



## The Minor Prophets and their Messages

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**Hosea – Joel – Amos – Obadiah – Jonah – Micah – Nahum –  
Habakkuk – Zephaniah – Haggai – Zechariah – Malachi**

The twelve prophets that follow the Book of Daniel in the canonical Bible are called the Minor Prophets, simply because they are shorter than the others, and not as being in any respect inferior.

### Major and Minor Prophets

God's Divine Purpose for man from the beginning was that man was destined to rule over creation. Man was to be king of the earth. However, with the fall of man God has been working direct or through the medium of the prophets, and at last through the Messiah to restore man as king of the earth. The ultimate and unifying theme of Old Testament theology is "The Kingdom". The Prophets were important highlights:

1. When the kings apostatised, God raised up prophets as mediators of His theocratic kingdom.
2. The prophets had a twofold message, firstly, to exhort the people to obey the Mosaic Law in the theocratic kingdom. Secondly, in prophesying the final form of the kingdom: Messiah's millennial rule.
3. Isaiah saw a suffering Messiah as foundational to the future kingdom reign of the World Saviour.

4. Jeremiah announced the New Covenant as the very basis whereby God will bless Israel in the future.
5. Ezekiel envisioned a restored worship in the future kingdom.
6. Daniel saw the Messiah destroying all earthly kingdoms and the establishment of the millennial kingdom

A prophet received his call or appointment direct from God. Some prophets like Jeremiah or later in New Testament times John the Baptist, were called before birth (Jeremiah 1: 5, and Luke 1: 13-16), but their privilege was not a birthright. Their authority came from God alone whose message they bore (Exodus 7: 1). A prophet sometimes became quite dramatic and acted out his message; for instance, Isaiah went naked and barefoot for three years (Isaiah 20: 2-3). Ezekiel lay on his left side for three-hundred ninety days and on his right side for forty more (Ezekiel 4: 1-8). Among the Minor Prophets, Zechariah broke two staves (Zechariah 11: 7-14). Making themselves as such a spectacle, prophets aroused curiosity but also invited the scorn of their peers (Jeremiah 11:21).

Except for God's Call, prophets had no special qualifications. They appeared from all walks of life and classes of society. Important, that God has used people in every age to fill the prophetic role of proclaiming His Holy Word.

Though Christians know and enjoy certain portions of the prophetic word, without seeing its reference strictly to the remnant of Israel, fail to study the prophets. Not a few think the study to be unprofitable, the subject being too mysterious, they say. One great hindrance to the understanding of the prophets is that they are not allowed to mean what they say. To allow Israel to signify Israel in its punishment, its restoration, and its future earthly glory, immediately clears away a tremendous lot of difficulties. Many sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ and other parts of the Holy Scripture cannot be understood unless a true outline of prophesy be grasped. This being understood, none of the moral teaching and consolation as to the unchangeable nature and ways of God will be lost.

### **A final thought on the prophets in general**

The prophetic books provide a developing concept of God's future dealing with Israel, and indeed the whole world. The prophets provide an expanded picture of the Messiah's work in His first (earthly state) and second (resurrected state) advents, focussing on the ultimate establishment of the future kingdom the Christians are waiting for. A great emphasis is given to the Messiah's Second Advent and His glorious reign on earth. Meanwhile, closely related to that particular event is Israel's repentance, forgiveness and restoration. The two go hand in hand for it is through Israel that God will bless the nations of the world. Many biblical prophecies have intertwined concepts that the prophets describe,

for their own present time and the future. The final focus does not rest with Israel, but also with the glory of God. The prophet Isaiah spoke of a future kingdom era when only the holy one would communion with a holy God.

“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. (Isaiah 35: 8)” (KJV)

Ezekiel detailed the future worship of a holy God, glorious in appearance together with His people (Ezekiel 43:2, 4 and 5). Zechariah concludes with an emphasis on the holiness of God in the future kingdom era (Zechariah 14: 20-21). So, the recognition as well as the adoration in truth and in spirit will be achieved in the future kingdom age.

## Hosea

In general, the Holy Scriptures cover vast topics with few words. Many major events are dismissed with one or two senses. With Hosea, we have the writings of a given prophet, one who spent a lifetime speaking out the major issues of the day.

“The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. (Hosea 1: 1)” (KJV)

Hosea is supposed to have been of the kingdom of Israel. He lived and prophesied during a long period. The scope of predictions appears to be, to detect, reprove, and convince the Jewish nation in general, and the Israelites in particular, of their many sins, particularly their idolatry: the corrupt state of the kingdom is also noticed. However, he invites them to repentance with promises of mercy, and ‘good news’ predictions of the future restoration of the Israelites and of the Jews, and their final converse to Christianity.

Nothing is related to the ancestors of the prophet Hosea, whose name is identical with Hoshea, except that he was the son of Beeri. He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and of Jeroboam king of Israel. He is essentially occupied with the moral condition of the people, principally of Israel, and the judgments that is to follow. Israel is treated as in rebellion from the beginning. The prophesy divides itself in this way; chapters 1 to 3, give God’s plan respecting Israel; and, in chapters 4 to 14, the people are addressed. There minor sub-divisions within these chapters.

## Dating

The prophet dates his prophesying by giving the names of four kings of Judah, and one king of Israel as stated above. A tabulation of these enables to determine approximately the length of his prophesying and the history of their reigns reveals the condition of the times.

Jeroboam, King of Israel	41 years	(15 years with Uzziah)
Uzziah, King of Judah	52 years	(37 years after Jeroboam's death)
Jotham, King of Judah	16 years	
Ahaz, King of Judah	16 years	
Hezekiah, King of Judah	29 years	

This is quite revealing as to the length of prophetic utterance. Hosea's voice was heard in reigns that covered no less than 138 years. How long he in fact prophesied, we do not know, but it could have been less than about seventy years.

Is it possible that so little is recorded? For sure, what we have here are indeed mere fragments of longer books. We must bear in mind that the prophets were scorned in their lifetime by their contemporaries, the object of their own scorn. Jeremiah's book was publicly burned, and had to be rewritten. Some prophets were killed. Obviously, their books were not kept in any official libraries. Rather, their words must have been committed to memory, passed on, and finally recorded, edited and canonised.

We do not know very much about Hosea, mainly because of the brevity of the book. As happens with many other biblical books, the editor must have added an opening line to the book, letting us know the time during which the prophet was active. Here we have the century prior to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It is a time of political turmoil, outside danger, and moral decline in that kingdom. Hosea senses the doom of Israel, as do the other great prophets of his time, Amos, Isaiah and Micah. The inevitable doom is a function of external factors such as the rise of Assyria in the north and its expansionist policy, and attacks by Egypt from the south; and the internal factors, such as the social and moral decline of the kingdom.

## Characteristics

The period covered by the prophesying of Hosea was undoubtedly the darkest in the whole history of the kingdom of Israel. It embraced the latter part of the ninth and most of the eighth centuries before Christ. The only king of Israel to

whom he refers is Jeroboam, who was the last king but one who was God-appointed.

Hosea became a prophet in a most unusual way. God told him to marry a prostitute. She gave him two sons and one daughter. His unusual marriage became a symbol of the “whoring” of Israel after foreign military alliances and after foreign gods, instead of putting its yielding trust in the God of Israel, who is Israel’s true “husband.” There is nothing unusual about a prophet using his own private life as a metaphor for the greater issues of the day. Isaiah gives his son a name that predicts a military disaster for Israel. However, none of the prophets went to the extreme of marrying a woman ineligible by Jewish law for marriage to prove a point.

God promised Jehu (II Kings 15: 8) that four generations should occupy the throne. Jeroboam was the third, and his son, Zechariah, after an interregnum of twenty-two years, reigned six months. This followed the most terrible condition of affairs. The political life was characterised by anarchy and misrule. Kings came to the throne over the murder of others. Zechariah was slain by Pekah, and he in turn was slain by Hoshea, the last king of Israel. These were soldiers, so that there existed during this time a military despotism. Foreign alliances in the past had involved the nation in extricable confusion. They constantly endeavoured to play these off against each other, and yet under the oppression of all.

Hosea used his marriage as a metaphor, and like Jeremiah was a man of the heart. Both prophets seem to have fallen into one of the two categories, of those who are guided by the heart, and those who are guided by their mind. Hosea sees the political and spiritual issues of his time through the prism of personal relationship and feelings. Unlike an Ezekiel, with his relentless prophecies of doom, Hosea manages in the first chapter of his book to speak both doom and consolation. He predicts Israel’s destruction at the hands of her enemies, and immediately turns to redemption and a new covenant, typically in images of marriage:

“And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. (Hosea 2: 19-22)” (KJV)

## **Religion**

One of Hosea's most touching passages conveying God's feelings toward backsliding and wayward Israel is the following:

“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. (Hosea 11: 1)” (KJV)

“I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. (Hosea 11: 3-4)” (KJV)

No other prophet spoke about the relationship between God and Israel in more tender and loving terms. The only one, who comes close to Hosea, is Jeremiah. Over all the failure, heartbreaking and desolating though it be, there is always sounds of music of God's love and assurance remains that He has not exhausted His methods, but will realise His triumph. “I will redeem; I will bring back.” At the coming of Christ love will triumph through judgment, and at last over judgment. The triumph is certain because “Adonai” is God and not man. May God grant that we as Christians catch the notes of Hosea's great message, sin, judgment and love, and laying emphasis on them all, gathering at all times the perfect harmony of the message.

“You will know Adonai”, in Genesis we read that Adam “knew” his wife, Eve. From there, the expression “to know someone in the biblical sense,” namely carnal knowledge. But this is only one aspect. Hosea, who uses the term frequently “knowing God”, is making the point that it is not enough to know through one's reason that there is a God. One must feel it inside oneself. True knowledge of God means leading a godly life, being in harmony with God. This is the goal the prophet wants his people, we today, strive for.

### **Hosea's Message Today**

Hosea learned by the horrible tragedy in his own home and in his heart as well, and with fierce and hot anger, he denounces priests, kings, princes, judges, and people alike. Today, we denounce modernism and liberalism among clergy (bishops, priests, ministers of the Word, preachers, teachers, etc.), with their biblical criticism, sceptical attitude towards Christian origins and traditional dogma, emphasising moral conduct only. We reject the liberal thought as being an deviation, neither objective nor reasonable nor scientific in any significant sense. Like Hosea, we want to keep the biblical doctrines and disciplines of historic Christianity intact and undiluted. We belong to Evangelical Christianity in the proclamation of the historical, biblical Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to Him personally and so be

reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation, we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with His Church, and from there the responsive service in the world.

## **Judgment in Hosea**

Hosea was very careful in emphasising the fact that judgment is the necessary result of sin, declaring the judgments in all their awful force and completeness. He showed very clearly that for “sin” man has no right to entertain the faintest hope of pardon. Despite the greatest fact in his message that “love” is the greatest triumph, he clearly discerns and emphatically declares that the triumph of love is postponed flood of judgment. No surface repentance, which is a mere device to escape punishment, can be accepted with God. The penalties of apostasy are as irrevocable as are the laws of purity.

## **Love in Hosea**

The love song of God continues even though the pathway of love’s triumph lies often through suffering. Pain of which no man can ever know the measure, and the cost of restoration of the unfaithful lover be that of the bearing of the judgment by the faithful lover. Still love moves right towards the goal, and sings the song of victory that is to be.

## **Outline**

Chapters 1 - 3	Israel’s rejection as an unfaithful wife; her future reception and restoration.
Chapters 4 - 14	Messages of judgment mingled with pleadings of love and mercy.

## **Analysis**

### **The prophet’s marriage symbolising Israel’s sin**

Introduction

Hosea divinely commanded to marry a harlot

Future restoration of Israel (Romans 9: 23-26)

### **Israel’s suffering for her harlotry**

Appeal and warning

Israel to be restored

### **Israel’s future restoration**

Israel’s past symbolised

### **Chapter 1**

Verse 1

Verses 2 - 9

Verses 10-11

### **Chapter 2**

Verses 1 - 13

Verses 14 - 23

### **Chapter 3**

Verses 1 - 3

Israel's present described	Verse 4
Israel's future indicated	Verse 5
<b>Ephraim's attachment to idolatry</b>	<b>Chapter 4</b>
Fruits of idolatry	Verses 1 - 11
Description of Ephraim's idolatry	Verses 12 - 19
<b>Message of reproach and future mercy</b>	<b>Chapters 5 - 6</b>
The favour of the Lord withdrawn	Chapter 5: 1 - 14
Future return and blessing	Chapters 5: 15 – 6: 3
<b>The Lord's condemnation of Israel</b>	<b>Chapters 7 - 13</b>
Her moral corruption	Chapter 7: 1-16
Judgment upon her apostasy	Chapters 8: 1 – 9: 9
Retrospect of the nation's sin and despair	Chapters 9: 10 – 11: 11
Ephraim's condemnation	Chapters 11: 12 – 13: 13
<b>Kingdom restoration of Israel</b>	<b>Chapter 14</b>
Appeal to return	Verses 1 - 3
The Lord's gracious response	Verses 4 - 8
The prophet's addendum, an application for all time	Verse 9

## **Epilogue**

The causes of Christianity's failure today are those of the failure of Israel of old. Spiritual idolatry is evidenced by the paganism, which has become mingled with the things concerning God. Just witness, in spite of ecumenical counsels, the Roman and the Orthodox Churches, and other communities, holding fast to their self-centred satisfaction, will excommunicate those who differ from them. Do not be too angry with the Pope in Rome as long as you are a pope yourself! The harlotry of worldliness is hanging about in most of the churches today, through modernism and liberalism, far from the Gospel truth. Thousands who name Jesus Christ are taking possessions which have been bestowed upon God and are spending them in the pursuit of worldly ambitions and pleasures. Blood-bought souls through Jesus Christ are in today's churches inflaming themselves with carnality under every green tree. Through these happenings, the Evangelical testimony which should be borne to every nation, in every home, and each one personally is silenced, and the name of God is being profaned among believers and unbelievers. Having said this, know that whatever message has been conveyed here along the "Word of God", further comments do not come within the scope of these studies.

## **Examination questions:**

1. Describe the religious and social life of Hosea's day (see also 2 Kings 14: 23-27)
2. What help does this book afford towards solving the problem of God's holiness and love, His mercy and judgment?
3. What hope does Hosea hold out to those who are conscious of backsliding?

## Joel

From the desolations about to come upon the land of Judah, by the ravages of locusts and other insects, the prophet Joel exhorts the Jews to repentance, fasting and prayer. He notices the blessings of the Gospel, with the final glorious state of the Church.

Joel means "Jehovah is God, Yahweh", Jah is his God; worshipper of God; he who desires; he who wills; he who fulfils every desire, very common in the Holy Scripture; All that is known of him is the statement of the opening verse that:

"The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. (Joel 1: 1)" (KJV)

"And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beer-sheba. (2 Samuel 8: 1-2)" (KJV)

"The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah. ( 1 Chronicles 6: 36)" (KJV)

"And the sons of Uzzi; Izrahiah: and the sons of Izrahiah; Michael, and Obadiah, and Joel, Ishiah, five: all of them chief men. ( 1 Chronicles 7: 3)" (KJV)

"Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Haggeri. ( 1 Chronicles 11:38)" (KJV)

"Of the sons of Gershom; Joel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and thirty. 1 Chronicles 15: 7)" (KJV)

"Of the children of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah: of the half tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah. ( 1 Chronicles 27: 20)" (KJV)

The book suggests that he was a man of Judah, an inhabitant of Jerusalem, and a prophet of the Southern Kingdom. He was not a priest.

“Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD. (Joel 1: 13-14)” (KJV)

“Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? (Joel 2: 17)” (KJV)

The style is graphic and vivacious, full of rhythm and even poetry. The short book of the Prophet Joel, consisting of four short chapters, provides no clue as to who Joel was, when exactly he prophesied, or any other particulars. He could have lived at any time from the time of the early kings to the end of the monarchy. His book consists of two seemingly unrelated subjects. The first is a major plague of locust, and the second is a vision of the end of time, or judgment day.

**The date** of the prophecy can only be gathered from internal evidence, and this is of a slender and doubtful nature as to leave the subject an open question. However, there are certain points of interest, enough to help us to form an opinion:

1. The prophet makes no reference to Syrians, Assyrians, or Chaldeans. He does mention Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia.
2. He makes no reference to idolatry nor corruption, but he speaks of the temple services as being maintained.
3. He does not say anything about kings and princes, but he refers to elders and priests.
4. He had none of the scorn for the sacrifices which mark the writings of other prophets. However, he mourns that because of the locust plague there are no offerings.
5. A large number of passages are found in the book, similar to those in other prophetic writings.

In fact, the date is thought to be either before the reign of Ahaz (742-726 B.C.) or after the exile, because of the absence of any mention of Syria, Assyria, or even Babylon among the enemies of Israel. Anyway, of the Minor Prophets, Joel

is judged to be the earliest writing in connection with Judah. We will not make further speculations.

## **What makes Joel a Prophet?**

The key-note of the prophecy is “the day of Jehovah” as we already know, which is five times mentioned in connection with the future judgments, which will bring in the full blessing of Israel and mankind (the whole earth), when the Lord will also have His portion, a meal offering, and a drink offering for Himself.

Joel speaks in the name of God, while we have not the slightest idea as to the time and context in which he speaks, his words being well within the scope of biblical prophetic tradition. His vision of the final judgment is as powerful as any in the Holy Scripture. Some of it, such as the text “blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke,” has found its way into the Passover Haggiah.

Joel was especially a prophet to Judah, and the burden of his message, which seems to be one remarkable utterance rather than notes of a ministry covering a long period like that of the prophet Hosea. A terrible locust plague, which had devastated the entire country, was seen by the prophet as a judgment of God ; and this he declared, and announced the fact that it indicated a still severer judgment, which could not be averted by heart repentance.

It is appropriate to mention that Joel concludes his holy writ with the vision of the end of time:

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion. (Joel 3: 18-21)” (KJV)

## **Outline**

<b>Chapter 1: 1-20</b>	The locust plague – the Day of the Lord
<b>Chapter 2: 1-32</b>	Events of the day of the Lord
<b>Chapter 3: 1-16</b>	The judgment of the nations
<b>Chapter 3: 17-21</b>	Kingdom blessing

## **In detail:**

### **The locust plague – the day of the Lord**

The desolation of the land

Appeal to lament the plague

Call to self-humiliation and repentance

The plague a prophetic symbol of the day of the Lord

### **Events of the Day of the Lord**

The invading army from the North

The Lord's army appears

The repentant remnant

The Lord's response to the repentant Jews in the land

The promise of the outpouring of the Spirit

### **The judgment of the nations**

Israel's end-time restoration

The nations judged

Full kingdom blessing

### **Chapter 1**

Verses 1 - 7

Verses 8 – 13

Verse 14

Verses 15-20

### **Chapter 2**

Verses 1-10

Verse 11

Verses 12-17

Verses 18-27

Verses 28-32

### **Chapter 3**

Verse 1

Verses 2-16

Verses 17-21

## **Joel's Message**

Joel's message to his time, as well as for our time today, was primarily one concerning the authoritative and overcoming government of God, illumining all the way through by his and our consciousness of being attended by divine grace.

He declared the government of God as being His absolute supremacy, realising in the plague of locusts, which gave rise to his message, the visitation of God. From this, he deduced a warning of a yet more terrible visitation imminent. These messages as found in Joel led to a fuller vision and declaration of the ultimate realisation of divine purposes through God's government. His main thought, "God is on the throne."

**The Grace of God!** How beautifully it was manifested! His message was one about the tenderness of Jehovah (Yahweh / JHWH), for in response to repentance God was declared as ever avoiding judgment and acting in mercy. Even when the Prophet dealt with the final acts of divine government, he realised that a way to escape would be made for those calling upon the Name of the Lord. Also, the terrible scenes of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, made an end through God's Love.

The most outstanding part of Joel's prophecy, of the man who heard and uttered it, is the section which predicted the dispensation of the Spirit. The approach to God in salvation is always through grace, and grace was also manifested in the dispensation of law God promised the people of Israel a land, peace, victory

over enemies, and blessing. Despite Israel's repeated failure, God continued to deal with the nation in grace. Amid Israel's failure God promised the nation a new covenant whereby He would forgive her sins to Israel and Gentiles. God provided divine enablement through the display of His grace and the ministry of the Spirit, the new dispensation.

Dispensationalism is nowhere more distinctive than in its doctrine of the church. Dispensationalists hold that the church is entirely distinct from Israel as an entity. This is argued from several points:

1. The church was a mystery, unknown in the Old Testament.

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 3: 1-9)” (KJV)

“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints. (Colossians 1: 26)” (KJV)

2. The Church is composed of Jews and Gentiles; the Gentiles being fellowheirs with the Jews without having to become Jewish proselytes, which was not true in the Old Testament.

“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Ephesians 3: 6)” (KJV)

This issue was removed in Acts 15 when the Judaizers attempted to put the gentiles under the law.

3. The church, Christian Assembly, did not begin until Acts, chapter 2. It is the baptising work of the Holy Spirit that unites believers with Christ and one another, making up the church.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12: 13)” (KJV)

That work belonged still to the future in Acts 1: 5, but in Acts 11: 15 it is clear that it began in Acts 2, establishing the birth of the church.

“For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts 1: 5)”

“And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. (Acts 11:15)”

Dispensationalists believe that the church will conclude its existence upon the earth at the rapture, prior the Tribulation.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4: 16)”

4. The church is distinguished from Israel in the New Testament.

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God. (1 Corinthians 10: 32)”

**The Day of the Lord.** Different from the Lord’s Day, the Resurrection Day, Sunday. A lot of us mistakenly assume that, when the apostle John wrote that he “was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1: 10), he was simply worshipping on Sunday, and experienced the vision on that day. Nowhere the Holy Scripture define “the Lord’s day” as the first day of the week, nor even the seventh day of the week as day of rest and worship. If this were referring to a day of the week, we would have to conclude that John meant the seventh day, since Jesus Christ said He was the “Lord of the Sabbath”, not some other day of the week.

“Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath. (Mark 2: 28)” (KJV)

Along Joel’s message, everyday is the “day of the Lord”. When devastation sweeps abroad, it is His day. When everything seems wrong, it is His day. This conviction in the heart makes a man say, “The day of the Lord must come eventually when all that is wrong shall be perfectly and forever set right. He will

finally assert Himself in overwhelming majesty and power compelling all things to the issues of His own will.

**The Lord's Day and the Plan.** Here, it is important to remember the place we occupy in the plan, living in the day of the poured-out Spirit; it is a day of prophesy, of dreams, of visions, and the things irrespective of caste or any human division. The ending of the day will be ushered in by signs and portents mysterious and supernatural. During its course "whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved." It is the day of God's patience, preceding the putting forth of His power.

Also, the context of John's vision in the Book of Revelation shows that he was really not referring to a day of the week. More important, he wrote that the vision transported him forward into that time the Holy Scripture, calls the 'day of the Lord,' "day of the Lord Jesus Christ", and the "day of Christ."

"For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates. (Jeremiah 46: 10)" (KJV)

"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. (Zephaniah 1: 14)" (KJV)

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come. (Acts 2: 20)" (KJV)

"Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1: 8)" (KJV)

"As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus. (2 Corinthians 1: 14)" (KJV)

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ( I Thessalonians 5: 2)" (KJV)

"That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. (2 Thessalonians 2: 2)" (KJV)

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with

fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (2 Peter 3: 10)” (KJV)

Above terms are not speaking of the time around the clock, 7/7 and 24/24 periods, but they refer to the end-time events surrounding the return of Jesus Christ, when He will personally and directly intervene in human affairs. So, “the Day of the Lord” indicate the end of the age of man’s rule and the beginning of the age of Jesus Christ.

**God’s principles through Joel.** For life and service, it is of great importance that the heart should be warned and comforted by being constantly reminded of the present overruling of God, and the sure certainty of His final Victory. The message to the age must always be that of the divine supremacy, of the divine immanence, of the divine activity. We want to tell men that the Lord that sitteth in the heavens laughs at the folly of their rebellion, and weeps over the misery of their sin, and waits as King to pardon repenting souls.

### **Examination questions:**

1. Note the use of Joel 2: 28-32 made by Peter in Acts 2 and by the apostle Paul to the Romans 10: 13. Consider the relevance of these verses to the missionary enterprise;
2. Find traces of reference to this prophecy in Matthew 24 and Revelation 9.

## **Amos**

Amos was a herdsman we will see later, and therefore engaged in agriculture. However, the same Divine Spirit influenced Isaiah and Daniel in the court, and Amos in the sheepfolds, giving to each the powers, and eloquence needful to them. He assures the twelve tribes of the destruction of the neighbouring nations; and as they at that time gave themselves up to wickedness and idolatry, he reproves the Jewish nation with severity; but describes the restoration of the church by the coming Messiah, extending to the latter days.

The Book of Amos consists of nine short chapters; however, it packs more prophetic power than any other book in the Old Testament. In fact, Amos was the first of the literary prophets, and much of what they had to say was first said by him. Unlike some of his famous successors, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and

Ezekiel, Amos was not a member of the elite, but rather a herdsman from the countryside of Judah, or possibly Israel.

Amos was partly contemporaneous with the prophet Hosea. During the reign of Jeroboam he came out of Tekoah, in Judah, to Bethel, and in Israel. Here again, the exact date cannot be fixed, but his message was delivered two year before the earthquake (Amos 1: 1), as he declares when carrying out those messages to writing. The earthquake is noticed by Zechariah (Zechariah 14: 5), and Josephus places it at the time when Uzziah was smitten with leprosy (II Chronicles 26: 16-21). In all possibility the messages of Amos were delivered during the period when Jeroboam was king of Israel and Uzziah king of Judah; when Hosea began his long career of prophesying.

“The words of Amos, who was among the herdman of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. (Amos 1:1)” (KJV)

“And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. (Zechariah 14: 5)” (KJV)

“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. (2 Chronicles 26: 16-21).” (KJV)

The later years of the reign of Jeroboam were characterised by great material prosperity. There are evidences in his message of the wealth and luxury of the people.

“And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD. (Amos 3: 15)”

“Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. (Amos 5: 11)”

“That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed. The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein. (Amos 6: 4-8)”

The above references show, as do many others, that injustice, oppression and vice were rampant, the poor being ground down under the feet of the rich. These very material signs of prosperity were being construed by the people into symbols of the special evidences of divine protection, and yet they were forgetful of the requirements of God’s law.

The prophesy of Amos is described as “the words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa.” Its genuineness is unquestionable, and is testified too, by the historical incident related in Amos 7: 10-17, by the unity pervading the whole, and by its close correspondence with the external conditions under which it was delivered.

“Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court. Then answered

Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land. (Amos 7: 10-17)" (KJV)

Tekoa is situated in the barren hill-country six miles south of Bethlehem, overlooking the Dead Sea. The prophecy abounds with pastoral images derived from these surroundings.

"And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither. (Amos 1: 2)" (KJV)

"Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves. (Amos 2: 13)" (KJV)

"Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? Shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? (Amos 3: 4-5)" (KJV)

"And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. (Amos 4: 7)" (KJV)

"Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name: .... (Amos 5: 8)" (KJV)

"Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock: Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? (Amos 6: 12-13)" (KJV)

"Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. (Amos 7: 1)" (KJV)

“Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. (Amos 8: 1)” (KJV)

“It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.” (Amos 9: 6)” (KJV)

Nearby was the highroad leading from Jerusalem to Hebron and Beersheba, where Amos would see and meet with troops of pilgrims passing to and fro.

“But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought. (Amos 5: 5)” (KJV)

“And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. (Amos 8: 12)” (KJV)

We also hear repeated the rumours of the caravan and market place; and, how the plague was going forward from Egypt.

“And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD. (Amos 6: 10)” (KJV)

Ugly stories of the Phoenician slave-market:

“Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant: But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof. (Amos 1: 9)” (KJV)

Accounts of the great festivals and fairs, of the oppression of the poor and the careless luxury of the rich.

“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. (Amos 5: 21)” (KJV)

As a herdsman Amos would take his wool to the markets of Northern Israel, where he derived his vivid pictures of her town life, commerce, and the ceremonial of the great sanctuaries. Among these was Bethel, the chief centre of

the apostate worship of God (Jehovah) under the image of a calf; and, the same for Gilgal, seven miles further North. The judgments of God by war are abroad throughout the prophecy, soon to be fulfilled upon the surrounding nations, and finally upon Israel, by the hand of Assyria. Amos goes to say that Israel has become so sinful that God has a good mind to wipe it off the face of the earth. Yet, God will not annihilate the House of Jacob, as the “Covenant” can never be broken.

Amos is the first prophet to predict the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He lived in the time of King Jeroboam II, some fifty years before the fall of Israel, which is a time of prosperity and territorial expansion. This prosperity is alluded to in his condemnation of the rich who oppress the poor as we already know.

“Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. (Amos 4: 1)” (KJV)

**Theme:** “The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem.” (Amos 1: 2 and 3: 16)

## Outline

<b>Chapters 1: 1- 2:16</b>	Judgment on Israel, Judah, and surrounding nations.
<b>Chapters 3: 1 – 9:10</b>	The Lord’s indictment of the entire house of Jacob.
<b>Chapters 3: 1 – 6:14</b>	Four disapproving sermons.
<b>Chapters 7: 1 - 9:10</b>	Five symbolic predictions of punishment.
<b>Chapters 9: 11 - 15</b>	The Kingdom blessing for restored Israel.

## In detail

### Judgment on surrounding nations

The announcement

Judgment on six nations

### Judgment on Judah and Israel

Judgment on Judah

Judgment on Israel

### Israel’s greater opportunity and guilt

Because of her greater opportunity

The thoroughness of the divine judgment

### Prepare to meet your God, O Israel

Indictment of the wealthy women of Samaria

Israel’s abominable ritualism

### Chapters 1: 1 – 2: 3

Verses 1-2

Chapters 1: 3 – 2: 3

### Chapter 2: 4 - 16

Verses 4 - 5

Verses 6 - 16

### Chapter 3

Verses 1 - 11

Verses 12 - 15

### Chapter 4

Verses 1 - 3

Verses 4 - 5

Israel has to face God's judgment	Verses 6 - 13
<b>Seek the Lord and live</b>	<b>Chapter 5</b>
Lament for the fallen and forsaken nation	Verses 1 - 3
Seek the Lord	Verses 4 - 17
Be warned on the Day of the Lord	Verses 18 - 20
The Lord's hatred on their empty religion	Verses 21 - 27
<b>Catastrophe on the self-secure</b>	<b>Chapter 6</b>
Warning to self-indulgent sinners	Verses 1 - 7
Punishment is unavoidable	Verses 8 - 14
<b>The locust plague, the drought and the plumb line</b>	<b>Chapter 7</b>
The locust plague	Verses 1 - 3
The drought	Verses 4 - 6
The plumb line	Verses 7 - 9
Amos and Amaziah	Verses 10 - 17
<b>The fruit basket</b>	<b>Chapter 8</b>
The basket of ripe produce	Verses 1 - 3
The reason for the end	Verses 4 - 14
<b>The Lord at the altar</b>	<b>Chapter 9: 1 - 10</b>
The Lord at the altar	Verses 1 - 6
The Lord and sinful Israel	Verses 7 - 10
<b>Future kingdom blessing</b>	<b>Chapter 9: 11-15</b>
Messiah's return and reign	Verses 11-15

## Short Commentary

### Chapters 1 and 2

There are eight short denunciations of judgments, introduced by the words "for three transgressions and for four." The judgments are against: (1) Syria under its chief city Damascus. (2) The Philistines under Gaza. (3) Tyre. (4) Edom. (5) Ammon. (6) Moa. (7) Judah. (8) Israel.

### Chapter 3

Here Judah and Israel are spoken of, "the whole family," as one, though division had come in. Then, follows the momentous statement that this family was the only one God had known, and taken into relationship, so God would punish them for their iniquities. Though judgments would come there would be a remnant left, as when a shepherd recovers from a lion "two legs or a piece of an ear" A small remnant indeed.

“Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch. (Amos 3: 12)” (KJV)

## **Chapter 4**

This chapter is against Israel, especially because they had oppressed the poor. God had brought minor judgments upon them, such as:

1. Insufficiency, “cleanness of teeth;”
2. Need of rain, which was sent on one city, but not on the other.
3. Blasting and mildew.
4. Pestilence and a stink, their young men being slain with the sword.
5. They were overthrown as Sodom and Gomorrah, some being saved as firebrands out of the burning.

After each judgment is added the result, “Ye have yet not returned unto me.” (Amos 4: 11).

“I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. 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. (Amos 4: 11-13)” (KJV)

## **Chapter 5**

Israel is still denounced, but is exhorted to seek the Lord. Some desired the day of the Lord, but that will be very dark and with judgment. So terrible was their wickedness that God hated and despised their assemblies and offerings. They turned completely to idolatry.

## **Chapter 6**

This chapter denounces those that are in Zion, living in luxury and pleasure, and false confidence, in spite all the warnings that had been given.

## **Chapters 7 and 8**

These chapters as well as chapter 9 are visions with their applications. Chapter 7 exhibits the patient of Jehovah. The prophet interceded for Jacob, and He repented of the evil he was bringing on them. Still judgment followed. The declaration of the doom was repugnant to Amaziah the priest of the king's false religion at Bethel. He bade Amos to flee to Judah. Amos replied that he had been no prophet, nor prophet's son, but only a herdsman, sent by Jehovah. Judgments should fall on Amaziah, while Israel should go into captivity. In chapter eight is denounced Israel for its self-ease and oppression of the poor.

## **Chapter 9**

None could possibly escape the eye of the judgment of God. He would destroy them from off the face of the earth, but not completely: a remnant should be saved:

“For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. (Amos 9: 9)” (KJV)

Verses 11 to 15 speak of restoration and blessing. The plowman shall overtake the reaper; while the mountains shall drop wine. The captives will return. God will plant them upon their land and they shall no more be pulled up. David's tent is the Davidic dynasty the Lord will raise up in the Person of the Christ returning in glory at His second advent to establish the kingdom over Israel.

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? (Acts 1: 6)” (KJV)

James quoted this great prophesy at the first church council:

“And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. (Acts 15: 15-17)” (KJV)

The Holy Spirit on that sublime occasion utilised it to unfold the divine plan for the future; and, that is, in this present age God is calling out a people for His name. After which, the Lord will return in all glory and re-establish the Davidic dynasty in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of

old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this. (Amos 9: 11-12) (KJV)”

Followed by millennial prosperity:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. (Amos 9: 13)”

Resulting in a restored Israel:

“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God. (Amos 9: 14-15)”

With Amos, biblical prophecy expands its horizons from dealing strictly with the people of Israel, to presenting a global view of what is to come, presenting a global view of the human in the light of Christ’s return.

Through the Holy Scripture, God provides us a clear picture of our destiny, but the decision remains ours. We must choose whether we will turn from the ways of Satan and this present evil world (represented in the Garden of Eden by the tree of knowledge of good and evil) to the righteous ways of God.

“And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (Revelation 22: 6-7)” (KJV)

These words are faithful and true. Blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

### **Examination questions:**

1. What likeness, or difference, can you see between the early life, call, and mission of Moses and those of Amos? (See our “Genesis” Course)
2. Trace any reference to the Pentateuch, its history or ordinances, in this prophecy. (See our “Genesis” Course)

# Obadiah

The first part of Obadiah denounces the destruction of Edom, dwelling upon the injuries they inflicted on the Jews. The second part foretells the restoration of the Jews, and the latter glories of the Church.

While the name “Obadiah” is quite common in the Old Testament, meaning “servant of Jehovah”, the writer cannot be identified with any of those who bear his name. Who is Obadiah and what is his message are hard to answer. This is the shortest book in the Holy Scripture, consisting of a single chapter with only twenty-one verses. All we know is that Obadiah had a vision about Edom.

The date depends on the interpretation of the reference in verses 11-14:

“In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. (Obadiah verses 11-14)” (KJV)

Some expositors see in these an allusion to events in the reign of Jehoram or of Ahaz.

“Moreover the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that were near the Ethiopians: And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons. (2 Chronicles 21: 16-17)” (KJV)

“At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives. ( 2 Chronicles 28: 16-17)” (KJV)

“And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the

prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.) (1 Kings 18: 3-4)” (KJV)

However, it is more probable that like in Jeremiah, they refer to the evil part that Edom played in the sack of Jerusalem.

“I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD. Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. (Jeremiah 49: 14-17)” (KJV)

In this case Obadiah and Jeremiah would be contemporaries, and the close connection of these passages would find an easy explanation; they might, for example, be pronounced by Jeremiah and heard by, or reported to Obadiah. It may be noted that whereas Edom is masculine, Obadiah writes of “her” in verse 1, perhaps following Jeremiah 49: 13-14, where the reference is to Bozrah (feminine), the capital of Edom.

“The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. (Obadiah verse 1)” (KJV)

“For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes. I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. (Jeremiah 49: 13-14)” (KJV)

The Rabbis of the Talmud identified Obadiah with the person of the same name who lived in the time of King Ahab. They actually thought he was an Edomite proselyte (Sanhedrin 39b). That would put him in the ninth century B.C.E. After textual analysis, they too, show similarities between Obadiah and parts of Jeremiah, chapter 49, putting him in the sixth century B.C.E., some three hundred years after. They claim, that would make more sense, since the Edomites, who lived on the other side of Jordan and were believed to be descendants of Esau, Jacob’s brother, therefore cousins of the Jews, helping Nebuchadnezzar in defeating Judah and destroying Jerusalem. Obadiah has a terrible prediction for the Edomites, who will be destroyed for their evil deeds.

In Jewish history, Edom becomes synonymous with hatred of Israel, and the Roman Empire is often referred to as Edom, the Evil Kingdom. The prophet concludes with a prediction of Judah's restoration.

“But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. (Obadiah verse 17)” (KJV)

“And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's. (Obadiah verse 21)” (KJV)

## Outline

<b>Verses 1 - 9</b>	Edom's destruction foretold
<b>Verses 10 - 14</b>	Cause of Edom's fall
<b>Verses 15 - 21</b>	The Day of the Lord

## In detail

### Edom's destruction foretold

Dislocated from her mountain fortress

Plundered and deserted completely

### Cause of Edom's fall

The prophecy concerning Edom was spoken not to Edom, but to Israel, and would be intended as a word of comfort for those among the chosen people who, loyal to Jehovah, were yet suffering with the whole nation. It was a declaration of the fact that God is never unmindful of the actions of the enemies who take advantage of Israel's calamity, and the punishment of such was certain.

### The Day of the Lord

One clear light ever burns ahead, leading us upward and onward; it is perfectly expressed in the closing words of Obadiah: “The kingdom shall be the Lord's.”

### Verses 1 - 9

Verses 1 - 4

Verses 5 - 9

### Verses 10 - 14

### Verses 15 - 21

The unfriendly relationship of Edom to Israel is the burden of the prophecy. Certain punishment for Edom is predicted unless newness of spirit enters into her dealings with Israel. To the latter is promised the blessing of prosperity.

This short book is also valuable for us today, because of its remarkable prophecy, also remarkably fulfilled. Though God so judged Edom, He remembered His promise to Jacob, and spared a remnant, whereby blessing in “salvation and sanctification” (verse 17) have come to Christ's Church.

Prophetic statements sometimes apply to more than one fulfilment, which we could call “duality”. A prime example of duality is Christ’s first coming to atone for our sins and His second coming to rule as King of Kings. Bible prophesy is international in scope. It is centred on the only Ruler: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who can establish utopia on earth. Let the great powers of today remember that the measure of a nation’s patience with God’s suffering Israel is the measure of that nation’s permanence. God is unchangeable. The “Holy Nation,” of which we form a part of by God’s grace, is peculiarly called to express the compassion of His heart even toward those who are suffering the calamities of His judgment.

### **Examination question:**

Trace the parallels and contrasts between Obadiah’s prophecy and Jeremiah 49: 7-22 and Ezekiel 35.

## **Jonah**

The prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai, is mentioned in 2 Kings 14: 25, in the time of King Jeroboam the Second, in the ninth century B.C.E.

“He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher. (2 Kings 14: 25)” (KJV)

His miraculous deliverance from out of the fish, rendered him a type of our blessed Lord, who mentions it, so as to show the certain truth of the narrative, whatever else may be suggested. All that was done, was easy to the almighty power of the Author and Sustainer of life. This book shows us, however, by the example of the Ninevites, how great are the Divine forbearance and long-suffering towards sinners. It shows a most striking contrast between the goodness and mercy of the Lord, and the rebellion, impatience, and peevishness of his servant; and, it will be best understood by those who are acquainted with their own hearts.

It is difficult to know with certainty when Jonah actually lived. The style of the book and some of the words used could place it centuries later. Unlike the other prophets, whose text consists mainly of prophecies and written in a rich poetic style, the Book of Jonah only contains a few words of prophecy, and consists strictly of a short story told in a prose style.

One needs to say, very confidently affirmed, that Jonah was not the author of the book, by those who doubt the possibility of its miracles to the fourth century BCE.

However, for those who admit the miraculous element in Scripture, the following reasons will justify its historical character.

- (1) Its style is that of simple history, the names of places and people are not symbolical, and the theme of the power of true repentance which runs through the book testifies its unity.
- (2) The magnitude of Nineveh, once denied by critics, has been proved by archaeology. The circuit of the inner wall was eight miles, and there were suburbs.
- (3) Its historical character was accepted by Jews scholars, who were quite able to distinguish history from allegory, while our Lord's words seem to imply the genuineness of the events to which He referred.

“But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. (Matthew 12: 39-41)” (KJV)

- (4) Arguments to the contrary coming from Aramaisms and the supposed parallel in Jeremiah 51: 34, and of little weight in some of the Psalms.

Briefly, God sends Jonah on a mission to the great city of Nineveh, in Mesopotamia, to exhort its people to repent. He refuses to go on that mission, and instead goes to the sea and boards a ship. Out at sea a storm starts, everyone prays to his or her own god for rescue, but to no avail, when they discover that Jonah is a fugitive from God. Jonah tells them to cast him overboard to appease God. They do, and the sea quiets down, as Jonah is swallowed by the big fish. God rescues him from the fish, making Jonah realise he cannot possibly run away from God.

The Book of Jonah is one of the best known biblical stories of the Old Testament. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the story itself is intriguing and memorable. Secondly, it is read entirely in the synagogue every year on the afternoon of the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. It is the day on which Jews are expected to fully repent and atone for their sins. Like all popular folk stories,

there are misconceptions about the biblical account. The most common is that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. The Old Testament never mentions a whale, but a “great fish.”

## Outline

<b>Chapters 1 - 2</b>	Jonah’s commission and disobedience
<b>Chapters 3 - 4</b>	Jonah’s renewed commission and its result.

## In detail

### Jonah’s call and disobedience

The divine call and attempted escape

The storm at sea

Jonah’s witness and fate

### Jonah’s prayer and deliverance

His prayer of thanksgiving

His deliverance

### Jonah’s renewed commission

Jonah’s obedience

Nineveh repents

### Jonah’s reaction to the revival

Jonah is angered

Jonah, the prophet, rebuked

### Chapter 1

Verses 1 - 3

Verses 4 - 7

Verses 8 - 17

### Chapter 2

Verses 1 – 9

Verse 10

### Chapter 3

Verses 1 - 4

Verses 5 - 10

### Chapter 4

Verses 1 - 5

Verses 6 - 11

Beside being a story written in prose while most prophetic texts are written in poetic language, the Book of Jonah is a morality tale, a background story about the mission of the prophet Jonah, who cannot possibly escape his mission. The story seems to be a composite of several versions, written at different times. It must have been very popular from the start, and may have been included in the Bible not because of its great prophetic message, but because of popular demand. Many themes for sermons in the Book of Jonah, as “The Governing God,” found on every page. “The Longsuffering of God” with a nation, longsuffering with individual man. Also, “National Accountability”, the perishing or permanent element depending on a nation’s relationship to God, whether Israel or Nineveh. “Personal Responsibility” as evidenced in the story of Jonah. Finally, “How to Cooperate with God” in accomplishing His work. Also, its great popularity is attested by the fact that it is included in the Jewish ritual Yom Kippur. Jonah also is a popular figure in Christianity as well as in Islam. To Christians the story indicates the capacity of the gentiles for salvation, and to the Muslim, Jonah is one of the apostles of Allah.

## God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry? (Jonah 4:9)

Anger is not always or necessarily sinful, but it has such a tendency to run wild that whenever it displays itself, we should be quick to question its character, with this enquiry, 'Doest thou well to be angry?'

It may be that we can answer, 'YES.' Very frequently anger is the madman's firebrand, but sometimes it is Elijah's fire from heaven. We do well when we are angry with sin, because of the wrong which it commits against our good and gracious God; or with ourselves because we remain so foolish after so much divine instruction; or with others when the sole cause of anger is the evil which they do. He who is not angry at transgression becomes a partaker in it. Sin is a loathsome and hateful thing, and no renewed heart can patiently endure it. God himself is angry with the wicked every day, and it is written in his word, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.'

Far more frequently it is to be feared that our anger is not commendable or even justifiable, and then we must answer, 'NO.' Why should we be fretful with children, passionate with servants, and wrathful with companions? Is such anger honourable to our Christian profession, or glorifying to God? Is it not the old evil heart seeking to gain dominion, and should we not resist it with all the might of our newborn nature? Many professors give way to temper as though it were useless to attempt resistance; but let the believer remember that he must be a conqueror in every point, or else he cannot be crowned. If we cannot control our tempers, what has grace done for us? Some one told Mr. Jay that grace was often grafted on a crab stump. 'Yes,' said he, 'but the fruit will not be crabs.'

We must not make natural infirmity an excuse for sin, but we must flee to the cross and pray the Lord to crucify our tempers, and renew us in gentleness and meekness after his own image.

### **Examination question:**

Compare and contrast Jonah's experience with that of the apostle Paul in Acts 27.

## **Micah**

Micah was raised up to support Isaiah, and to confirm his predictions, while he invited to repentance, both by threatened judgments and promised mercies. A

very remarkable passage, in chapter 5, contains a summary of prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Micah is a contemporary of Isaiah. However, unlike Isaiah who is a member of the priestly upper-class in Jerusalem, Micah is a country boy from Southern coast of Israel. He too witnesses the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and predicts the fall of Judah. Micah is the first to pronounce the shocking prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. His words make a profound and lasting impression on the people, that they are mentioned again one-hundred years later in the Book of Jeremiah:

“Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountains of the house as the high places of a forest. (Jeremiah 26: 17-18)” (KJV)

Micah also says:

“Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. (Micah 3: 9-12)” (KJV)

The message of Micah was particularly to the cities of Israel and Judah as the centres affecting the national thought and action.

“The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. (Micah 1: 1)” (KJV)

The sins he rebukes are peculiarly those of cities: Oppression and violence, corruption of princes, prophets and priests, bribery, robbery, dishonesty, pride. The prophesy is a declaration of God’s Divine Plan. It consists of three addresses, each beginning with a call to hear.

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

“And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment? (Micah 3: 1)” (KJV)

“Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. (Micah 6: 1)” (KJV)

Micah’s style is vehement, forceful, and very sharp in its contrasts and turns of thought. The prophecies are separate, evidently put together as a co-ordinated whole, possibly by Micah’s own hand.

Micah, like Amos before him, was a man of the people. He felt deeply the moral crisis that brought the fall of Israel, and afterwards threatening the survival of the Kingdom of Judah. His prophetic utterances are not carefully thought out or arranged in any particular order. He spoke directly from the heart, using rural imagery; and, deeply offended by the glib use made of God’s name by the prophets and the priests, the ruling classes in Samaria and Jerusalem, living with a false sense of security, just ignoring the idolatry and injustice prevalent throughout the land. Overwhelmed by his own words of doom, quickly turns to predicting a future time when the remnant of Israel will be brought back by a loving God.

“I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. (Micah 2: 12)” (KJV)

## **Micah’s Prophecies**

The prophecy starts with Jotham, the period being circa 745-715 B.C.E.

“The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. (Micah 1: 1)” (KJV)

Assyria forms the political background with Babylon on the distant horizon.

“And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria

with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders. (Micah 5: 5-6)” (KJV)

“In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. (Micah 7: 12)” (KJV)

“Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies. (Micah 4: 10)” (KJV)

Micah was vividly remembered after one-hundred twenty later by Jeremiah.

“Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountains of the house as the high places of a forest. (Jeremiah 26: 18)” (KJV)

As in Amos and Hosea knowledge of the Pentateuch is assumed. Directed mainly to Judah, the denunciation of apostasy is less pointed, but the Deuteronomic background is there and prohibitions, and penalties are recognised.

### **Deuteronomy background**

“Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him. Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God. (Micah 3: 5-7)” (KJV)

“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall

Speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him. (Deuteronomy 18: 15-22)” (KJV)

### **Prohibitions:**

“And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers: Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. (Micah 5: 12-13)” (KJV)

“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. (Deuteronomy 18: 10)” (KJV)

### **Penalties:**

“Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. (Micah 6: 15)” (KJV)

“Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it. (Deuteronomy 28: 38)” (KJV)

The prophet dwells on the Exodus, and conquest, whilst the great figures of Moses and the patriarchs tower like peaks above.

### **Exodus**

“For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. (Micah 6: 4)” (KJV)

“According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things. (Micah 7: 15)” (KJV)

## **Conquest**

“O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD. (Micah 6: 5)” (KJV)

## **The great figures of Moses**

“For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.(Micah 6: 4)” (KJV)

## **The patriarchs**

“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: 20)” (KJV)

His is familiar also with later epic poetry, and modern history is enlisted in his service.

## **Epic poetry**

“And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. (Micah 1: 4)” (KJV)

“The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel. (Judges 5: 5)” (KJV)

“And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.(Judges 1: 10)” (KJV)

“Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. (2 Samuel 1: 20)” (KJV)

## **Modern history and service**

“Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. (Micah 7: 10)” (KJV)

“And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. (2 Kings 9: 33)” (KJV)

Micah had a pointed message for each of the villages in his own location.

“Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust. Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel; he shall receive of you his standing. For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem. O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee. Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-gath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel. Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel. Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee. (Micah 1: 10-16)” (KJV)

His pillories of social injustices are brilliant and destructive.

“Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil. (Micah 2: 1-3)” (KJV)

“And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment? Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. (Micah 3: 1-4)” (KJV)

“Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in

making thee desolate because of thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. (Micah 6: 10-15)” (KJV)

“Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. (Micah 7: 1-4)” (KJV)

He is equally at home in country and city. **He refers to mountain torrents:**

“And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. (Micah 1: 4)” (KJV)

#### **To the flocks:**

“I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. (Micah 2: 12)” (KJV)

#### **To nightfall:**

“Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Micah 3: 6)” (KJV)

#### **The threshing floor:**

“Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. (Micah 4: 13) (KJV)

### **To dew and showers:**

“And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. (Micah 5: 7)” (KJV)

### **To the everlasting hills:**

“Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. ( Micah 6: 1-2)” (KJV)

### **To the serpent of the dust:**

“They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee. Micah 7: 17)” (KJV)

### **The idol markets:**

“And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot. (Micah 1: 7)” (KJV)

### **The schemes of big business:**

“Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. (Micah 2: 1) (KJV)

### **The callousness of the nobility:**

“Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. (Micah 3: 3)” (KJV)

### **Jerusalem's citadels:**

“And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. (Micah 4: 8)” (KJV)

### **The chariots:**

“And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots. (Micah 5: 10)” (KJV)

### **The merchants deceit:**

“Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? (Micah 6: 11)” (KJV)

### **The disruption of family life:**

“For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. (Micah 7: 6)” (KJV)

The prophet’s message seems to have been reiterated all over the country: “hear ye people” (Micah 1: 2, comparing with Jeremiah 26: 18):

“Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountains of the house as the high places of a forest. (Jeremiah 26: 18)” (KJV)

And, to all people of Judah (see again Micah 2: 12; 5: 2; 6: 1-2; 7: 11-12 and 14).

## **Outline**

<b>Chapters 1 - 3</b>	General prediction of judgment
<b>Chapters 4 - 5</b>	The coming messianic Kingdom
<b>Chapters 6 - 7</b>	The Lord’s controversy with His people and final mercy

## **In detail**

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Judgment on Samaria and Judah</b>
Verse 1	Introduction
Verses 2 - 7	Judgment on Samaria
Verses 8 - 16	Lamentation over Samaria and Judah
<b>Chapters 2 - 3</b>	<b>Judgment on various classes</b>
Chapter 2: 1-11	The leaders of Samaria and Jerusalem misled

Chapter 2: 12-13	Mercy on a remnant
Chapter 3: 1-12	Denunciation of various classes
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Establishment of Messiah's Kingdom.</b>
Verses 1 - 5	Character of the Kingdom
Verses 6 - 13	Establishment of the Kingdom
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>The first and second advents of the Messiah</b>
Verse 1	Prospect and retrospect
Verse 2	His first advent and rejection
Verse 3	Interval between the advents
Verses 4 - 6	The second advent
Verses 7 - 15	The blessed remnant and the Kingdom
<b>Chapters 6 - 7</b>	<b>Final controversy and mercy</b>
Chapter 6: 1 – 7: 6	The people's ingratitude and sin
Chapter 7: 7 - 20	Confession, petition and thanksgiving

### **Micah's vision of the "End of Days":**

In Isaiah chapter 4, we find Isaiah's vision of the "End of Days":

"And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach. In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain. (Isaiah Chapter 4)" (KJV)

Micah repeats almost word by word, that which found in Isaiah. It is unlikely that the two prophets made such a similar statement, unless given by God through inspiration. It just shows how important the "End of Days" are. However, there are biblical theologians thinking that Micah may have repeated the words of Isaiah, or interpolated in his text by a later editor. If there was an interpolation, it may show that the texts of the books of the prophets did not reach us intact from their original source, but underwent various stages of editing. Taking as example, the scroll of Isaiah that was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls around 1948. On the one hand, it is amazing that this version of

Isaiah found at the Nil Valley near Nag Hammadi, Egypt, is nearly identical to the one we are using today as canonical book of the Old and New Testament. On the other hand, there are a few verses in this scroll which are different from the ones we know.

Perhaps better than anyone else in the Old Testament, Micah was able in chapter 6: 8 to sum up in three words what God expects of Israel and of humankind: “Justice, Mercy and Humility.”

“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)” (KJV)

Here we have the entire essence of the prophetic teachings, until the “End of Days.” According to Judaism and Christianity, God’s two main attributes in dealing with humankind are justice and mercy. It is in office on every person to do justice, which is an unconditional action one must never deviate from. For example, giving to the poor is an act of justice, rather than mercy or charity. It must be done regularly, rather than occasionally, when one feels moved to do it. In Hebrew giving to the poor is called ‘*tzedakah*’, a word derived from ‘*tzedek*’, or justice. This is different from the concept of charity, which is derived from the Latin ‘*caritas*’, meaning love and affection. Next to doing justice comes lovingkindness, or mercy. When one is imbued with the feeling of what Micah calls ‘*hesed*’ (mercy), but also meaning kindness, grace, charity and so on, one is compelled to do justice. (Refer to “Key Word Study Bible” (Hebrew-Greek) (KJV), AMG Publishers). In legal terms, justice is the letter of the law, while mercy is the spirit of the law. The two matches together to create the harmony necessary for the well-being of the individual as well as the society. Finally, “walking humbly with thy God” means being aware at all times that there is a higher authority one is always accountable to. One must never play God. Rather, one must always remind oneself that human power and human judgment are limited, and must always be used with discretion.

“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)” (KJV)

The Book of Micah ends with a beautiful prayer of faith, in which the prophet asks God to have mercy on his people, and restore them to their former

prosperity and glory. As in the rest of the book, which consists of prophetic statements without particular sequence or order, it is not quite clear what the prophet has in mind, or whether this text is indeed Micah's own words rather than a later insertion. However, we attempt to put it into an historical context. It is quite possible that Micah pronounced these words soon after the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Judah is now alone (the prophet alluding to "God's flock that dwells alone"), and the provinces of Bashan and Gilead are lost. The prophet reminds Israel's enemies that the ultimate power is in the hands of God, and there is nothing they can do to defy it.

May God in His great love and grace, drive us from these studies into a closer study of the great library of God so full of truth, that grips the conscience now just as it did in ancient times; and may we, learning what the Word of God says, pass infinitely beyond that into the doing of what it says, that we may show His praise not only with our lips, but in our lives.

## **Meditation to conclude the study of the prophetic book Micah.**

### **"He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord. (Micah 5: 4)" (KJV)**

Christ's reign in his church is that of a shepherd king. He has supremacy, but it is the superiority of a wise and tender shepherd over his needy and loving flock; he commands and receives obedience, but it is the willing obedience of the well cared for sheep, rendered joyfully to their beloved shepherd, whose voice they know so well. He rules by the force of love and the energy of goodness.

His reign is practical in its character. It is said, 'He shall stand and feed.' The great head of the church is actively engaged in providing for his people. He does not sit down upon the throne in empty state, or hold a sceptre without wielding it in government. No, he stands and feeds. The expression 'feed,' in the original, is like an analogous one in the Greek, which means 'to shepherdise,' to do everything expected of a shepherd: to guide, to watch, to preserve, to restore, to tend, as well as to feed.

His reign is continual in its duration. It is said, 'he shall stand and feed'; not 'He shall feed now and then, and leave his position'; not, 'He shall one day grant a revival, and then next day leave his church to barrenness.' His eyes never slumber, and his hands never rest; his heart never ceases to beat with love, and his shoulders are never weary of carrying his people's burdens.

His reign is effectually powerful in its action; ‘He shall feed in the strength of Jehovah.’ Wherever Christ is, there is God; and whatever Christ does is the act of the Most High. Oh! it is a joyful truth to consider that he who stands today representing the interests of his people is very God of very God, to whom every knee shall bow. Happy are we who belong to such a shepherd, whose humanity communes with us, and whose divinity protects us. Let us worship and bow down before him as the people of his pasture.

### **Examination questions:**

1. Compare the character and work of Elijah, Isaiah and Micah.
2. Note the word ‘therefore’ and where possible, express in your own words the connections of thought.
3. List the main features of the national and international situation.
4. Give an inside description from this prophesy of the city life of the period, particularly that of Jerusalem.
5. Distinguish the fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecies of this book.
6. Translate Micah 6: 6-9 as far as you can into a letter of Christian spiritual advice.

## **Nahum**

This prophet denounces the certain and approaching destruction of the Assyrian empire, particularly of Nineveh, which is described very accurately. Together with this is consolation for his countrymen, encouraging them to trust in God.

Nothing is known of the prophet than is declared in the title itself. However, he was a native of Elkosh, in spite that this town cannot be located with certainty. Some place it is Assyria, and defend this by traditions, and by his evident acquaintance with local terms as Huzzab.

“And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts. (Nahum 2: 7)” (KJV)

Some place in Palestine, and quote his references to Lebanon, Carmel and Bashan. The location is uncertain, and obviously unimportant as to now. The date must have been at any rate after the fall of Thebes, B.C.E.:

“Art thou better than populous No-Amon, that was situated among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? (Nahum 3: 8)” (KJV)

“No-Amon” refers to Thebes. This is before the fall of Nineveh, B.C.E. 606. This is sufficiently definite, and there is practical unanimity.

Nahum employs beautiful poetic language, and does not concern himself with either the moral issues or the ritual issues of the people of Judah. Instead, his entire book is devoted to a prophecy about Assyria and its capital, Nineveh. Assyria at the time was Israel’s archenemy, the destroyer of the Northern Kingdom. Its fall in the hands of the Babylonians is a major event for Judah and for the rest of the region, and Nahum launches a frontal attack on the evil of Assyria which brings upon it the vengeance of God.

After his initial statement about Assyria, Nahum goes on to say:

“Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off. (Nahum 1: 15)” (KJV)

The destroyer of Israel will not come back to destroy Judah. However, less than thirty years later, the destroyer of Assyria, namely, Babylonia, will come and destroy Judah. Nahum seems to be unaware of this, as he joyously lets Judah know it is safe. This would disqualify him as a true prophet of the God of Israel. How do we really work our way through this problem? Biblical commentators and scholars have suggested a variety of answers, but none of which seems to be satisfactory. Nahum remains a mystery among the prophets of the Bible. One can only wonder if his colleagues, prophets like Isaiah or Jeremiah, are comfortable having him in their august company.

## Outline

<b>Chapter 1</b>	The verdict of vengeance
<b>Chapter 2</b>	The vision of vengeance
<b>Chapter 3</b>	The vindication of vengeance

## In detail

<b>Chapter 1: 1-15</b>	<b>The Destruction of Nineveh is decreed</b>
Chapter 1: 1-8	The general principles of Divine Judgment
Chapter 1: 1-2	God’s Vengeance in Judgment
Chapter 1: 3-8	God’s Power in Judgment
Chapter 1: 9-15	The destruction of Nineveh and deliverance of Judah
<b>Chapter 2: 1-13</b>	<b>The Destruction of Nineveh is described</b>
Chapter 2: 1-2	The call to battle

Chapter 2: 3-13	The destruction of Nineveh
<b>Chapter 3: 1-19</b>	<b>The destruction of Nineveh is earned</b>
Chapter 3: 1-11	The reason for the destruction of Nineveh
Chapter 3: 1-7	Nineveh's great ungodliness
Chapter 3: 8-11	Comparison of Nineveh with No Amon
Chapter 3: 12-19	The destruction of Nineveh is inevitable
Chapter 3: 12-15	Nineveh's strongholds are weak
Chapter 3: 16-19	Nineveh's leaders are weak

Nahum's declaration of God's approaching judgment also carries a call for holy living and faithful proclamation by God's Covenant People. Our work is to carry the Gospel's message of salvation to those who are surely lost unless they turn to God in repentance and faith.

### **Examination questions:**

Compare the prophecies, given in this order, and relating to Assyria, in Isaiah 10: 24 to 34; Jonah, Nahum, and Zephaniah 2: 13.

## **Habakkuk**

The subject of this prophecy is the destruction of Judea and Jerusalem for the sins of the people, and the consolation of the faithful under national calamities.

Of Habakkuk, dealing with the problems of faith, nothing more is known than his name here declared, but maybe he was a Levite. "Might is Right and the Faith of the Righteous," is the theme of the book.

**"The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. (Habakkuk 3: 19)" (KJV)**

Habakkuk prophesied at the time of the rise of the Chaldeans, or the Babylonian Empire, following the fall of Assyria. While the prophet Nahum rejoices in the fall of Assyria, Israel's archenemy, Habakkuk is shaken by the rise of Babylonia, another evil empire poised to destroy every nation in its path. Therefore, Habakkuk resembles Nahum in that both are basically "one issue" prophets. Neither one goes into the moral and ritual issues that deeply concern other prophets, but instead concentrate on one particular issue of their time. Habakkuk also confronted the issue of the rise of another evil empire in a new way. He engages God in a dialogue, in which God responds to the prophet's questions. Habakkuk starts out by questioning God's justice. Here we recall

Jeremiah's question to God about the same issue, one of the main issues not only in the Old Testament, but also in all cultures and religions throughout the world. God, instead of giving a direct answer, tells Habakkuk about the rise of the Chaldeans, "the bitter and the swift nation", who will devastate many nations.

There is no very serious discrepancy in the opinions concerning the dates of his prophesying. Internal evidence brings it as we already know into relation with the Chaldeans invasion, so that the range is 638-586 B.C.E. The Chaldeans invasion was a punishment for Manasseh's sin, and yet did not come until after the death of Josiah, in the reign of Johoiakim.

"And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did. (2 Kings 24: 2-3)" (KJV)

When Habakkuk delivered his message, the condition of things calling for reformation still existed.

"O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth. (Habakkuk 1: 2-4)" (KJV)

The probability is therefore that he prophesied during the closing years of Manasseh or during the reign of Amon or earlier than Zephaniah in the days of Josiah. If he prophesied later than Zephaniah he ignored the reform of Josiah. The attempts of modern critics to place the prophecy later is based upon the assumption that at the earlier date nothing was known of the Chaldeans so exact as was the description of the prophet.

### **Might is Right**

Habakkuk changes from a general observation about good unrewarded and evil unpunished, to a specific historical phenomenon, which makes him the only prophet who raises this question: "Why does God use evil empires to punish what the prophet perceives to be not only sinful nations, including Israel and Judah, but the innocent as well? It has enormous implications regarding

theodicy, that is, whether indeed there is divine justice. Were prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel right? Were Israel and Judah so sinful that they deserved to be destroyed? What Habakkuk is saying, is that generation after generation, since time immemorial, there always seems to be one evil empire after another that causes great suffering and destroys many innocent lives. In the twentieth century we remember, besides Nazism in Germany, many other evil regimes in Russia, Spain, Italy, Japan, to quote a few as there are many others, today Al Qaeda and the Taliban, who murdered many millions of innocent people. Is this really all part of the divine plan?

Habakkuk does not seem to have a good answer for this question. In fact, his answer seems to boil down to three Hebrew words, which translate as follows:

“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. (Habakkuk 2: 4)” (KJV)

### **The Just shall live by his faith**

In the midst of all the evil in the world, one can achieve a state of righteousness, and find the true meaning of life in this state of grace. Faith distinguishes all whom God honours from first to last, not the law but faith. The source of all blessing for sinful man is in the grace of God working by His Son and in the Holy Spirit. It is by faith that we receive the blessing; and faith is never without repentance to God as its accompaniment, never without love as its fruit, with works and ways suitable and inseparable in God’s care. It is of God’s will, but through faith, that we were begotten by the word; it is of faith that we have been justified; it is by faith that we have had and have access into this grace, the true grace of God, wherein we stand; it is through faith that we are all sons of God, as through faith we received the promise of the Spirit; by grace have we been saved through faith, as the believer only has eternal life in the Son of God, and boasts in hope of the glory of God.

However, Habakkuk struggled with his faith and found more questions than answers, but concludes by saying:

“Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. (Habakkuk 3: 18-19)” (KJV)

Habakkuk is a man of faith asking questions and receiving answers. When he tried living in a day, he wailed, “O God, you are doing nothing!” However, when he began to breathe the subconsciousness of eternity and touched the

infinitude of divinity, then he said: “God is doing everything, and if I have any one fear it is lest his wrath which is to overwhelm it too terrible. O Lord, remember mercy.”

The problems of faith must be submitted to God for His answer; and whenever a soul does that, there will come such revelations as shall create a song of triumph even while the heart abides in the presence of a present sadness.

## Outline

<b>Chapter 1</b>	Judah’s judgment through the Chaldeans announced
<b>Chapter 2</b>	Ultimate judgment upon the Chaldeans predicted
<b>Chapter 3</b>	The prophet’s vision of the coming king

## In detail

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Judah’s judgment by the Chaldeans</b>
Verses 1 - 4	Problem: why the Lord had not judged Judah’s sin
Verses 5 - 11	The divine solution
Verses 12 - 17	Problem: why the wicked Chaldeans were used to punish Judah
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>The Lord’s solution: judgment of the Chaldeans</b>
Verses 1 - 5	A righteous remnant to be preserved
Verses 6 - 19	The Chaldeans themselves shall be punished
Verse 20	The sovereign Lord is ruling
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Vision of the Lord’s coming and kingdom</b>
Verses 1 - 2	The prophet’s prayer
Verses 3 - 15	The coming of the Lord as judge and warrior
Verses 16 - 19	The effect of the theodicy on the prophet

Certain passages stand out above the rest:

“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. (Habakkuk 2: 4)” (KJV)

“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)” (KJV)

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. (Hebrews 10: 38)” (KJV)

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2: 3)” (KJV)

“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. (Hebrews 10: 37)” (KJV)

Habakkuk chapter 3, is a wonderful Psalm of faith in the majesty of God. Only a truly great prophet could write words which have proved themselves such an inspiration to all ages.

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. (Habakkuk 3: 17 – 19)” (KJV)

### **Examination questions:**

1. Study in connection with Habakkuk 2: 4 and 3: 17-19, the New Testament references given above and the instances of faith in Hebrews 11.
2. Observe the triumphant spirit of faith in God alone which is found in Habakkuk 3: 17-19, and compare it with the similar passages in Deuteronomy 33: Psalms 18 and 27; and, in the New Testament.

## **ZEPHANIAH**

Zephaniah excites to repentance, foretells the destruction of the enemies of the Jews, and comforts the pious among them with promises of future blessings, the restoration of their nation, and the prosperity of God’s Assembly, the Church, in the latter days.

Zephaniah, the severity and goodness of God, or the Day of the Almighty, is a book consisting of three chapters. It deals with the vision of the Day of God. Zephaniah prophesies in the time of King Josiah, before the righteous king performed the great reform. Jerusalem is overwhelmed with the pagan cults introduced by King Manasseh, suffering from moral decline. This is the time following the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and prior to the fall of Judah. Zephaniah, like his predecessors, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, and like his

younger contemporary Jeremiah, realises that the Kingdom of Judah is facing cataclysmic events. He invokes the common vision of the literary prophets, as to the “Day of God”, a day of judgment that must put an end to paganism, followed by a rebirth of the remnant of Israel.

So, this prophecy is really dated as having come to Zephaniah in the reign of Josiah, reigning for thirty-one years (638-608 B.C.E.) During what period of his reign did Zephaniah prophesy? That is the general difficulty. Josiah began his reign when he was eight years old.

In 630, he began to look for God, at sixteen years old and eighth years of reign. In 626, he began to purge Jerusalem; twenty years old, and twelfth years of reign. In 620, he began to repair the temple, found the Book and celebrated the Passover; he was now twenty-six years old, in his eighteenth year of reign. In 608, he died, at thirty-eight years old, in his thirtieth of reign.

It is most probable that Zephaniah descended from King Hezekiah. He was the fourth generation from Hezekiah, while Josiah was third in direct descending from Hezekiah. Hezekiah in all probability would be if such no older than Josiah, maybe younger. Therefore, his prophesying would necessarily have come not later than the reformation period.

Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old and reigned twenty-nine years.

“Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. (2 Chroniccles 29: 1)” (KJV)

Mannaseh began to reign when he was twelve years old and reigned fifty-five years.

“Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. (2 Chronicles 33: 1-3)” (KJV)

Amon began to reign when he was twenty-two years old and reigned two years.

“Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. ((2 Chronicles 33: 21)” (KJV)

Josiah began to reign when he was eight years old.

Manasseh was 45 years old when Amon was born; and, Amon was sixteen years old when Josiah was born. Therefore, there was sixty-one years between the birth of Manasseh and Josiah.

In Zechariah’s genealogy, this period was covered by the generations of Hezekiah, Amariah, Gedaliah, Cushi, and Zephaniah. The prophet must therefore have been a young man when the word of the Lord came to him during Josiah’s reformation or about 626-630 B.C.E.

“I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD. I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests; And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham. (Zephaniah 1: 2-5)” (KJV)

In his prophecy, Zephaniah carries the vision of the Day of the Lord to its final extreme. It is, in effect, a reversal of the story of creation in the first chapter of Genesis. Here, the Day of the Lord is here the Day of Wrath. The prophet spares no one. The judgment is global, and it encompasses the idolatrous nations as well as Israel and Judah. However, like all the other prophets, Zephaniah predicts a restoration of the remnant of Israel:

“Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. (Zephaniah 3: 14-15)” (KJV)

“At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD. (Zephaniah 3: 20)” (KJV)

## Outline

- |                          |                                   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Chapter 1: 1 -18</b>  | Judah’s coming doom               |
| <b>Chapter 2: 1 - 38</b> | Judgment upon surrounding nations |

## **Chapter 3: 9 - 20**      Israel in kingdom blessing

### **In detail**

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Judah's doom and the Day of the Lord</b>
Verses 1 - 3	Judgment of the whole earth
Verses 4 - 13	Judgment of Judah and Jerusalem
Verses 14 - 18	The Day of the Lord
<b>Chapters 2: 1 – 3: 8</b>	<b>The judgment of the nations</b>
Verses 2: 1 - 3	The call to repentance
Verses 4 - 7	Judgment on the Philistines
Verses 8 - 10	Judgment on Moah and Ammon
Verses 11 - 15	Judgment on other nations
Chapter 3: 1- 8	Judgment upon Jerusalem
<b>Chapter 3: 1 - 8</b>	<b>Israel in kingdom blessing</b>
Verses 9 - 13	Salvation and deliverance in the kingdom
Verses 14 - 20	Praise in the kingdom

The day of the Lord is clearly the day of wrath and judgment. In its limited way, it has taken place more than once. In its ultimate manifestation, it will take place in what Isaiah called “the end of time.” And, that is, the end of life as we have known it for thousands of years, and the beginning of a whole new stage of human existence, completely different from the cumulative experience of the human race.

In the Jewish year cycle, a day of judgment occurs once a year on the “Day of Atonement.” In Jewish history, the destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple was a day of judgment, which was followed by the return from Babylonia and the rebuilding of the Temple. One could argue that the destruction of the Second Temple was a repetition of the Day of the Lord announced by the prophets, and that the return of the Jews to their land in our time is, in the words used today of the new liturgy of Israel, the “Beginning of our redemption.”

Important, in both Judaism and Christianity, the belief exists in the eventual day of judgment that will usher a new world. The prophets are the ones who gave rise to this belief, which even during biblical times and thereafter has undergone many transformations.

God will save, he will be Jesus. Before the glorious times foretold, believers will be sorrowful, and objects of reproach. However, the Lord will save the weakest

believer, and cause true Christians to be greatly honoured where they have been treated with contempt. One act of mercy and grace shall serve, both to gather Israel out of their dispersions and to lead them to their own land. Then, will God's Israel be made a name and a praise for eternity.

The events alone can fully answer the language of this prophecy. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but they may rejoice in God's love. Our hearts should honour the Lord, and rejoice in Him, when we hear such words of condescension and grace. If now kept from His ordinances, it is our trial and grief; but in due time we shall be gathered into His heavenly temple and abode. The glory and happiness of the believer will be perfect, unmoveable and eternal, when he is freed from earthly pain, and brought to heavenly bliss.

### Examination questions:

1. "The day of the Lord is at hand" (Isaiah 13: 6; Joel 1: 15; Zephaniah 1: 7; Matthew 3: 2; 2 Thessalonians 2: 2; Revelation 1: 3). Note how this refrain runs through the Bible and ponder on its meaning.
2. Compare the prophecies of Zephaniah and Malachi in respect of their combination of warning with promises of blessing.



# The Post-exilic Period

## Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

<b>Palestine</b>	<b>Persian Empire</b>	<b>Greece</b>
	549 – Cyrus the Great united Persia and Media	
538 – Edict of Cyrus	546 – Lydia conquered	
536 – Jews return	539 – Crown Prince Belshazzar ruled Babylon	
536 – 534 Altar laid Economic and Spiritual poverty	530-522 Cambyses	
	525 Egypt conquered	
520 Haggai, Zechariah	522 – 486 Darius I	
535 – 515 Temple rebuilt	490 Defeated by Greeks at Marathon	Greek ascendancy defeated Persians under Darius I
	486 465 Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) Esther's husband	485-425 Herodotus, Father of History
480 Zechariah's later ministry (Zechariah 9-14)	480 Defeated by Greeks at Thermopylae and Salamis	480 defeated Persians under Xerxes I
458 Ezra's return	465 – 424 Artaxerxes II	470-399 Socrates
445 Nehemiah rebuilt walls	424 – 423 Xerxes II	460-429 Golden Age of Pericles
435 Malachi	423 – 404 Darius II	
	404 – 358 Artaxerxes II	428 – 348 Plato
	358- 338 Artaxerxes III	384 – 322 Aristotle
	338 – 336 Arses	
	336 – 331 Darius III	336-323 Rise of Alexander
Date (B.C.E.)	336-323 Kingdom fell to Alexander	

## Haggai

After the return from captivity, Haggai was sent to encourage the people to rebuild the temple, and to approve their neglect. To encourage their undertaking, the people are assured that the glory of the second temple shall far exceed that of the first, by the appearing therein of Christ, the desire of all nations.

Haggai, more than a prophet, along with his contemporary, the prophet Zechariah, is a spiritual leader who is fully dedicated to a specific mission, namely, encouraging the returned exiles in Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Haggai and Zechariah are able to prevail on the people to begin the work, which in four years results in the completion of the basic structure of the Temple.

“In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? (Haggai 1: 1-4)” (KJV)

Of Haggai's personal story nothing is known, but the dating of our prophesy is very exact. It is noticeable that for the first time a Gentile date is given and Israel counts its days by the reign of an outside king. Darius reigned from 521 B.C.E. to 486 B.C.E., so that Haggai's four messages fell within about four months in the years 520-519 B.C.E. He and Zechariah were contemporary and in part their prophesying alternating as follows:

Second year of Darius, 6<sup>th</sup> month, 1<sup>st</sup> day, Haggai's first message.  
Second year of Darius, 7<sup>th</sup> month, 21<sup>st</sup> day, Haggai's second message.  
Second year of Darius, 8<sup>th</sup> month, Zechariah's first message.  
Second year of Darius, 9<sup>th</sup> month, 24<sup>th</sup> day, Haggai's third message.  
Second year of Darius, 9<sup>th</sup> month, 24<sup>th</sup> day, Haggai's fourth message.  
Second year of Darius, 11<sup>th</sup> month, 24<sup>th</sup> day, Zechariah's second message.  
Fourth year of Darius, 9<sup>th</sup> month, 4<sup>th</sup> day, Zechariah's third message.

The last two giants of the era of the biblical prophets are Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Looking back on biblical prophecy, the first great prophet is Moses, as being known as the 'Father of the prophets.' Other giants are Elijah, Amos, and Isaiah. When Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed in the year 586 B.C.E., an era of some 700 years of great prophets comes to an end. The people of Judah are exiled to Babylonia, where they remain for about seventy years. When Cyrus the

Great of Persia defeats the Babylonians in 539 B.C.E., he allows the Jews to return to their land and take with them many of the vessels of the Holy Temple plundered by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia. A certain portion of the exiles goes back to Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

Back in their land, now a Persian province with a Persian-appointed Jewish governor named Zerubbabel, some new prophets emerge, who no longer are part of the great age of prophecy. Three of them, last books in the Old Testament, are known to us: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. In reality, the classical biblical period of the Old Testament has now ended. Gone is the kingdom, the great prophets, and Solomon's Temple. As the remnant of Israel attempts to restore a semblance of political and spiritual independence, it is clear that many things have changed. The Israelite community is now in transition as a theocracy, a province ruled by priests, rather than a monarchy. New ideas, new beliefs are being tested. Haggai is one of the new spiritual leaders who seek to prepare the people for the new age.

As we have just read, for the understanding of the conditions which existed in Haggai's day, we have to go back a little in the history of Israel; let us summarise.

### **The tabulation of events:**

536 B.C.E.: Return from Babylon under Zerubbabel:

“And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required. (Ezra 3: 1-4)” (KJV)

1. Altar built.
2. Sacrifices offered.
3. Feast of Tabernacles.

535 B.C.E.: Foundations of the Temple laid. Opposition of Samaritans and the building stopped.

520 – 519 B.C.E. Prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. They begin to rebuild.  
515 B.C.E. The Temple completed.

We can imagine something of the state of things if we think of a community in the present day where there is no place of worship, but where the foundations of a house of God have been laid and the people have left off building and have turned to make themselves comfortable with the very materials which they should have put in the house of God.

## Outline

<b>Chapter 1:1 - 15</b>	Call to rebuild the Temple
<b>Chapter 2: 1 - 19</b>	Prophecy of the millennial Temple
<b>Chapter 2: 20 - 23</b>	Prophecy of the destruction of gentile world power

## In detail

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Call to rebuild the Temple</b>
Verses 1 - 6	Call to face sinful neglect
Verses 7 - 11	Declaration of the Lord's judgment
Verses 12 - 15	The people's response
<b>Chapter 2: 1 - 19</b>	<b>Prophecy of the millennial Temple</b>
Verses 1 - 9	The prediction of the Temple
Verses 10 - 19	Promise of present blessing
<b>Chapter 2: 20 - 23</b>	<b>Destruction of Gentile world power.</b>
Verses 20 - 22	The shaking of the nations
Verse 23	The promised ruler

Haggai did use several arguments to get the people going on the major project of rebuilding the Temple. First, he points out to the poor harvests they have had since their return, and argues that without God dwelling in their midst they cannot prosper. Next, he evokes the greatness of the original Temple, and assures them that the new Temple will be even greater. He also predicts that God will punish the neighbouring nations, and as a result, much of their wealth will be used to beautify and enhance the new Temple. Finally, he shows that the sacrifices administered by the priest are not ritually acceptable, and only after the Temple is completed will Israel's sacrifices be acceptable to God.

Haggai's last prophecy refers to Zerubbabel, the Persian-appointed governor of Judah, who Haggai believes will be chosen by God as the ruler of his people, namely, the new king.

This does not happen. In fact, Haggai's prophecies are somewhat off the mark so far as the Old Testament history is concerned. However, the intent is clear, and the results are positive. In other words, the returned exiles, some of whom have now been back for several years, do not have the courage and the determination to undertake the great task of rebuilding the Temple. Haggai is able to inspire them to overcome their fear and their misgivings and get the work done. So, the mission is accomplished.

In the last verses of Chapter 2: 20-23, is foretold the establishment and continuance of the kingdom of Christ; by union with whom his people are sealed with the Holy Spirit sealed with his image, so distinguished from all others. Here, also is foretold the changes, even to that time when the kingdom of Christ shall overthrow and occupy the place of all the empires which opposed his cause. The promise has special reference to Christ, who descended from Zerubbabel in a direct line, and is the unique builder of the Gospel Temple. Our Lord Jesus is the Signet on God's right hand, for all power is given to Him, and derived from Him. By Him, and in Him, all the promises of God are 'yes', and 'amen.' Whatever changes take place on earth, all will contribute to comfort, honour, and true happiness of his people saved by grace.

“And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts. (Haggai 2: 20-23)” (KJV)

### **Examination questions:**

1. How far is the prosperity of God's creatures dependent on the degree to which they honour Him? See Matthew 6: 33; Acts 3: 6; and Philipians 4: 11 ff.
2. What has this book to teach about the proportion of time and money which the Christian should devote to the work of the kingdom, e.g. to churches, missionary and charitable work, compared with what is devoted to personal comforts and luxuries? (See 2 Corinthians 9: 9-15)
3. Compare Haggai 2: 6, 7, 22, 23 with Hebrews 12: 26. Created things and earthly kingdoms have a value. What place should they take in the life of a Christian?

# Zechariah

The book of Zechariah is unique in its messianic emphasis among the Minor Prophets, and in its unfolding of events connected with the first and second advents of Christ. It has been called the best messianic, and apocalyptic and eschatological of all writings of the Old Testament.

Along with Haggai, Zechariah advocates the rebuilding of the Temple after the return from the Babylonian Exile. However, while Haggai is pragmatic and programmatic, Zechariah is a visionary, or a mystic, who keeps having visions, which express his ideas about the rebuilding of the Temple, the redemption of Judah and Jerusalem, the installation of Joshua, the high priest, and the rededication of the people to God and to God's law of justice and mercy. While Haggai deals directly with the business of the rebuilding, Zechariah provides inspiration and spiritual guidance.

This prophesy is suitable to all, as the scope is to reprove for sin, and threaten God's judgments against the impenitent and to encourage those that feared God, with assurances of the mercy God had in store for His Church, and especially of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up His Kingdom in the world.

Zechariah was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo.

“In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. (Zechariah 1: 1-2)” (KJV)  
In the book of Ezra he is called the son of Iddo;

“Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. (Ezra 1: 1)” (KJV)

“And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. (Ezra 6: 14)” (KJV)

From Nehemiah we learn that Iddo was a priest and from Nehemiah that Zechariah was also a priest.

“Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah (Nehemiah 12: 4)” (KJV)

And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; Of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; Of Melicu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; Of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; Of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam. (Nehemiah 12: 12, 16)” (KJV)

If these refer to the same persons, then our prophet was also a priest. The first part of the book is carefully dated, and the first prophetic utterances of Zechariah are closely related to those of Haggai. The latter part of the book of Zechariah, chapters 9 to 14 are undated, and is of far wider application.

Zechariah’s visions in chapters 1 to 8, and his symbolic acts, remind us of similar visions and acts seen and performed by the prophet Ezekiel, who precedes Zechariah. With Ezekiel we have the beginning of mysticism, eschatology, and apocalyptic visions, which seem to result from the time of the fall of Judah and later the return to some of the exiles during the time of Zechariah. It is quite natural for people living in times of crisis to look for another form of reality beyond the here and the now. Both, Haggai and Zechariah, who yearned for full redemption for their people after the loss of the monarchy, are having God-given visions of a better future.

In fact, it was an all important time in the history of Israel. The Messiah was promised to come through the chosen nation and that nation was practically dead, and was being buried in its captivity. How far this is true is evident by the small remnant who had interest and enthusiasm enough to return. Through Divine intervention, Cyrus issued the proclamation and the return of this remnant was like a resurrection of the nation from the death. In this direction was made possible the coming of the Messiah.

Zechariah’s visions are not easy to explain. In the first vision, an angel of God takes the prophet at night to a deep valley where he shows him a man riding a red horse and stopping near myrtle trees., followed by red, sorrel, and white horses. The angel tells the prophet he will explain to him the meaning of all this. Then the equestrian says, explaining that the horses are messengers of God, searching the earth. They found out that all is peaceful on earth. Then, the angel asks God why, seventy years after the destruction of Jerusalem, God has not yet taken pity on Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. God replies that now has come the time to rebuild the Temple and for God to return to Jerusalem.

It is to be assumed, that Zechariah communicates this vision to the returned exiles in Jerusalem, and inspires them to rebuild the Temple. The details of Zechariah’s vision must be interpreted two ways, for his time, and for later, the

Christ Era, our very “now.” Prophecy cannot be separated from history. It reflects the far-reaching perspective of the Holy Scripture. An accurate biblical world-view requires an understanding of God’s view of the history of the world, and how it is divinely influenced. We need to recognise that God intervenes in the affairs of men to fulfil His divine plan. However, it is just as important that we understand His perspectives, placing prophecy in its proper context. A prophet is one through whom God speaks, one appointed to reveal the will of God to His people. One of the greatest of these prophets was God’s own Son, Jesus Christ:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. (Hebrews 1: 1-2)” (KJV)

People seldom think of Jesus Christ as a prophet, but a prophet He was:

“Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. (Luke 13: 33)” (KJV)

“And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. (Luke 24: 19)” (KJV)

“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. (John 6: 14)” (KJV)

Jesus’ message was the Gospel of the Kingdom of God:

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. (Mark 1: 14)” (KJV)

Coming back to Zechariah, after seeing the equestrian, he saw four horns that symbolise the enemies attacking Jerusalem. Then, he sees Stan rebuking Joshua, the high priest, while Joshua worn soiled garments, representing the sins of Israel. Then, he saw a seven-branch golden candlestick, representing the presence of God in the world. Then, he saw a flying scroll, representing punishment for stealing. Then, he saw scales with a woman, representing evil. Then he saw four chariots coming out of mountains of brass, representing the four corners of the earth. Once Zechariah is done with his visions, he reminds the people of the need to return to God, and prophesies regarding Jerusalem:

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. (Zechariah 8: 4-5)” (KJV)

The visions are the prophet’s way of inspiring the people to take heart. The ‘present’ may be grim. The Temple is still ruins. The returned exiles are few, all belonging to a temporary situation. There is a reality greater than the dreary sight of Jerusalem still in ruins. It appears in visions from God, which the prophet sees and reports to his people. Those who believe in his visions will be able to carry on and fulfil the divine promise. Prophecy is not merely a series of unrelated predictions randomly scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments. It always has a structure, and set on a firm foundation. To understand the foundation, we must realise the overall purpose of the Bible, its themes and the threads of its stories.

Satan, the deceiver, known to us as the devil, makes its appearance here for the first time. In earlier biblical stories, such as the story of Balaam and his she-ass in the Book of Numbers, the word ‘Satan’ appears in the sense of adversary, not the devil. In the Book of Job, Satan makes its debut as God’s evil messenger. In early Christian lore, and more so in the Middle Ages, Satan becomes a major figure, mostly in Christianity based on both Old and New Testament, but also among Muslims and obviously the Jews. The appearance of Satan here in Zechariah , may be the result of foreign influences picked up by Zechariah in Babylonia prior the returning to Jerusalem. An understanding of Satan’s influence yesterday, today and tomorrow is necessary if we are to understand prophecy, as the devil exerts a powerful influence over human affairs. Satan, the devil is a real personal being who opposes the Christian and seeks to make him ineffective in his Christian life. He is a formidable enemy of the Christian since he is intent on devouring Christians.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (I Peter 5: 8)” (KJV)

The Christian is called on to resist the devil.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4: 7)” (KJV)

This can be accomplished through putting on the armour for a spiritual battle.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of

the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6: 10-17)” (KJV)

Why does Zechariah proclaim:

Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, **Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.** Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. (Zachariah 4: 6-7)” (KJV)

Remember that the apostle John, in his vision concerning Satan’s part in end time events, heard a voice exclaiming:

“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. (Revelation 12: 12)” (KJV)

Satan’s intention embody no concern for the welfare of human being. He wants to use the factions of humanity for war, not peace. Satan knows Jesus Christ will soon return; he is fully aware that his control over humanity will soon end.

**“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. (Zechariah 4: 6)” (KJV)**

This is one of the most famous verses in the Old Testament. One should bear in mind that it was preceded by seven centuries of nearly constant wars, which began with the exodus in the desert, and ended with the fall of Jerusalem seventy years before the time of Zechariah.

The prophet is making a radical statement. Judah is too small and weak to carry on with wars. The time has come to realise that Jewish survival is predicated on the spirit, not on the letter or psychological force. In reality, for the next 24 centuries, with the exception of the Maccabean wars and the Bar Kokhba rebellion, Jews will rely on the “faith” rather than their sword to survive.

## Outline

### Part one

Chapter 1: 1-6	Introduction
Chapters 1: 7 – 6: 8	Eight night visions
Chapter 6: 9 - 15	Crowning the high priest
Chapters 7: 1 – 8: 23	Question of facts

### Part Two – Oracle 1

Chapters 9: 1 – 11: 17	Messianic first advent and rejection
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### Oracle 2

Chapters 12: 1 – 14:	Messiah's second advent and acceptance.
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## Important Messianic Predictions in Zechariah:

<b>Chapter 3: 8</b>	<b>“Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.”</b> (The Lord's Servant, the Branch)
<b>Chapter 6: 12</b>	<b>“And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.”</b> (The Man, the Branch)
<b>Chapter 6: 13</b>	<b>“Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”</b> (The King – Priest)
<b>Chapter 11: 4 - 11</b>	<b>“Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me. Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it assunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that</b>

	waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD. (Zechariah 11: 4-11) (the True Shepherd)
<b>Zechariah 11: 15-17; and, 13:7</b>	“And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.”
	“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” (The True Shepherd vs. the false shepherd, the Antichrist)
<b>Chapter 11: 12-13</b>	“And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.” (the betrayal of the Good Shepherd)
<b>Chapter 12: 10</b>	“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” (His crucifixion)
<b>Chapter 13: 7</b>	“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” (His sufferings)
<b>Chapter 14: 4</b>	“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.” (His Second Advent in Glory)

## **In detail**

<b>Chapter 1: 1-17</b>	<b>Vision of the man among the myrtles</b>
Verse 1	Foreword
Verses 2 - 6	The call to repentance
Verses 7 - 17	The man among the myrtle trees
<b>Chapter 1: 18-21</b>	<b>Vision of the four horns and four craftsmen</b>
Chapter 1: 18-21	Israel triumphant over her foes

## **Chapter 2**

Verses 1 - 3

Verses 4 - 13

## **Chapter 3**

Verses 1 - 3

Verses 4 - 5

Verses 6 - 7

Verses 8 - 10

## **Chapter 4**

Verses 1 - 5

Verses 6 - 10

Verses 11 - 14

## **Chapter 5**

Verses 1 - 4

Verses 5 - 11

## **Chapter 6: 1-8**

Verses 1 - 3

Verses 4 - 8

## **Chapter 6: 9-15**

Verses 9 - 11

Verses 12-13, and 15

Verse 14

## **Chapter 7**

Verses 1 - 3

Verses 4 - 7

Verses 8 - 14

## **Chapter 8**

Verses 1 - 8

Verses 9 - 17

Verses 18 - 23

## **Chapters 9: 1 – 10: 1**

### **Vision of the surveyor**

The measuring line

Promises proceeding from the vision

### **Vision of Joshua's cleansing (restoration of Israel as a high-priestly nation)**

Israel as defiled and condemned

Israel as pardoned and repositioned

Covenant of priesthood renewed with Joshua

Prediction of restored Israel under the figure of Messiah, the Branch

### **Vision of the golden lampstand (portraying Israel as the light of the world under Messiah King-Priest)**

Symbolism of the vision

Purpose of the vision

The prophet favoured with a full explanation

### **Visions of the flying scroll and the measuring basket**

The flying scroll

The measuring basket

### **Vision of the four chariots**

*It presents the judgment of the nations preparatory to Messiah's reign. The findings of the scouts in vision one (1) are now executed.*

The vision presented

The vision explained

### **Crowning the high priest**

*The eight visions have ended. An historical event follows: Joshua's coronation, for which the eight visions were preparatory.*

The historical event and the prophetic symbolism

Messianic import of the prophetic symbolism

Provision for a permanent memorial

### **The question of the fasts**

The raised question

The motive of selfishness exposed

Call to repentance proclaimed

### **When the fasts become joyful feasts**

Present partial restoration forerunner of an eventual full restoration of Israel.

Encouragement during the hardship of the present partial restoration

Prediction of full millennial restoration

### **Human world ruler vs. Divine Prince of Peace**

Chapter 9: 1 - 8	Sudden rise of Alexander the Great
Chapter 9: 9	First advent of Israel's humble King and Saviour
Chapters 9: 10 – 10: 1	Second advent of Israel's glorious king
<b>Chapters 10: 2 - 12</b>	<b>Divine Prince of Peace and Deliverer</b>
Verses 2 - 4	The second advent and the cure of the nation's deception
Verses 5 - 12	The second advent and the nation's triumph over its foes
<b>Chapter 11</b>	<b>Israel's rejection of the good shepherd</b>
Verses 1 - 3	Future devastation of the land
Verses 4-14	Prediction of the rejection of the good shepherd
Verses 15 - 17	Prediction of the acceptance of the bad shepherd
<b>Chapter 12</b>	<b>Israel's deliverance and national conversion</b>
Verses 1 - 9	Future siege of Jerusalem
Verses 10 - 14	Vision of the crucified Messiah and the result
<b>Chapter 13</b>	<b>Israel's national cleansing</b>
Verses 1 - 6	Prophecy of Israel's national cleansing
Verse 7	Provision for Israel's national conversion
Verses 8 - 9	Prelude to Israel's national conversion
Verse 9	The appropriation of the provisions for cleansing
<b>Chapter 14</b>	<b>Messiah's second advent in glory</b>
Verses 1 - 3	Last enemy siege against Jerusalem
Verses 4 - 7	Personal advent Messiah
Verses 8 - 21	Messianic kingdom established over Israel

The time will come when Christ will share His authority with all who become immortal children of God. He promises us, **“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. ( Revelation 21: 7)”** (KJV) This is the destiny God promises to everyone who surrenders his will to Him.

Some biblical scholars say that the chapters 9 through 14 of the book of Zechariah are not part of the original book. In the first eight chapters, we have an historical figure operating in a historical context. The last six chapters should, on the other hand, contain various unrelated subjects and terms that are not part of the style, the language, or the themes of the first eight chapters. They argue, “most likely, these last six chapters are pre-exilic text that found its way into this book by mistake.”

These arguments are vitiated by the following facts:

1. It is impossible from internal evidence to ascribe these chapters to any particular period. The critics themselves are almost equally divided

between pre-exilic date and one much later than Zechariah, but the prophecies are well adapted to Zechariah's own time.

2. The differences in style from the earlier chapters can be accounted for by the change of subject matter and by the lapse of years in the prophet's life. Even so, many links of comparison may be traced between the styles of the two sections. All fourteen chapters may well be the work of Zechariah.

Zechariah sees the calling of Israel in a world setting, and utters messianic prophecies of remarkable power and distinctness. Through the medium of visions and by direct appeal he preaches God's call to repentance from the sins which brought the judgment of Jehovah down on His chosen people; His promises of deliverance from the nations which oppress them; and the coming of their Messiah King, who will restore, sanctify and use them as His agent for the redemption of the Gentiles and the establishment in the last days of His kingdom upon the earth.

Zechariah is used by New Testament writers more than any other prophet, so clear and frequent are his predictions concerning Christ and His church, the Israel of faith. He depicts in detail the sufferings and glory of the Messiah in His acts of redemption, both at His first appearing and at His return to earth in the final day of the Lord.

### **Examination questions:**

1. Trace in detail the place Israel is to take among the nations.
2. How much of this applies to the spiritual Church of Christ and how much to the Jewish nation as such?
3. By means of a reference Bible, trace the echoes of this book in the Book of Revelation.
4. Collect all the messianic prophecies and the references to their fulfilment in the Gospels.

## **Malachi**

Malachi was the last prophet, and is supposed to have prophesied B.C.E. 420. He reproves the priests and the people for the evil practices into which they had fallen, and invites them to repentance and reformation with promises of blessings to be accorded at the coming of the Messiah. And, now that prophecy was to cease, he spoke clearly of the Messiah, so near at hand, and directs the people of God to keep I remembrance the law of Moses, while they were in expectation of the Gospel of Christ.

The end of the prophetic era with Malachi, meaning in Hebrew “my messenger.” It is quite possible that what we have here is an anonymous writer, not necessarily a prophet, as a number of biblical scholars would say. In fact, this last book of the second division of the Old Testament, or Prophets, consisting of three chapters, reads like a compendium of prophetic ideas, or a summary of the teachings of the prophets, rather than the utterance of one particular prophet. What we can gather from the text is that these words were written after the time of Haggai and Zechariah, when the Second Temple was already rebuilt, and life in the newly rebuilt city of Jerusalem began to normalise.

While believing Malachi to be the prophet’s actual name, it is significant anyway. In this connection, note the prophecy concerning John.

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to this temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 3: 1)” (KJV)

The connection of Malachi with Ezra and Nehemiah is evident, for they refer to the same conditions.

### **Nehemiah**

### **Malachi**

“Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites. (Nehemiah 13.29)” (KJV)

“In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish

“But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 2: 8)” (KJV) (*Polluted priesthood.*)

“Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts. And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth

women cause to sin. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives? (Nehemiah 13: 23-27)” (KJV)

“And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. ( Nehemiah 13: 10-12)” (KJV)

not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. (Malachi 2: 10-16)” (KJV) *(mixed marriages)*

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (Malachi 3: 10)” (KJV) *(failure to pay the tithes)*

Malachi begins with the cause and Nehemiah with the effect, and while Malachi is not mentioned by Ezra or Nehemiah, they deal with the same sins in the people. Probably, therefore, Malachi prophesied after Nehemiah’s time.

Malachi applies the prophetic teachings to his place and time as we have seen from the above. The returned exiles are striving to establish a renewed Jewish life in the small province of Judah. Not only the Temple, but also the social, ethical and religious structures have to be rebuilt. Malachi emphasises the need for strong Jewish families, based on respect for parents and elders.

“A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? (Malachi 1: 6)” (KJV)

“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. (Malachi 4: 6)” (KJV)

The community must band together to survive under the covenant of the ancestors. Husbands must remain loyal to their wives. As for charity and ritual observances, the tithing and the offerings must be faithfully followed. Social justice, however, must take precedence over everything else. When all of this is accomplished, the prophet envisions a time of full reconciliation between Israel and God.

“Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. (Malachi 3: 4)” (KJV)

In his concluding words, the prophet mentions the Day of the Lord, and introduces what becomes a post-biblical Jewish and Christian beliefs, namely, before the coming of that Day and of the messianic age, the prophet Elijah (John the Baptist) will come to announce those great events.

Malachi’s conclusion, which provides a proper ending to the books of the prophets, is believed to be a later addition.

In spite of the favour Malachi had shown to His chosen people, God’s name was despised and He was robbed of His dues by priests and people alike, who kept to the outward forms of religion prescribed in the law of Moses, but made light of the offerings and service of the Temple, and profaned the sanctities of the divinely ordained family life.

Malachi makes a call for sincerity in the service of God and purity of personal life, and foretells that God will raise up from among the Gentiles those who will “worship Him in spirit and in truth”.

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4: 21-24)” (KJV)

Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Malachi fittingly unites the whole divine revelation both Old and New Testament by recalling the chosen people to

obedience to the eternal law, given under the conduct of Moses, and proclaimed by the prophets, represented by Elijah, while pointing to the coming Messiah, who will both judge the people by the standards of His law, save and purify those who fear the Lord.

“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. (Malachi 4: 4-5)” (KJV)

The New Testament starts where the Old Testament ends. God’s messenger appears in the person of John the Baptist.

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to this temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 3: 1)” (KJV)

“As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. (Mark 1: 2)” (KJV)

“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways. (Luke 1: 76)” (KJV)

The true Light shines and brings healing to the world.

“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)” (KJV)

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8: 12)” (KJV)

“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9: 5)” (KJV)

On the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah are seen to testify to the fulfilment of the former dispensation, and that is on the Cross of Calvary.

“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you

Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. (Malachi 4: 4-5)” (KJV)

“And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9: 30-31)” (KJV)

## Outline

<b>Chapter 1: 1-5</b>	Introduction: the Lord’s love for Israel
<b>Chapters 1: 6 – 2: 9</b>	Oracle against the priests
<b>Chapters 2: 10 – 4: 3</b>	Oracles against Jewish laymen
<b>Chapter 4: 4- 6</b>	Concluding warning

## In detail

<b>Chapter 1: 1 - 5</b>	<b>The Lord’s love for Israel</b>
Verses 1 - 2	Declaration of that love
Verses 3 - 5	Contrast to Esau (Edomites)
<b>Chapters 1: 6 – 2: 16</b>	<b>Oracle against the priests and people</b>
Chapter 1: 6 - 14	The impenitence of the priests
Chapter 2: 1 - 9	Their impenitence to be punished
Chapter 2: 10 - 16	First oracle against the people
<b>Chapters 2: 17 – 4: 6</b>	<b>Prophecy of Messiah’s Advent</b>
Chapter 2: 17	The occasion of the prophecy
Chapter 3: 1 - 6	The prophecy itself
Chapter 3: 7 - 12	The people’s sin robbing God
Chapters 3: 13 – 4: 3	The people’s sin for criticising the Lord
Chapter 4: 4 - 6	Concluding admonition

## Religious functionaries of antiquity

All ancient cultures had a class of people who invoked the gods and made predictions. Israel society was no different. As we read through the books of the prophets, we come across many such people who spoke both in the name of the God of Israel and pagan gods. The biblical prophets, men of the only and one God refer to them most of the time as false prophets.

Prophets from Samuel to Malachi grew out of this universal tradition. The too spent much of their time predicting future event. However, this is not where

their strength laid. Whatever their predictions, they were always right about their sense of justice and morality. Their passion for justice was unsurpassed in all of human culture. “Justice, you shall pursue”, was their watchword. This conviction is never compromised. Micah putted in better than anyone else: God expects humanity to do justice, love, mercy, and walk humbly with God. These things, which seem all too obvious, always were and continue to be difficult to follow. The prophets believed that a world imbued with justice, mercy, and humility should be possible. They dedicated their lives promoting such a world, and their words will continue to inspire through Jesus Christ, our Prophet, our Saviour, our personal friend through yielding faith in Him, the Son of God. In Christ Jesus, and through faith in Him, will the nations work towards that goal.

What is the message of Malachi for us as Church today? “Behold, the day cometh.” We need an understanding of the fact that the Church’s true attitude was declared by the apostle Paul when he wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians, and spoke of them as those who had turned from idols to serve God and to wait for His Son. This is the threefold truth about the Church’s attitude and the attitude of every real believer in Jesus.

### **Examination questions:**

1. Study the various spheres of conduct in which human profession conflicts with the divine claims (‘...saith the Lord; Yet ye say ...’), and compare them with features of modern society both religious and secular.
2. Apply the teaching of Malachi on offerings to its fulfilment in the ‘living sacrifice’ of the Christian’s life. See Romans 12: 1-2.
3. Study the New Testament fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies in the book of Malachi. Malachi 3: 1; Matthew 11: 10, etc.

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