

*MINOR
PROPHETS
II*

Joel – Zephaniah

Dr. Brian J. Bailey

“Minor Prophets II: Joel - Zephaniah”

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Printed June 2006

Design of Front Cover:

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Printed by:

Zion Christian Publishers

P.O. Box 70

Waverly, New York 14892

Phone: 607-565-2801

Fax: 607-565-3329

www.zionfellowship.org

ISBN 1-59665-007-9

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Editorial team: Carla Borges, Mary Humphreys, David Kropf, Justin Kropf, Lois Kropf, and Caroline Tham.

We wish to extend our thanks to these dear ones for without their many hours of invaluable assistance, this book would not have been possible. We are truly grateful for their diligence, creativity, and excellence in the compilation of this book for the glory of God.

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Appendix

INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS

The Minor Prophets are composed of 12 books from Hosea to Malachi. This portion of the Word of God was named “The Minor Prophets” by Saint Augustine to differentiate it from another group of prophets called “The Major Prophets.” The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The difference between the Major and Minor Prophets is not the quality or importance, but rather the content. The Major Prophets are simply larger than the Minor Prophets.

These 12 books have been grouped in the following order by the Jews:

- 1. Pre-Exilic** - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, and Nahum
- 2. Just Prior to the Exile** - Habakkuk and Zephaniah
- 3. Post-Exilic** - Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, and Nahum dealt with the threat from Assyria. Habakkuk and Zephaniah dealt with the threat from Babylon.

Those who compiled the Holy Scriptures have arranged these 12 books so that those of the pre-exilic times come first—Hosea to Nahum. Then follow those of the Babylonian period—Habakkuk and Zephaniah. Lastly are the three

prophets of the post-exilic period—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. However, the chronological order is not strictly preserved within the groups. So here is an accepted list of the Minor Prophets and their approximate times of prophesying.

1. Obadiah prophesied during the reign of Jehoram, king of Judah, in the early 9th century B.C. – 848-841 B.C.

2. Joel prophesied possibly during the reign of Joash of Judah – 810-750 B.C.

3. Jonah prophesied during the early reign of Jeroboam II of Israel – 785-782 B.C.

4. Amos prophesied during the reigns of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, and Uzziah, king of Judah – 765-760 B.C.

5. Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—kings of Judah; and also during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel – 790-725 B.C.

6. Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah – 750-710 B.C.

7. Nahum prophesied during the second half of the reign of Hezekiah – 663-612 BC.

8. Habakkuk prophesied possibly during the last part of the reign of Manasseh and the first part of the reign of Josiah – 650-628 B.C.

9. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah – 628-623 B.C.

10. Haggai prophesied during the second year of Darius Hystaspes – 520 B.C.

11. Zechariah prophesied during the second year of Darius Hystaspes – 520 B.C.

12. Malachi prophesied during the reign of the Persian king Xerxes – 433-424 B.C.

* All dates are approximate.

MAP OF ISRAEL



THE BOOK OF JOEL

Introduction

Joel is generally believed to be the oldest of the Minor Prophets after Obadiah. It is thought that Joel prophesied during the early years of the reign of King Joash, between 835-796 B.C. or 810-750 B.C. This is something that we are not absolutely positive about because the book itself does not tell us when he prophesied, but 810-750 B.C. seems like the more probable date.

The book of Joel is a prophetic book. Therefore, we must not be close-minded when we consider this book, as certain verses are very clear-cut and have definite interpretations, while others are open to various applications.

The judgments in the book of Joel can have several interpretations. Some theologians believe that the plague of locusts was strictly literal. Others believe that the plague applies to the Babylonians, and others to the Assyrians. In addition, there are some who believe that the locusts can also be likened to the Church of the Last Days, which will be a great and mighty army.

We have to realise that the Holy Spirit can quicken any given verse in a number of different ways to various people. All Scripture is profitable for doctrine and instruction in righteousness. Although a verse may have been fulfilled

thousands of years ago, it can have a present-day application for our lives and in specific circumstances, agreeing, of course, with the whole tenor of Scripture and godliness.

Outline

Part 1 The Destruction of Successive Plagues and
Locusts (1:1-12)

Part 2 A Call to Repentance and Its Consequences
(1:13-2:27)

Part 3 The Outpouring of the Spirit upon the Church
(2:28-32)

Part 4 Final Judgments upon the Nations that Come
Against Israel in the End Times (3:1-21)

Part One

The Destruction of Successive Plagues and Locusts

1:1-12

1:1 - *“The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.”*
Very little is known about the prophet Joel, whose name means “Jehovah is God,” except that he was the son of Pethuel, which means “enlarged of God.” The important thing to know is that the Lord anointed him to declare prophetic messages.

1:2-4 - *“Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.”*

This is speaking of a tremendous plague, which was very clearly natural and literal. Although this plague can have other interpretations, its first interpretation is literal. It was God’s judgment upon the people. There are four plagues mentioned here:

1. A plague of palmerworms
2. A plague of locusts
3. A plague of cankerworms
4. A plague of caterpillars

There have been many different interpretations for the plague of locusts. One interpretation is that there are four distinct kinds of locusts. Another is that there are four generations of locusts. We have a problem with these interpretations because in natural history those terms (four different kinds and four different generations) are not used.

In addition to being literal plagues, I believe that they represent four successive judgments, as in Jeremiah 15:3, which says, “And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.” Ezekiel 14:21 also speaks of four successive destructive judgments. However, I am very open to other interpretations that the Holy Spirit might quicken.

The nation of Israel was terribly backslidden at this time. As a result, many judgments came upon them. Part of their judgment was that other nations rose against them. Under Rehoboam’s rule, Judah was invaded by Shishak, the king of Egypt (1 Ki. 14:25-26). Edom invaded Jerusalem during Jehoram’s reign from 848-841 B.C. (2 Ki. 8:20-22; 2 Chr. 21:8-20). The point that I am trying to bring out is that when Joel was prophesying, the situation in the land was desperate. God had sent plagues of locusts to devour all their agricultural products and had also sent many nations to punish them.

1:5 - *“Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off*

from your mouth.” The sin of drunkenness was prevalent in Israel at this time. The prophet was saying that the drunkards were going to weep because the locusts would destroy the vines, and there would be no more wine for them to drink.

1:6-7 - *“For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.”*

These two verses have dual interpretations. Naturally and literally, they referred to the plagues of locusts that devastated the land, including the fig trees and vines. However, these verses are also figurative. In Scripture, Israel is often portrayed as a vine (cf. Isa. 5, Ps. 80:8-19, Jer. 2:21, Hos. 10:1). The prophet Joel was also prophesying concerning future judgments upon Israel, when Assyria and Babylon would devour the Israelites.

1:8 - *“Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.”* The sorrows in Israel would be like the terrible lamentation of a virgin who has lost the husband of her youth. To understand this verse, we must understand the marriage customs of Israel. When a girl was given to a man, there was an engagement period that lasted usually about a year. This engagement period was legally binding and they were considered married, even though they were not living together yet.

During this year of engagement, the virgin bride was betrothed to her husband. He was called her husband and she was called his wife. If her husband died during that year before they got married, one can only imagine the sorrow and anguish of the betrothed girl. She would put on sackcloth and weep bitterly for her deceased husband. This is how the prophet described the lamentation that was going to come upon Israel when they were judged.

1:9 - *“The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord’s ministers, mourn.”* The meat and drink offerings would cease because the land would be destroyed. There was no meat or drink offering to offer unto the Lord, and the priests mourned because they could not fulfill their priestly duties.

1:10-11 - *“The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.”* Israel had been a prosperous agricultural nation. They had been blessed with corn, wine, wheat, and barley. Nonetheless, the prophet is saying that there would come a time when their harvest would perish.

1:12 - *“The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.”* This verse has a spiritual application along with its natural

interpretation. All of these trees and fruits have a spiritual significance. Wine (the vine) speaks of joy. The fig tree speaks of kindness and sweetness. The pomegranate speaks of love (cf. Song 4:12-14, Gal. 5:22-23). The palm tree speaks of righteousness (Jer. 10:5). The apple tree speaks of communion with Christ (Song 2:3; 8:5). All the trees and fruits had dried up, as had all these spiritual virtues from the lives of the people.

How can we prevent these fruits from drying up in our lives as they did in the lives of the Israelites? Verse 12 gives us the answer: *“All the trees of the field are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.”* When the joy of the Lord is missing from a person’s life, everything else dries up, resulting in natural disasters. A person without the joy of the Lord will literally dry up. **Many illnesses can be induced by sadness and depression.**

Part Two

A Call to Repentance and Its Consequences

1:13 - 2:27

1:13 - *“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.”* The Lord said that the economic dearth in the country could be changed if they would mourn and repent of their wicked ways.

1:14 - *“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.”* The Lord instructed His priests and ministers to call a national assembly and fast in the house of God, for a time of national repentance and prayer.

When a church is facing major obstacles, it is very fruitful to have corporate prayer meetings at the church. If possible, it is good to set up a 24-hour prayer chain. It is important for the whole congregation to be involved, because there is strength in numbers. Jesus emphasised this when He said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt. 18:20).

1:15 - *“Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.”*

Throughout Scripture, “*the Day of the Lord*” is the day of judgment and reckoning. This is seen in Amos 5:18, “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.”

Zephaniah 1:14-15 says, “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 bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

In the ultimate sense, *the Day of the Lord* refers to the judgments around the time of the Lord’s Second Coming, but historically, it also refers to many severe judgments upon Israel. “The day of the Lord” could describe the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C., the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and also the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman army.

1:16 - “*Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God?*” Joy and gladness were cut off from the house of God. The presence of the Lord is basically three things: love, joy, and peace. As pastors, you must make sure that the presence of the Lord, accompanied by these three fruits of the Spirit, is in your churches. They create a very healthy atmosphere in a church. When that atmosphere is missing from a church, everything else will go wrong.

1:17-20 - “*The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is*

withered. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O Lord, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.”

This is a graphic picture of the complete devastation that came upon Israel. There were tremendous economic difficulties in Israel. They were devastated not only by natural disasters, but also by nations that overran them. Edom and Egypt had afflicted Israel in the past, and Assyria and Babylon rose up against Israel after this prophecy.

CHAPTER 2

2:1 - *“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.”* Joel is speaking specifically of Jerusalem and Zion. When the Lord says, *“It is nigh at hand,”* we must understand that for Him it might be coming soon, but usually it is a long period of time by our standards. The Lord says this judgment is nigh at hand, but it actually took place several decades later.

2:2 - *“A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the*

years of many generations.” This can only apply to two nations, Assyria and Babylon, which are essentially one people. These nations were very cruel and completely overran Israel and Judah. Assyria and Babylon are basically modern-day Iraq. The cruelty of the Saddam Hussein regime epitomises them.

2:3 - *“A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.”* The Assyrians and Babylonians were very cruel and violent, without mercy. They destroyed the land of Israel, which before was like the Garden of Eden. This is similar to Iraq’s attack on Kuwait. They burned the oil wells and devastated the country.

2:4-6 - *“The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.”* The phrase in verse 5, *“like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains,”* is taken by many people to refer to the locusts, but I believe it is speaking of Babylon.

2:7-9 - *“They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and*

when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.” The literal interpretation of these verses, as seen from the context, refers to the Babylonian army that God would raise up to punish Israel. However, it can also be applied spiritually to the Church of the Last days, which will be a mighty army.

2:10-11 - *“The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide in it?”* Verse 11 says, *“the Lord shall utter his voice before his army.”* Some people believe that this can only refer to the Church, the Lord’s Army, and not to a heathen nation, but that is not necessarily true.

We see that the Lord called Nebuchadnezzar “His servant” in Jeremiah 43:10, “... Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them” (cf. Jer. 25:9, 27:6). Therefore, Joel chapter 2 is clearly speaking prophetically of the Babylonians.

Years ago when my wife and I were preaching at a pastors’ seminar in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, all the ministers

at the seminar were very afraid that Thailand was going to fall to Communism. Vietnam and Cambodia were being overrun at that time by the Communists. Every morning before the seminar started the pastors would read the newspaper to find out where the Communists were.

Then God spoke to me and said, “I am controlling the Communists, and I am not going to bring them against Thailand at this time.” When I announced that, all the ministers stopped reading the newspapers, and we continued with the seminar. God has proven that word to be true. He did not bring the Communists into Thailand at that time.

My point is that it is God who controls the nations, and He was with the Babylonians. He gave them the directive to come against Jerusalem. God used the Babylonians to punish the Israelites for their sins. Therefore, it is very clear that the great army of Joel 2 was prophetic of the Babylonian army.

However, I also believe that these verses can be applied to the Church of the Last days; but we must not spiritualise away the literal interpretation. Also, we must be very careful when we apply these verses to the Church. Many people have erred because of this. They give people a false sense of security, teaching that the Church is going to be totally triumphant in the last days and usher in the Millennium.

The Word of God makes it very clear that although the Church will be

**It is God
who controls
the nations.**

triumphant *in the end*, it will be greatly persecuted and overcome by the Antichrist for a time. Revelation 13:7 says of the Antichrist, “And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to *overcome* them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” Daniel 7:21 confirms this, “I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and *prevailed* against them.” The Church will experience revival and persecution at the same time.

Likewise, Israel will be totally overrun by the enemy in the last days. I have seen the destruction of Israel in a vision. I saw the land of Israel divided, as prophesied in Joel chapter 3. Christ will return again at the very moment when Israel is about to be totally wiped out.

2:12 - *“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.”* God keeps emphasising that the key to being spared from judgment is prayer, fasting, and repentance. That is what Hezekiah did when the Assyrians came against Jerusalem (2 Ki. 19:1,14-19).

2:13 - *And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”*

The prophet says that if they will rend their hearts, not their garments—an internal repentance rather than an external one—God would not bring evil upon them. The Israelites were

accustomed to rending their garments and going through the outward motions of “repentance,” putting on sackcloth and so forth. However, God wanted them to repent *from their hearts*. Only a real change from their hearts could save them.

2:14 - *“Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord our God?”* This is an amazing verse. Joel says that even if the Israelites repented, they could not assume that God would forgive and bless them. This is a grave mistake that too many people make. They think that they can repent any time they want and that God will automatically accept them back and restore them. Repentance is a gift from God, and He shows mercy on those to whom He decides to show mercy.

2:15-16 - *“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.”* The Lord tells the leaders to call a national assembly of prayer and gather everyone (men, women, and children) to seek the Lord. Even newborn babies and newlyweds are included in this call to repentance.

2:17 - *“Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they*

say among the people, Where is their God?" This can only be speaking of another nation as a threat to Israel. The Israelites are instructed to cry out to God that He will not permit a heathen nation to rule over them.

2:18-20 - *"Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things."*

Often, in the Word of God, things can have many fulfillments. This is seen in Ezekiel 38, where the judgments against Gog and Magog have more than one fulfillment. Joel's prophecies likewise have many fulfillments.

These verses are referring historically to the Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah, when they encamped around Jerusalem and God slew 185,000 of them through the angel of the Lord, as recorded in Isaiah 37:36. However, the futuristic and final fulfillment will be when God defeats Israel's enemies in Armageddon.

2:21-22 - *"Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the*

field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.” This is the same message of all the prophets—
“There is nothing too difficult for God; so be glad and rejoice, and fear not.”

2:23 - *“Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.”* Joel is speaking of the outpouring of rain upon Israel, but he also is speaking prophetically of the outpouring of the Spirit of God in the Church Age. Israel had two rainy seasons: the former rain to soften the ground, and the latter rains, which were much greater, to bring the crop to maturity.

Spiritually, the former rain represents the outpouring of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost. The “former rain moderately” typifies the Charismatic movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s. The Charismatic movement had everything they had in the Early Church revival, but in moderation. The promise for the last days is that the Church will experience the former rain and the latter rain at the same time.

What was the Early Church revival like? The Word of God says that the followers of Jesus turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Three thousand people were saved in one day. They converted whole cities to the Lord. Just the shadow of Peter passing by caused people to be healed (Acts 5:15). The

cloths that were placed upon the body of Paul were taken to other cities and people were healed by them.

Well then, what can we expect to see in this last day revival, which will be much greater? I have seen glimpses of it in visions, and I can tell you that it will be glorious—far more glorious than the Early Church revival!

2:24 - *“And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.”* Naturally, after God turned the captivity of Israel, they experienced great economic prosperity. However, this verse also has a spiritual significance. Wheat speaks of the Word of God. Wine speaks of joy. Oil represents the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in the last days there is going to be a feasting upon the Word of God. God’s Word is going to be opened in a new way. There will be great joy and a mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit.

2:25 - *“And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.”* This is speaking of the time when the Lord completely devastated the land through the plagues that He sent, as well as His judgments through the Assyrians and Babylonians. God promised to restore all the years that were “eaten” away or wasted.

Therefore, it appears that the Church will go through a very rough time in the last days, and then will come into revival.

Ministers from all over the world have told me that these last few years have been the hardest times they have ever experienced. The Lord is going to make up for all the years we have suffered. God is a faithful rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). If He brings judgment, leanness, and barrenness, then after a time He will bring tremendous blessing. We are going to experience the greatest revival ever.

This is not only what God is going to do for the Church, but I believe that this is something that God wants to do for each one of us. If we have gone through barrenness, darkness, reproach, and economic distress, perhaps for a very long time, God is going to make up for all those years of barrenness (Isa. 54:1). God is going to cause those who have been barren to be fruitful and to break forth on the right hand and on the left. He is going to restore all the years that have been wasted.

2:26-27 - *“And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.”*

Shame seems to have covered many of God’s people the past few years, but God is going to reverse the situation. This is how God works. Although Joseph lived in a time of famine, he fed not only his brethren, but also many nations.

This is symptomatic of what will happen in the last days. Great difficulties are going to come upon the United States and other nations, but the Church will have plenty of resources and will be able to care for people and feed them.

This is what happened in the time of Aimee Semple McPherson. She fed thousands of people during the Great Depression. Christ told the disciples to feed the 5,000 when they were hungry (Mt. 14:16). The call and responsibility of the Church in the last days is to feed the people, both naturally and spiritually.

The Church will have an abundance of provision and will care for many people. We want to enter into this now. We want to open our hands wide to others, for God loves a cheerful giver. We should have a “bountiful eye” that sees the needs of others and meets them (Prov. 22:9).

Part Three

The Outpouring of the Spirit upon the Church

2:28-32

2:28-32 - “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.”

Peter quoted these verses on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:17-21. Peter said in Acts 2:14-16, “Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.” Then Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32.

The outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 was only a foretaste of what God will do in the last days!

However, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was not the complete fulfillment of Joel's prophecy; it was only a *partial* fulfillment. The outpouring of the Spirit of God on the Day of Pentecost was a foretaste of what God is going to do in the last days. Therefore, Joel 2:28-32 has a double fulfillment: a partial fulfillment in the Early Church and a complete fulfillment in the Last Day Church.

Joel 2:30-31 clearly places the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy in the last days, "*And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.*" This was not fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The sun was not darkened and there were no signs in the heavens. Also, this Scripture says that these events shall take place before the day of the Lord comes, or in the time before "*the day of the Lord*" (v. 31). The day of the Lord is the Day of Judgment at the Second Coming. So this is clearly speaking of the last days.

The Lord Jesus alludes to Joel 2:30-31 in Matthew 24:29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Therefore, Joel was obviously speaking of the last days, with a partial fulfillment on the day of Pentecost.

We read in Joel 2:32, "*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be*

delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” The first part of verse 32 says, “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be *delivered*,” whereas in Acts 2:21 it says they will be *saved*.

Where is deliverance found? In Mount Zion. Obadiah 1:17 says, “But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” The true Church will come to Mount Zion in the last days and will bring deliverance. This also has a fulfillment in Israel as well. When the Lord comes again there will be salvation and deliverance for the remnant left in Jerusalem and Zion.

Part Four

Final Judgments upon the Nations that Come Against Israel in the End Times

3:1-21

3:1 - *“For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem.”*

Joel chapter 3 is a period of time devoted specifically to the final judgments upon the nations of the earth. When does this take place? Verse 1 says, *“In those days, and in that time.”* It takes place at the time of the day of the Lord (Joel 2:31), in the last days just prior to the Second Coming.

Joel 3:1 states that God will bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah chapter 30 confirms this. To an extent, this has already taken place. The Jews have returned to their land. Israel became a state again in 1948. Therefore, we are already living in the time of Joel 3:1.

3:2 - *“I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”*

The land of Israel will be divided. That is very clear from Scripture. God said, *“They have parted my land.”* Israel will be occupied by foreign nations. I have actually seen this take place in a vision. It has not happened yet, but it will happen

in the near future. There is a gap of several decades between Joel 3:1 and 3:2—from the time Israel became a nation in 1948 to the time when the land will be divided.

The valley of Jehoshaphat is also called the Kidron Valley, which is on the east side of Jerusalem between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem. The Lord is going to gather the Arab nations and bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat to judge them. The land has to be divided for the Arab armies to cross over. They could not cross the River Jordan if the Israeli armies were there. The land must be divided and then occupied by the Arabs in order for the Arab armies to come into the land. This is confirmed in Daniel 11:39, where it says that the Antichrist will “divide the land for gain.”

After the land of Israel is divided in the last days, the Lord will destroy these foreign nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat, which actually means “the valley of God’s judgment.” Jehoshaphat means “Jehovah judges.”

3:3-4 - *“And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink. Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head.”* Tyre and Zidon are located in modern-day Lebanon, and the coasts of Palestine are inhabited by the Palestinians (the Philistines). God is going to punish them for their attacks on Israel.

3:5 - *“Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things.”*

This is what happened repeatedly when different nations attacked Israel. They removed the gold, silver, and treasures from the Temple and the storehouses and took them back to their own countries and temples (cf. 2 Chr. 21:16-17; 36:7,10).

3:6 - *“The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border.”* In the last days, there will be a restoration of the empires that afflicted Israel in the past. Historically, the nations that afflicted Israel are: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. All of these nations and kingdoms will arise in the last days and oppose Israel, as in the past. Egypt is certainly active. Persia is modern-day Iran, and Babylon is present-day Iraq.

The old Roman Empire will also arise, in the form of ten kings. Germany had to reunite because it is part of the old Holy Roman Empire. The only one of these nations that has not risen to full power yet is Greece, which has been very quiet, but it will arise in the last days and attack Israel. Then God will judge them.

3:7-8 - *“Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head. And I will sell your sons and daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the Lord hath spoken it.”*

God is going to reverse things for Israel. This will happen to a great extent at the time of the Second Coming of Christ.

3:9-10 - *“Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.”*

Today everyone is proclaiming that there is going to be peace in the Middle East, but that is contrary to the Word of God. According to the Bible, there will be war in the Middle East. First Thessalonians 5:3 says, “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them...”

God instructs the people to turn their plowshares into swords, and their pruninghooks into spears, because the time prior to the Second Coming will be a time of war. This verse is the exact opposite of Isaiah 2:4, which says, “And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Isaiah 2:4 is speaking of the millennial reign of Christ upon earth, when there will be a time of great peace. It is then that people will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks but prior to the Second Coming, there will be many wars and great violence.

3:11-12 - *“Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause*

thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.” This is speaking of the nations that will come against Israel in the final siege of Jerusalem in the last days. God will use the heathen nations to punish Israel for their sins, and then He will punish the nations for their wickedness.

3:13-14 - *“Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.”* This is similar to the vision that Daniel had of the Son of Man with a sickle. The Lord is going to reap the heathen in bloodshed. This speaks of tremendous numbers of people that will come against Jerusalem and be slain by the Lord in His anger and vengeance (Isa. 63).

In Isaiah 63:1-6 we read of the terrible judgments of the Lord upon the nations in the last days: “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the

day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.”

3:15 - *“The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.”* This is a repetition of Joel 2:30-31, speaking clearly of the last days. It is repeated so that we grasp it. The sun and moon will be darkened. Jesus said in Matthew 24:29, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.”

We also read in Isaiah 13:9-10, “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.”

3:16-17 - *“The Lord shall also roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know*

that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.” I have had visions of Jerusalem being invaded by heathen armies in the last days. The interesting thing is that Mount Zion will not fall. God will inhabit Jerusalem and make it holy after He returns.

Verses 18 through 21 describe what will happen when the Lord returns to save His people.

3:18 - *“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.”* This is brought out again in Zechariah 13, obviously speaking of the tremendous blessings that will come upon the land of Israel during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ upon earth.

3:19 - *“Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.”* Edom, the ancient nations of Moab and Ammon (the kingdom of Jordan), and also Egypt will come against Israel. As a result, the Lord will punish them and make them desolate.

3:20-21 - *“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.”*

When the Lord returns, the nation of Israel will repent and acknowledge their Saviour, Jesus Christ. They will recognise the nail scars in His hands and realise that He is the One (Jesus of Nazareth) whom they rejected. The Lord will cleanse them of all their sins. In fact, Zechariah 13:1 states that there will be a fountain in Jerusalem for the cleansing of the Jews.

Thus we can see the tremendous blessings that will come upon the land of Israel when the Lord returns and establishes His millennial kingdom after their devastation. We must see that there is an order of events for everything. The blessings come *after* the awesome judgment of the nations who come against Jerusalem. Jerusalem will experience the Great Tribulation and much bloodshed before the Lord returns. Then the Lord will cleanse the Israelites and bless them.

CONCLUSION

Joel was probably the second oldest book of the Minor Prophets. Joel prophesied with clarity and accuracy concerning the last siege of Jerusalem. However, he also spoke of the great outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the Church in the last days. Therefore, the last days will be characterised by two things—judgment upon the nations and revival in the Church.

THE BOOK OF AMOS

Introduction

The prophet Amos ministered during the early years of Hosea's ministry. Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel, circa 793-740 B.C. It is believed by many conservative scholars that the earthquake during the reign of Uzziah took place in about 763 B.C. Amos began his ministry two years before this earthquake. Therefore, he probably ministered some time between 765-760 B.C.

Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. He was a very poor man with a humble background, but his writings reveal a wealth of historical knowledge and profound illustrations.

The theme of the book of Amos is social justice in the midst of economic prosperity. The wealthy upper classes were oppressing the poor.

Outline

Part 1	Judgments upon the Nations	(1:1 - 2:16)
Part 2	Three Specific Messages to Israel, Introduced by the Phrase "Hear Ye" (3:1; 4:1; 5:1)	(3:1 - 5:17)
Part 3	Announcement of Exile	(5:18 - 6:14)
Part 4	Five Visions of Judgment	(7:1 - 9:10)
Part 5	The Restoration of Israel	(9:11-15)

Part One

Judgments upon the Nations

1:1 - 2:16

1:1 - *“The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.”* Amos, whose name means “Burden-bearer” or “One with a burden,” was a herdsman from Tekoa, a little village nestled in the highlands of Judah, about six miles south of Bethlehem, and ten or eleven miles from Jerusalem.

Very little is known about the city of Tekoa. Ira, one of David’s chief men, was from Tekoa (2 Sam. 23:26). King Jehoshaphat defeated the Ammonites and Moabites in the wilderness between Engedi and Tekoa (2 Chr. 20:20-22). Tekoa was occupied after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity (Neh. 3:5).

Tekoa was a village surrounded by pastureland. Amos was a herdsman (a very low-paying occupation) and also a gatherer of sycamore fruit (Amos 7:14-15). Amos apparently was a very poor man since he did not even own his own flock. A person who gathered sycamore fruit, which was the poorest of fruits (basically the food of swine), was considered the poorest of the poor. In other words, Amos had to gather sycamore fruit because he was not earning

enough money as a herdsman. He had to have two jobs to make ends meet.

Although he was poor, Amos was not ignorant or uneducated by any means. On the contrary, he was a very educated man. His extensive usage of illustrations and his thorough knowledge of history reveal that he was well versed in Scripture.

As we mentioned in our introduction, Amos prophesied during the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. The earthquake, as we are told by Josephus, took place in the same year that Uzziah became a leper (2 Chr. 26:16-21). It is believed that this took place in 763 B.C., but that is an approximate date.

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

The prophet Amos lived in Judah, south of Jerusalem, but prophesied to northern Israel. He prophesied during a time of great economic prosperity when Israel was experiencing the fulfillments of Elisha’s prophecies (see 2 Ki. 13-14). Israel had come to a pinnacle of economic power and wealth which they had not known since the days of King Solomon.

1:2 - *“And he said, The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall whither.”* Amos began his prophetic ministry by saying that the Lord would roar from Zion. All the areas that were enjoying great prosperity at that time were going to mourn and wither away. Carmel, which means “fruitful” or “garden land,” epitomised the prosperity they were experiencing, but God says that He would bring them to nothing.

From chapter 1:3 to 2:16, the prophet Amos pronounces God’s judgment upon eight nations. He prophesies judgment upon six heathen nations that were the sworn enemies of Judah and Israel, but then declares that judgment was also going to come upon Judah and Israel.

The prophet Amos begins each pronouncement of judgment with the phrase: “for three transgressions ... and for four” (Amos 1:3,6,9,11,13; 2:1,4,6). This phrase speaks of a complete judgment. It was not referring to three or four specific transgressions, but a multitude of transgressions.

The eight nations upon whom Amos pronounced judgment were:

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Syria (1:3-5) | 2. Philistia (1:6-8) |
| 3. Phoenicia (1:9-10) | 4. Edom (1:11-12) |
| 5. Ammon (1:13-15) | 6. Moab (2:1-3) |
| 7. Judah (2:4-5) | 8. Israel (2:6-16) |

Syria (1:3-5)

1:3-4 - *“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron: But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.”* The inhabitants of Damascus and Syria are known, even to this day, for their extreme cruelty. They actually threshed their victims and slaughtered them with iron instruments.

Damascus was the capital city of Syria. Hazael was the king of Syria from the middle of the 9th century B.C. to the end of the century (circa 841-806 B.C. or 843-796 B.C.). When he was the officer of Benhadad II, the king of Syria, he met with the prophet Elisha, when the prophet went to Damascus. Elisha prophesied that Benhadad would die and that Hazael would become the next king (1 Ki. 19:15-17).

Hazael murdered Benhadad shortly afterward and became the next king of Syria. Elisha wept when the Lord showed him all the wicked things that Hazael would do to the children of Israel (2 Ki. 8:7-15). Hazael did indeed fulfill Elisha’s prophecy by attacking Israel and Judah. He attacked Ahaziah the king of Judah and Joram the king of Israel (2 Ki. 8:28-29; 9:14-15). His dominance extended down from Syria into northern Israel and also southern Judah. After defeating Gath, Hazael set his eyes on Jerusalem. King Joash of Judah gave him many of the temple treasures (2 Ki. 12:17-18, 2 Chr. 24:23-24).

There were several Syrian kings who were named Benhadad. The house of Benhadad became synonymous with the kings of Syria. The dynastic line of Syria was like the Davidic line of the kings of Judah. The kings of Judah had to come from the line of David. Benhadad was of the house of Syria. Thus Amos was pronouncing judgment upon Damascus, the king, and the royal line.

God does not necessarily bless those whom He uses to execute His judgments!

1:5 - *“I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord.”* Amos prophesied that Syria would be destroyed, including the bar of Damascus, which many believe refers to the enormous gate-bar that prevented armies from invading the city.

The region of Kir encompassed the nations of Assyria and Babylon. This is referring to God’s judgments upon Damascus by the Assyrians and Babylonians. The Lord declared that the people of Damascus and Syria would be taken away captive to Kir. This was fulfilled in 2 Kings 16:9.

Philistia (1:6-8)

1:6-7 - *“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole*

captivity, to deliver them up to Edom: But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof.”

In verses 6-7, Amos turns his attention to the nation of Philistia (the Philistines), the coastal plain of southwestern Palestine. Philistia is sometimes referred to as Palestina in Scripture (Ex. 15:14, Isa. 14:29-31). The Gaza strip, a stronghold of the Philistines, is on the western coast of Israel. This area of land in Israel has been an area of turbulence for centuries.

The Philistines, known today as the Palestinians, are sworn enemies of Israel and will never make peace with God’s people. Amos is referring to the time when Edom invaded Jerusalem (see 2 Chr. 21:16-17, Obad. 1:11-14). The Judeans fled to Gaza for refuge, but the inhabitants of Gaza took them captive and delivered them to Edom.

Even though God declares that a specific judgment will come to pass, He does not necessarily bless those whom He uses to execute His judgments. Quite often, the Lord uses a nation or person to judge someone else, and then He judges the one whom He used to bring judgment. Obadiah records God’s judgments upon Edom for accepting the Jewish captives from the Philistines.

1:8 - *“And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God.”* Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron are three towns located close to each other on the coastal area

in the land of Philistia. These three cities are mentioned in 1 Samuel 6:17. When the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant out of Israel in the days of Samuel, they first took it to Ashdod. However, when it brought a plague upon Ashdod, they sent it to Gath and then to Ekron.

I want to stress again the importance of knowing history, especially Biblical history. If you do not, you will have a hard time understanding Biblical prophecies, especially those in the Minor Prophets. A solid knowledge of history also helps us comprehend what is happening today.

Israel has always had problems with the Philistines, and they always will until God ultimately judges them. The Gaza strip is in the heartland of Philistia. Since the days of Samson, Samuel, and David, there have always been wars between Israel and Gaza. Thus it should be no surprise to us to see the problems between the Palestinians and the Israelis today.

Phoenicia (1:9-10)

1:9-10 - *“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.”*

The third nation Amos pronounces judgment upon is Phoenicia and its capital city, Tyre, located about 35 miles

north of Carmel and about 25 miles south of Sidon on the Mediterranean coastline. The two principal cities of Phoenicia were Tyre and Sidon, both ancient cities. The people of Tyre and Sidon were the merchant princes of the Mediterranean (Isa. 23:8).

Amos is again speaking of the time when Edom overran Judah in the days of Jehoram. The Israelites fled down to Gaza, but the Philistines did not protect them. They handed the Israelites over to Edom. Others fled up into Tyre (modern-day Lebanon), and they also delivered them to the Edomites.

Tyre had a covenant with Israel, but they “remembered not the brotherly covenant.” Hiram, king of Tyre, was a friend of David, and made a covenant with Solomon, as we read in 1 Kings 5:12, “There was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together.” First Kings 5:1 says, “For Hiram was ever a lover of David.” In the days of David and Solomon, Lebanon made a covenant and alliance with Israel, and the Lord still holds them accountable to that pact.

Nonetheless, Tyre did not keep this brotherly covenant with Israel, and as a result, God judged Tyre. Alexander the Great conquered the city of Tyre, a seemingly invincible island fortress, after seven months of laying siege in 332 B.C.

Edom (1:11-12)

1:11-12 - *“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment*

thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.”

Edom was the fourth nation Amos pronounced judgment upon. Teman, a major city of Edom, was renowned for its wisdom (Jer. 49:7). Bozrah was the capital city of Edom (Jer. 49:22). Edom, Moab, and Ammon comprise the nations east of Israel, basically the modern-day country of Jordan.

The Edomites are the descendants of Esau (Gen. 25:30; 36:8-19). Perpetual hatred for Israel is in their blood (Ezek. 35:1-5). The root of the problem is that Edom (Esau) has never forgiven Israel (Jacob) for taking his birthright.

A lack of forgiveness can carry on for many generations and even for centuries. The same is true today, to an extent, in the United States. Many people in the South have not forgiven the North for the Civil War. We need to have a spirit of forgiveness. Forgiveness is rooted in forgetfulness. It is very easy to forgive if you cannot remember the wrong that was done to you. Therefore, we need to ask God for our “Manasseh,” which means “forgetfulness,” so that we can be free of all unforgiveness.

Isaiah 63:1-4 describes the Lord’s final judgment upon Edom when He returns: “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak

in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.”

Ammon (1:13-15)

1:13-15 - *“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border: But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of whirlwind: And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the Lord.”*

Ammon was the fifth nation Amos pronounced judgment upon. Rabbah was the capital city of Ammon (modern-day Jordan). The Ammonites were perpetual enemies of Judah and Israel. David reigned over Ammon, but at later times there were great battles between Ammon and Israel.

The Ammonites are descendants of Lot through his incestuous relationship with the youngest of his two daughters. She gave birth to a child and named him Benammi. He became the father of the Ammonites (Gen. 19:38). They were known for

their great cruelty. They ripped up the pregnant women of Gilead. Many of these judgments that Amos declared took place in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

CHAPTER 2

Moab (2:1-3)

2:1 - *“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime.”*

The judgments upon the nation of Moab, located east of Israel, are pronounced in verses 1-3. The Moabites are descendants of Lot through his incestuous relationship with his firstborn daughter. She named her child Moab (Gen. 19:37). The Moabites, even though they were relatives of Israel, became Israel’s mortal enemies.

There is tremendous contention among the Arab nations. Moab burned the bones of the king of Edom. Consequently, God pronounced judgment upon Moab. This vindictive act is also seen in Church history. At the Council of Constance (1414-1418), the Pope commanded the bones of John Wycliffe to be dug up and burned. Over the years, the Popes have burned the bones of many people. It is vindictiveness against the dead, and God hates it. Although the king of Edom was already dead, God punished Moab for burning his bones.

Jeremiah 48 is a description of Moab and God’s judgments upon the Moabites for their wickedness. They were a very

proud people, as described in Jeremiah 48:29, “We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.” Jeremiah 48:42 speaks of the ultimate judgment upon Moab: “And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the LORD.”

2:2-3 - *“But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of a trumpet: And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord.”* Kirioth (also Kerioth) was a fortified Moabite city (Jer. 48:24,41).

Tremendous judgments are going to come upon Moab, Ammon, and Edom in the last days. These three nations comprise what is known today as the country of Jordan. All three of these nations are closely related to Israel. Esau (Edom) was Jacob’s brother. Moab and Ammon were the sons of Lot, and great-nephews of Abraham. Yet they have been Israel’s enemies throughout all history. During the Persian Gulf War in 1991, Jordan was the only Arab nation that gave aid to Iraq, ignoring the United Nations’ boycott.

Make no mistake about it—Moab, Ammon, and Edom will be severely judged by the Lord when He returns. Daniel 11:41 records that the Antichrist will not touch these nations. Someone greater than the Antichrist, the very Son of God Himself, will put in His sickle and reap their blood. They are reserved for Christ’s own vengeance.

Judah (2:4-5)

2:4 - *“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked.”*

Now the Lord turns His attention to Judah. Just because God judged all these countries for afflicting Judah, it does not excuse and exonerate Judah for its sins. God had pronounced judgment on their enemies, but He also had to judge Judah for their own wickedness.

Judah had despised the law of the Lord and was not keeping His commandments. They were also guilty of lying, which caused them to err from the path of God. Lying is a very serious sin. It is one of the things that God hates the most (Prov. 6:16-17). Some people make light of it, but it is very serious to the Lord, and it has terrible consequences. If lying is not dealt with in our hearts, it will cause us to turn away from the Lord. Revelation 21:8 says that “all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

The antidote for the awful sin of lying is to ask the Lord to put His truth and a love for the truth in our hearts and in our mouths (Ps. 51:6). Proverbs 12:19 says, “The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.” The righteous hate lying (Ps. 119:163, Prov. 13:5).

2:5 - *“But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.”* This judgment took place in 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was burned by the Babylonians. Amos prophesied of this event many years before it took place. God judged Jerusalem in 586 B.C. for the sins of past kings.

It is interesting that Jerusalem was destroyed basically because of the sins of King Manasseh. We read in 2 Kings 21:11-14, “Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies.”

Second Kings 23:26-27 continues this same train of thought, “Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.”

The siege of Jerusalem took place about 56 years after Manasseh's reign. Therefore, we see that God sometimes reserves the judgment of one generation for a later generation. Ecclesiastes 3:15 tells us that God requires that which is past. Future generations reap what past generations have sown. We are all suffering for what our forefathers have done.

This principle of God is seen in the life of David. When there was a famine in the days of David, he inquired of the Lord concerning the cause of the famine. The Lord responded that it was because of what Saul had done to the Gibeonites about 40 years before (2 Sam. 21:1).

David was suffering the judgment of something Saul had done many years before, and Saul was already dead. David was reaping the consequences of Saul's actions. I have seen this same thing happen many times in churches. I have known many pastors who have struggled to get a breakthrough in their church. When they sought the Lord, they discovered that the blockage was due to something a previous pastor had done years before. Therefore, as leaders we need to be aware of this, find out the source of things, and deal with them accordingly.

Israel (2:6-16)

2:6 - *“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes.”* In verses 6-16, the Lord

pronounces judgment upon Israel. There was much oppression and robbery in Israel. They despised and oppressed the poor. Proverbs 21:13 says, “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.”

2:7-8 - *“That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name: And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.”*

The pledges or the clothes that people gave were not to be kept overnight, but were to be returned to them by nightfall according to the Law (Ex. 22:25-26), and were not to be slept or lain upon (Deut. 24:12-13). Yet the people used them to lie on, thus breaking the law of God. The Israelites were committing terrible immorality and adultery.

2:9-12 - *“Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath. Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.”*

In effect, God was saying to Israel: “Remember all that I have done for you. I brought you out of the land of Egypt. I took you through the wilderness for 40 years. I gave you the land of the Amorites, and the Land of Promise. I cast out nations before you, and caused you to inherit and possess their land. I made you My people. I made your sons prophets and Nazarites, but you despised all this. You despised this tremendous privilege that I had given unto you. You told the prophets not to prophesy and you made the Nazarites break their vow by drinking wine. You did not want to hear the word of the Lord. You have despised Me and the inheritance I gave you. Therefore, I am going to bring judgment upon you.”

2:13 - *“Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.”* In other words, the Lord was saying that their wickedness was like a weight and pressure upon Him.

2:14-16 - *“Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself: Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself. And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.”*

Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, was destroyed in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians, and Israel ceased to be a nation at that time. None of the wicked would escape from the judgment of the Lord!

Part Two

Three Specific Messages to Israel Introduced by the Phrase “Hear Ye”

3:1 - 5:17

In Part 2, the Lord gives three specific messages to Israel, all introduced by the phrase “Hear [ye] this word,” which occurs in Amos 3:1, 4:1, and 5:1.

3:1-2 - *“Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”* The Lord told Israel that He was going to punish them because of their sins. God’s standards are very clear and easy to understand. *If you do what is right, I will bless you. If you sin, I will punish you.* It is that simple.

Something important to understand about judgment is that it is based upon a person’s level of understanding and responsibility. The Lord brings this out in Luke 12:47-48, “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much

required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

There are degrees of punishment. Those who know better and do what is wrong anyway receive the greatest judgments. However, even those who did not know the will of their Master will be punished if they sin, albeit with less severity. We are judged according to our knowledge of the Lord and the opportunities He has given us. In the book of Romans the Apostle Paul develops the fact that Israel will be judged more severely than other nations because they had been blessed by God more than any other nation.

We are judged according to our knowledge of the Lord and the opportunities He has given us.

3:3 - *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”* This is a very important principle—two people cannot “walk together” unless they agree with each other. This verse is often applied to people. While this is appropriate, this verse is really speaking about God and man. The context, in verses 1-2, is God’s relationship with Israel.

This truth was made very real to me a number of years ago. The message the Lord gave me to preach at the church I was pastoring at that time was from Amos 3:2. I was just about to preach that people cannot walk together unless they are in agreement, and I heard the Lord say in my ear, “That verse is not speaking of people being in agreement with each other; it is speaking of Me and people.” God told me that He could not walk with those who do not agree with Him.

Therefore, unless we are in agreement with God, we cannot walk with Him and He cannot walk with us. That is why it is so important that we always agree with the Lord and align ourselves with Him, no matter what the consequences may be. Can you see the importance of agreeing with the Lord? When we have to make a decision, we should always seek the Lord first to find out how He feels about it so that we are always on the Lord's side. We must always agree with God because He is always right!

3:4-6 - *“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 [or trap] is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?”*

The answer to all of these questions is “no.” Obviously, a lion only roars when it has taken prey, and so forth. Then verse 6 says, *“Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?”* What an amazing statement! There must be a confirmation of this in the Word of God. Isaiah 45:7 says, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.” If there is evil in a city, who has done it? Satan? No, the Lord is the one who has done it. That is an extraordinary verse!

Now, this may be a little hard to understand, but we need to grasp the essence of what the Lord is saying. We know that

God is holy and that He cannot sin or do evil. There is ample proof of this in Scripture (Num. 23:19, Deut. 32:4, Heb. 4:15). What the Lord means is that nothing can happen unless He allows it to happen. In one way, you could say that it was the Lord who devastated Job's life. Certainly, He used Satan, but ultimately it was the Lord who ordained his trial because Satan can only do what the Lord permits him to do.

The older you get, the more you realise that it is not Satan that you have to worry about, but the Lord. Satan can only do what he is commanded to do by the Lord. In Job's case, Satan could only go as far as the Lord allowed him to. We want to walk uprightly before the Lord so that we are covered by His protection.

3:7 - *“Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”* This is a very important verse, especially as the Second Coming of the Lord draws closer. God never does anything major without first revealing it to His prophets—not to one prophet, but to *many*.

The word “prophets” is in the plural. The Lord never has only one witness—He always has many confirming witnesses for anything He does. When Elijah thought he was the only one standing for truth in his days, the Lord told him that there were 7,000 other faithful witnesses besides him (1 Ki. 19:18).

All the true prophets of God in Scripture confirmed each other. They all said the same thing, just from different viewpoints.

There are no unique or isolated messages. There are always confirmations if something is from the Lord. Everything is established in the mouth of two or three witnesses (Mt. 18:16). Certainly this was true concerning the Lord's judgments upon Israel. If God gave so many witnesses concerning the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, we can be sure that He will give even more witnesses in the last days to speak of His Second Coming. If something is true, we do not have to twist verses to confirm it—it will be obvious.

3:8 - *“The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?”* Amos is saying that God has spoken, and that he had to prophesy what God had said. We must also prophesy that which the Lord speaks to us. Jeremiah said that he wanted to refrain from speaking the Lord's words because of all the reproach he was experiencing, but the word of the Lord was like a fire inside him. He had to speak the message that the Lord had given him (Jer. 20:9).

3:9 - *“Publish in the palaces of Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof.”*

Ashdod is a city in Philistia. To an extent, this prophecy was fulfilled when Pharaoh Necco came up in the days of Josiah and killed him at Megiddo. This is recorded in 2 Kings 23:28-29, “Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? In his days Pharaoh-nechoh

king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.”

We read in 2 Chronicles 35:20-22, “After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.”

3:10 - *“For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.”* The Lord is speaking here of Israel, and in particular of the people that lived during the reign of Jeroboam II. The nobles made themselves rich through robbery and violence by using their power and influence to rob from the poor.

3:11 - *“Therefore saith the Lord God; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.”* This is referring to the Assyrians who came against Samaria. Hosea prophesied of it, and Amos confirmed it. A prophet

can see into the future and declare things that will happen in the future. Amos prophesied this during a time of prosperity.

3:12 - *“Thus saith the Lord; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch.”* Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Damascus was in Syria.

At this time Jeroboam had enlarged the borders of Israel so that they extended all the way north up to Damascus. Through the capture of Damascus, the Israelites became extremely wealthy. They had homes in Samaria and in Damascus. Many people had a winter house and a summer house. There was great wealth, but the Lord said that it would not last very long.

3:13-14 - *“Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts, That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.”* Bethel was located on the border between Judah and Israel. The altars there were erected by the first king of Israel, Jeroboam I, who had also set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan (1 Ki. 12:28-30). Bethel was a center of idol worship.

God is saying that He would also judge Bethel when He judged Samaria and Damascus. The Lord permitted the

tremendous idolatry in Bethel to continue for about 200 years. In His compassion, God had extended Israel's borders and prospered them. Instead of being grateful to Him, they used all their treasures for wickedness.

3:15 - *“And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.”* The Israelites were very wealthy, having winter and summer houses made of costly ivory. There was economic prosperity in Israel, but God said that it was going to come to an end.

CHAPTER 4

4:1 - *“Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.”* Now we come to the second of the three specific messages to Israel. Bashan was the region in the north, east of the Jordan River. It was an extremely fertile area known for its kine or well-nourished cattle (Ps. 22:12). The Lord called the Israelites “kine” to illustrate how wealthy they were. Even though they were rich, they oppressed the poor.

4:2 - *“The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.”* God is saying that He will be like a fisherman, hooking them and taking them away. The Lord also pronounced judgment upon their posterity. Their children suffered because of their sins.

4:3 - *“And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the Lord.”* God likens them to fat cows, saying that He is going to judge them.

4:4-5 - *“Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years. And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.”*

The Israelites offered sacrifices in Gilgal and Bethel. They continued offering sacrifices even while they were backslidden. They were offering sacrifices unto the Lord, but their sacrifices were mixed with leaven, which God hates. Leaven, which was expressly forbidden, speaks of sin, hypocrisy, and false doctrine. Their offerings were an abomination to the Lord.

4:6 - *“And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.”* Fasting for a long time makes a person’s teeth very clean. God sent a famine to cause them to turn back to Him, but they did not respond to the Lord. They continued in their sinful ways.

4:7 - *“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.” Drought is a terrible judgment. The Lord said that He caused it to rain upon one piece of land, but not upon another. That is why it is so important to live a righteous life. If we do, God will protect us while His judgments are poured out all around us.

In Psalm 91:5-7, the Lord promises those who dwell in His secret place that they will be protected while His judgments come down upon those all around them: “Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.”

4:8 - *“So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.”* God sent drought upon Israel. The people had to wander from city to city looking for water, but they were not satisfied. Yet after all this, God’s people did not return unto Him.

4:9 - *“I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.”* God sent diseases and disasters upon the Israelites, but they still did not return unto Him.

4:10 - *“I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up to your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.”* The Lord sent pestilences upon the land of Israel. He sent these judgments to cause them to return to Him, but they did not return.

The phrase *“yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord”* occurs five times in Amos chapter 4. It occurs in verses 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11. The Lord says five times, *“I have sent judgments upon you, but you have not returned unto Me.”* The whole purpose of judgment is for people to turn back to the Lord.

4:11-12 - *“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.”* Now Amos proceeds from the smaller to the greater judgments. The land was laid waste by devastating wars which occurred under the Syrian invasions.

We read in 2 Kings 13:4,7, *“And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.... Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen;*

for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.” The Lord punished Israel as He did Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord told Israel to prepare to meet their God. He was going to meet them as their Judge and punish them.

4:13 - *“For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, The God of hosts, is his name.”* God said He was going to bring His armies against them. The armies, of course, were basically the Assyrians for Israel, and the Babylonians for Judah. Israel ceased to be a nation in 722 B.C. when the Assyrians conquered Samaria and deported the Israelites to other nations (2 Kings 17), a fulfillment of Moses’ prophecy in Deuteronomy 29:22-29.

CHAPTER 5

Now we come to the last section of Part 2—the third of three specific messages to Israel: “Hear ye this word.”

5:1-2 - *“Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.”* Amos makes it very clear that Israel, the northern kingdom, would fall and not rise again. They will not be restored until the Lord returns. This is a repetition of what the other prophets had been saying. He is also speaking to the young virgins who were not married. Even

they had fallen because of these judgments. This is a prophecy that was fulfilled in 722 B.C. by the fall of Samaria and the consequent deportation of the population by the Assyrians.

5:3 - *“For thus saith the Lord God; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.”*

In other words, the Lord was saying that He was going to bring such devastation upon the land of Israel, that they would be reduced to only ten percent of their population (from a hundred to ten).

5:4 - *“For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live.”* The theme of Amos chapter 4 is: “Yet have ye not returned unto me.” The theme of chapter 5 is: “Seek the Lord.” God said, “Seek me, and ye shall live.”

5:5-6 - *“But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.”* In other words, the Lord was saying, “In your trouble, do not go to the idols in Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba for help, but come unto Me.” If they did not seek the Lord, a fire would consume them.

5:7-9 - *“Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the*

morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name. That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.”

In this poignant description of the unrighteousness of the nation, Amos uses “wormwood” to describe the *bitterness* of their wickedness. Wormwood is a very bitter plant. God says that even though their wickedness is great, if they will seek Him, He will turn their judgments into blessings.

Israel’s only hope is to seek the Lord, who has made the seven stars and Orion. God can turn light into darkness and darkness into light. He strengthens the weak who have been spoiled. We, too, should realise that God can give us victory against our strong enemies if we seek Him.

5:10 - *“They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.”* The nation of Israel was thoroughly backslidden. They hated those who rebuked them in the city gate for their wickedness, and they abhorred those who spoke uprightly. In olden times, the city gate was the place where justice was executed (Deut. 22:15, Ruth 4:1-2).

You will notice that whenever a country backslides, they begin to hate and persecute the righteous because they do not want to be reprov'd for their sin. This is the situation in America today. People do not want to listen when the righteous say that immorality and homosexuality are wrong.

5:11 - *“Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.”* People always desire permanency. People always want their houses to remain. The Israelites had built houses of hewn stone, but they were not going to dwell in them. They had planted vineyards, but they were not going to taste and enjoy the fruit of them.

5:12 - *“For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.”* This is what Hosea, who prophesied about the same time as Amos, was also saying. In this time of prosperity, the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer. There was no justice in the land, only bribery and oppression of the poor.

5:13-14 - *“Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.”* God keeps pleading with them to do good. He does not desire to judge them, but He will be forced to unless they turn from their wicked ways. Those who are wise and prudent do not complain in times of judgment because they know that God is just in everything He does.

5:15 - *“Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.”* We must hate

evil and love the good. Hebrews 1:9 says of Christ, “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Amos told Israel that if they turned from their evil ways and established justice, God would come with a blessing and be gracious to them, instead of judging them.

5:16-17 - *“Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord.”* God is saying that He is going to bring His armies into Samaria, and their cities will be full of wailing and mourning. The Lord said to them, *“I will pass through thee,”* speaking of a day of judgment.

Part Three

Announcement of Exile

5:18 - 6:14

5:18 - *“Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.”* He is saying that the day of the Lord is a time of judgment. The Jews are waiting for their Messiah even to this very day, but they do not realise that He already came and they rejected Him. When the Lord Jesus returns, He is going to deliver Israel from all their enemies, but only after they go through the Great Tribulation and experience tremendous judgments.

5:19 - *“As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.”* Historically, this is speaking of the fact that the judgments upon Israel would be progressively more destructive.

However, this verse also has a very important spiritual interpretation. This verse is speaking prophetically of the judgments that will occur in the last days. These three animals represent nations, as is so often the case in Scripture. The lion is the symbol of England, the greatest former leader of the Colonial powers. The bear symbolises Russia, the great former leader of the Communist powers. Many nations left the lion (the Colonial system), and they turned to the

bear (the Communist system). Now they are seeing that this system does not work, and they will turn to the snake, which represents none other than the Antichrist.

When nations were first gaining their independence in Africa about 30 years ago, the Lord prompted me to ask “why?” The Lord’s response was, “So that every nation will make its own choice between Christ and the Antichrist.” God is realigning the nations of the world today for this very reason. Every nation will have to make its own sovereign choice between Christ and the Antichrist.

We are living in troublous times. Governments are falling in many nations. There is a falling away of law and order in fulfillment of 2 Thessalonians 2:3. This must take place before the Antichrist can be revealed.

5:20 - *“Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?”* In verse 20 he repeats what he said in verse 18. The day of the Lord will be a time of great darkness and judgment.

5:21-23 - *“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell [savor or accept] in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.”* God wanted them to have a relationship with Him and obey Him, instead of offering

all their sacrifices. Because they were not walking in obedience to Him, He did not accept their feasts and sacrifices. God does not accept our sacrifices either, unless we are walking in obedience to Him.

5:24 - *“But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”* God wants our righteousness to flow continually like a river. We must be righteous and uphold justice. Everything we do must be right in order for God to bless us.

5:25-26 - *“Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.”* God is looking back to the time when the children of Israel were in the wilderness for 40 years. They offered sacrifices unto Him in the Tabernacle of Moses, but there was a mixture in the people. They were idolatrous. God cannot forget the sins of Israel, which they committed in the wilderness. Moloch (or Molech) and Chiun were two foreign gods that the Israelites made sacrifices to and worshipped.

5:27 - *“Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts.”* The area beyond Damascus is Assyria. God said He was going to send them into captivity in Assyria. This was fulfilled in 722 B.C. when Samaria went into Assyrian captivity.

CHAPTER 6

6:1 - *“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!”* Samaria and Zion (or Jerusalem) were the two chief cities of Israel and Judah, respectively. Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom, and Jerusalem was the capital of the Southern Kingdom.

There is the tendency to trust in geographic locations or buildings. At the time of the Babylonian siege, the people in Jerusalem said that the Temple would not fall because it was built by God (Jer. 7:4). We must be cleansed of this false security, recognising that our security is in Christ alone and is dependent upon a righteous life.

6:2 - *“Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?”* Calneh was a city in Syria. Hamath was a city north of Damascus. Gath was one of the principal cities of the Philistines. Calneh was devastated in about 738 B.C. by Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria. Hamath was destroyed in 720 B.C. by Sargon II of Assyria.

It is believed that Gath was destroyed also by Sargon II of Assyria about 711 B.C. The Lord pointed out these three heathen cities and told Israel to look at them to see if Israel was any better than they. As surely as they would be destroyed, Israel would be destroyed as well.

6:3-6 - *“Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of 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.”*

In verses 3-6, we have a description of the great wealth of Israel at this time. As we have already said, there was tremendous economic prosperity during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II. The people had luxurious beds made of costly ivory. They had so much wine that they drank it in bowls instead of cups. They had expensive ointments. However, in spite of all their prosperity, the Lord said He was going to take them into captivity.

The last part of verse 6 says, *“But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.”* The people were indifferent to the afflictions that the Lord’s judgments placed upon the ten northern tribes, represented by Joseph, who was the head of the tribes through his son Ephraim.

6:7 - *“Therefore now shall they go captive with the first of the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.”* The Lord is saying that all those who have lived in great luxury will be the first to go into captivity.

6:8 - *“The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate*

his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.” The Lord is simply saying, “I hate your luxury because your souls are so barren.”

6:9-10 - *“And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. And a man’s uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord.”* The Lord was going to bring the Assyrians upon them, a nation that would forbid them to mention the name of the Lord of Israel. This also happened to the Americans who were in the concentration camps in Vietnam. They were not allowed to have Bibles or to mention the name of the Lord.

6:11-12 - *“For, behold, the Lord commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts. 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.”* There was going to be a complete destruction of all the houses, both small and great alike.

The phrase, *“Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there [upon the rock] with oxen?”* speaks of the hardness of their hearts. As Hosea 10:12 says, we need to “break up the fallow ground.” The sweetness of justice had been turned into the bitter gall of judgment, and the

pleasant fruit of righteousness into the poisonous hemlock of sin.

6:13-14 - *“Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.”* Israel rejoiced in vanity, and as a punishment for this sin, the Assyrians completely overran Israel. God raised up these nations against His people. Israel would be afflicted from Hemath, a city north of Damascus, all the way to the Waddi of Egypt, which is the southernmost part in the desert near to the entrance of Egypt.

The Lord said in Isaiah 10:5, “O Assyria, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.” God many times raises up wicked nations to punish godly nations that are backslidden. We will see this happen in the last days.

Part Four

Five Visions of Judgment

7:1 - 9:10

We will now consider Amos' five visions of judgment:

1. The swarm of locusts (7:1-3)
2. The consuming fire (7:4-6)
3. The plumbline (7:7-9)
4. The ripe fruit (8:1-3)
5. The Lord by the altar (9:1-10)

1. The Swarm of Locusts (7:1-3)

7:1 - *“Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed the grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king’s mowings.”* This verse is saying that the Israelites had cut the grass, and when the latter rain came they were expecting the grass to shoot up so that they could feed their cattle. However, God was going to send a swarm of locusts (or grasshoppers) to eat the new growth.

7:2-3 - *“And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. The Lord repented for this: It shall not be, saith the Lord.”* This terrible judgment brought economic distress upon

the land of Israel, as well as starvation and famine. The prophet Amos cried out to the Lord to forgive them, and the Lord hearkened to him.

2. The Consuming Fire (7:4-6)

7:4-6 - *“Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God.”* Now we come to the second vision of judgment—the consuming fire. Obviously, when there is no rain, everything is parched and can catch on fire very easily. The Lord sent a consuming fire upon the land. Then the prophet Amos cried out to the Lord to be merciful to His people, and the Lord hearkened unto the prophet again.

3. The Plumbline (7:7-9)

7:7-8 - *“Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more.”*

Amos' third vision was of a plumbline. There is a difference between the third vision and the first two visions. In the first two visions, Amos sought the Lord and the Lord repented,

saying that He would not bring these things upon Israel. Now, however, He says that He has put a plumbline in Israel and He will not pass by them any more.

What is a plumbline? A plumbline is a straight line used to measure the standards of a building. It is used to make sure that a building is straight. In effect, God was saying to Israel, "I am going to put a plumbline among My people, and I am going to remove those who are not straight. Here are My standards, those who measure up will remain, but those who do not measure up and are not straight, will be destroyed." This is what happens so often in revival. God demands that people measure up to His standards.

7:9 - *"And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."* Israel was going to become desolate, and King Jeroboam's son would be killed. This was fulfilled in 2 Kings 15:10. Shallum conspired against King Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam, and killed him, as Amos had prophesied.

Amaziah Opposes Amos

7:10-11 - *"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."* Amaziah was one of the principal priests of Bethel,

a town steeped in idolatry since the time when Jeroboam I constructed altars to a golden calf.

The power of the Spirit must have been very strong upon Amos for this priest of heathen deities to say to the king, “We have to do something about Amos. The people cannot bear his voice.” When God anoints a prophet, the whole nation hears what he says. It is not something said in a little Bible study. Amos’ words were upsetting the people, and the rulers did not want that. Yet, that is exactly what the Lord wanted. Incidentally, Amos said that the house of Jeroboam would be killed with the sword, not that Jeroboam himself would be killed, as Amaziah quoted Amos as saying. Jeroboam II did not die by the sword.

7:12-13 - *“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.”* Amaziah recognised Amos as a prophet, but did not want to hear what he had to say. He told him to prophesy in Judah, but not in Israel. When the word of the Lord comes forth, those who are not living uprightly oppose the message, and the messenger. Amos was prophesying against Israel. His message was primarily to Israel, not Judah, even though he was from Judah. Amaziah told Amos not to prophesy in Bethel because it was the king’s chapel and the king’s court. King Jeroboam II worshipped in Bethel.

7:14 - *“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 sycomore fruit.”* Amos was a very poor

man who came from humble beginnings. He looked after the flocks of others because he could not afford his own flock. He also had to have a second job gathering sycamore fruit to make ends meet.

7:15 - “*And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.*”

Amos was not in a prayer chamber or on Mount Zion when the Lord called him to the ministry. What was he doing? He was being faithful to perform his *menial* tasks. **I have found in life that God calls those who are faithful in their earthly jobs.**

The Lord often speaks to us when we are doing what we are supposed to be doing.

When does God speak to us? So often He speaks to us when we are doing our duties. I knew a pastor’s wife who loved to wash dishes, which I could not understand. She said to me, “I love to wash dishes because it is there at the sink that the Lord speaks to me.”

The Lord often speaks to us when we are doing what we are supposed to be doing. I am not saying that we should not pray. We must pray if we are to hear the Lord speak. However, often the Lord does not speak while we are in prayer, but while we are doing our assigned duties.

David was called from following the flock and anointed by Samuel to be king. He was called while he was faithfully performing his duties. Psalm 78:70-71 says of David, “He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From

following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.”

7:16-17 - *“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.”*

The Assyrians came into the land many times before they actually defeated and took Israel captive. The Lord said through Amos, “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord and the prophet of God, you will be taken captive out of your land, and your wife will become a harlot, and your sons and daughters shall die by the sword.” Hosea and Amos both prophesied the same thing. Terrible judgments came upon Israel because of their sins.

CHAPTER 8

4. The Ripe Fruit (8:1-3)

8:1-2 - *“Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.”* The Lord showed Amos a basket of summer fruit, which was fully ripened and ready to be reaped.

God used this picture of the ripe summer fruit to illustrate the spiritual condition of Israel. Their sins had come to maturity and they were ripe for judgment. The Lord was not going to excuse them or pass by them any more. They were like overripe, rotten summer fruit that had to be cast out. The tribes of northern Israel were scattered by the Assyrians, and many of them have never returned to their land even to this day.

8:3 - *“And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.”* This is a sample of the tremendous destruction of Israel by the Assyrians. There were dead bodies everywhere, and weeping and howling were heard in the city because of the terrible judgments.

8:4 - *“Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail.”* The Lord rebuked Israel because they had persecuted the poor. I believe that every church should have some kind of outreach to the poor, even if it can only afford something small. The calling of the Church is to care for those who are in need. However, there is also the danger of becoming a “social church” that ignores its spiritual ministry and only concentrates on humanitarian aid. We must maintain a careful balance.

8:5 - *“Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?”* The rich were saying, “When will the sabbath be over? When will the feast day be over so that we can go back to

our commerce?” Because trade was suspended on the feast days and sabbaths, the merchants were anxious for the sabbaths and feast days to end so that they could continue their commerce.

They were making money through deceitful means. The merchants would cheat the people by using an undersized container (ephah) to measure their products, and a rigged scale to charge the customers more than they owed. God hates unjust balances (Lev. 19:35-36).

8:6 - *“That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?”* They were making merchandise of the poor, and they were deceitful with their prices, selling things that were not of good quality. The Lord abhors this. In verses 7-14, we see how God judges the people for their wickedness.

8:7-8 - *“The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.”*

The Israelites had sinned so greatly that God said that He would not forgive or forget their works. The flood of Egypt represents the Nile River. When it flooded, it swept over a large amount of land. In the same way, the Lord was going to punish the Israelites.

8:9-10 - *“And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will*

darken the earth in the clear day: And I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.” God was declaring that He was going to bring judgment upon the land. The Lord said: “You have been enjoying all the feasts and been merry, so I am going to turn them all into lamentations and mournings. You will mourn as at the death of an only son.” Sackcloth was worn for mourning.

We must compare Scripture with other Scripture passages, and the prophecies of the prophets with other prophecies to ensure that we do not err doctrinally. Amos 8:10 says that baldness would come upon every head. Isaiah prophesied the same thing in Isaiah 3:17, declaring that baldness would come upon the daughters of Israel.

8:11-12 - *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.”* God sent prophets to the Israelites and spoke to them, but they refused to listen to the Lord and His servants.

Consequently, the Lord says that He will not speak to them anymore. He was going to send a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. They would run to and fro, searching desperately

for the word of the Lord, but they would not find it. In their time of need, they would turn to God, but God would not hear them (Prov. 1:24-31). This literally happened to Israel. God's ways never change. If people will not listen to Him, then there comes a time when He will no longer speak to them, even if they turn and want to hear Him speak again.

God sometimes does this to churches who do not hearken to His Word. After a time, if they refuse to listen to Him, He takes His revelation away from them. We were speaking in a church once and I saw the candlestick of the church, representing the anointing, leave the church. God took away the anointing, revelation, and His Word from that church because they refused to walk in His ways.

8:13-14 - *“In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.”* Those who worshipped Baal in Samaria and the golden calves that Jeroboam I had erected in Dan and Bethel would be punished by the Lord. They would fall and never rise again.

CHAPTER 9

5. The Lord by the Altar (9:1-10)

9:1 - *“I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them*

with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.” Amos saw the Lord standing upon the altar. This is similar to Isaiah’s experience in Isaiah 6:1-4. Amos and Isaiah both saw the Lord, and they both speak of the posts of the doors being shaken or moved.

9:2-3 – *“Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.”* When the Lord determines to bring destruction, there is nothing that can stop Him.

The Lord said, in effect, “They might escape from the Assyrians, but they will not be delivered out of My hand. No matter where they run, they will not escape from Me. Even if they dig into hell, I will bring them out.” This literally happened during the Assyrian invasion. Many of them tried to escape from the Assyrians, but they could not escape from God’s judgments.

9:4 - *“And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.”* God said He would send the sword after those who had already gone into captivity and kill them. The Israelites have been persecuted throughout the centuries because they did not walk in obedience to the Lord. Israel is still under terrible judgment because they

had the privilege of being God's special people, but they rebelled against God. This punishment has lasted nearly 2,700 years, from 722 B.C. until the present time. There will only be complete restoration for Israel when the Lord Jesus comes again.

9:5 - *“And the Lord God of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.”* God was going to completely devour and overrun the land of Israel. The judgments of God are upon America now, and it is going to get worse, but praise God, there is also going to be revival!

9:6 - *“It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name.”* It is God who builds His plains or chambers of heaven one above another. This has the sense of steps from one plain of glory to another. On earth, God's armies of angels march in accordance with His will.

He is in command of the waters, saying to the proud water, “This far and no further” (Job 38:11). At times, He causes the sea to mount up through typhoons and come crashing down upon coastal regions. Also, this signifies that God takes the water from the sea, forms clouds, and pours the water upon the land.

9:7-8 - *“Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord. Have not I brought up*

Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord.” This is exactly what God has done to Israel. He has destroyed Israel from off the face of the earth, yet there is always a remnant left.

The Lord was so furious with Israel because of its sinful ways that it became in His eyes like the heathen nation of Ethiopia. He had brought Israel from Egypt to the land of Canaan. The Philistines were brought by God from Caphtor, which is Cyprus. The Syrians originally came from Kir, a city in Mesopotamia east of the Tigris River. When Tiglath-pileser III conquered the area in the reign of Ahaz, he carried away the people captive to Kir (2 Ki. 16:9).

9:9 - *“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.”* God sifted Israel like corn is sifted. There are Jews living in virtually every country of the world. They have been sifted and scattered throughout the nations of the world. I have even met Jews in remote parts of Africa.

9:10 - *“All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.”* God was saying that He was going to bring evil upon them, but they were saying that evil would not overtake them. How wrong and deceived they were!

Part Five

The Restoration of Israel

9:11-15

Now we come to the fifth and final section of Amos, chapter 9:11-15, which we have entitled, “The Restoration of Israel.” Like many of the other prophetic books, the last few verses of the book of Amos are devoted to the restoration of Israel (see Hosea 14, Joel 3:18-21). God pronounced tremendous judgments upon Israel, but Israel will be restored at the Second Coming of Christ.

9:11 - *“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.”* This was quoted by the Apostle James in Acts 15:16, speaking of the Church. The Early Church clearly understood that this meant the spiritual revival of the kingdom of David. That is why it is very important to study the life of David.

The Tabernacle of David was erected on top of Mount Zion. The Ark of the Covenant was placed inside it and there was open access to the presence of God. David went in and sat in the presence of the Lord. The restoration of the Tabernacle of David has both a natural and a spiritual fulfillment. In the Millennium, the kingdom of David will be restored for Israel. However, there is also a spiritual fulfillment for the Early Church and the Last Day Church.

The Last Day Church will come to spiritual Mount Zion, the dwelling place of God in heaven. They will experience a revival of the praise and worship that David established on Mount Zion, and will also know the glory and presence of God that David knew.

9:12 - *“That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this.”* There is a natural fulfillment of this for Israel, when the Lord returns again in the Millennium. David will be resurrected in the Millennium. His kingdom will be resurrected as well, and he will rule over Edom.

9:13 - *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”* The harvest will be so great that the reaper will not be able to reap all the harvest before the plowman comes along behind him to plow up the ground for a fresh crop. This verse also underscores the fact that there will be a lack of reapers.

In the Millennium, the harvest will be so great that there will not be enough reapers to bring in the harvest. The plowmen for the next crop will overtake the reapers. However, this also has a spiritual fulfillment. There will be a tremendous harvest of souls in the last days. We are going to experience the greatest revival ever in the history of mankind.

I have experienced revival, and I know what happens in revival. That is why I stress that it is crucial for church leaders to be trained and ready. A person has to be properly trained before he can be given a position and responsibility. When revival comes, it will be a time when we need “all hands on deck.”

Pastors must prepare and train leaders, teachers, elders, and deacons so that they can delegate responsibilities, and can accommodate all the people that will come in during revival. Everyone who is trained and prepared will be needed to carry the load of revival. The message of the Lord for the Church now is to prepare for revival.

Many years ago in New Zealand, every Saturday afternoon we had baptismal services, but we did not do the baptising. The deacons did the baptising, because we did not have time to do it. The deacons would give the new converts a class on water baptism for six weeks, and then they would baptise them. We had 50 home group meetings. On one night of the week, we would teach the home group leaders what to teach in their home meetings.

On Tuesday evening we had a teaching service, with an attendance of about 1,000. Only 500 were from our church, and the rest were leaders from other churches. They would teach their churches on Sunday what we taught them on Tuesday. The tapes of our teachings went throughout the nation to many churches. New Zealand experienced national revival during that time. However, we could not do

everything ourselves. We relied heavily upon others to help us bring in the great harvest of souls.

9:14 - *“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.”* The Lord promised to restore the captivity of Israel. There are many confirmations of this in the Word of God.

Isaiah 58:12 says, “And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.” The complete restoration of Israel will take place when the Lord Jesus comes again and establishes His millennial reign upon earth.

This verse not only has a fulfillment in the Millennium for Israel, but it also has a fulfillment for the Church in the last days. The Lord will restore the backslider. One of the greatest messages of the last day revival is the restoration of churches, for many churches have known the way and have become desolate. In the revival in New Zealand, nearly every church was touched, and we were invited to many different churches to minister. We will not have enough church buildings for the revival that is coming.

“They shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof.” They will reap the fruit and partake of the fruit from the

seeds that they themselves have sown. This also applies to the Church. We will see the fruit of all our labours.

9:15 - *“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 spoke of many judgments that were going to come upon Israel, but he concludes with a promise from God that Israel would be restored. The end of the matter is good. Israel will be restored to the Lord with great joy and peace in the Millennium. At that time, the Lord will plant them in their land and nobody will ever again take them out.

The Church, just like Israel, has backslidden, but by God’s grace, the end of the matter is that the Church will be revived and restored unto the Lord. When you are *in* Christ, the end of the matter is *always* good; it is always tremendous blessing. Praise the Lord!

CONCLUSION

If there were a predominant message in this precious book, it would be the pathos from the heart of God pleading with His people to hear Him. God continually warned Israel that if they did not repent and return to Him, He would cut them off. Regretfully, Israel rejected the Lord. As a result, the Lord punished Israel and they ceased to be a nation.

The Apostle Paul warned Gentile believers in Romans 11:22-23, “For if God spared not the natural

branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” If God did not spare Israel, the natural branches of the olive tree, He will most assuredly not spare us either, for we have been grafted into the olive tree. May we, as Christians, take heed to the warnings in the book of Amos.

I exhort you, dear reader, to hearken to the Lord and live a life of righteousness and holiness all the days of your life so that you may experience the blessing and prosperity of the Lord.

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Introduction

It is believed that Obadiah is the oldest of the writing prophets. This is based upon the fact that he rebuked Edom for entering into the gate of God's people in the day of their calamity. This is a reference to 2 Kings 8:20-22 and 2 Chronicles 21:8-20 when the Philistines and Arabians broke into Jerusalem during Jehoram's reign, 848-841 B.C. The theme of the book of Obadiah is God's judgment upon Edom.

Outline

Part 1 The Judgment Upon Edom (1:1-14)

Part 2 The Day of the Lord (1:15-16)

Part 3 The Restoration of Israel (1:17-21)

Part One

The Judgment upon Edom

1:1-14

1:1 - *“The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom; We have heard a rumor from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.”* Obadiah’s name, which means “servant or worshipper of Jehovah,” is very significant. He was a faithful servant of the Lord who declared the Lord’s judgment upon Edom.

The theme of Obadiah is God’s judgment upon Edom, which was the region of land (southeast and southwest of the Dead Sea) that was inhabited by Esau (Gen. 25:30; 36:1). The Edomites were constant enemies of Israel throughout history.

Esau was Jacob’s brother. Jacob later became Israel and inherited the promises of Abraham. In order to properly understand Obadiah’s message, we must first take a look at the history of Edom (Esau), and his family line. Esau was the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham. God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son. However, after waiting for a long time, they became impatient. Sarah gave her handmaid, Hagar, to Abraham, and she gave birth to their son Ishmael. Then came the promised seed, Isaac. The promises of God to Abraham would be fulfilled in Isaac, not in Ishmael.

Isaac married Rebekah, and she gave birth to twins, Esau and Jacob, who create some very profound theological questions. One wonders why there were twins and not just one son to continue the line. Rebekah enquired of the Lord when she was pregnant and the Lord told her in Genesis 25:23, “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” Before they were even born, God said: “The elder shall serve the younger. Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.”

The Apostle Paul develops this thought in Romans 9:10-16, which says, “And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” This is a fundamental truth. It is not our strivings or efforts in the flesh, but the mercy of God that enables us to succeed.

As we look at these verses, the word “predestination” comes to our minds. Are some predestinated to hell and some predestinated to heaven? Romans 8:29 says, “For whom he

did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Those whom the Father foreknew, He predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.

All Scripture must flow together. No verse can contradict another verse. We are told by Paul that God desires everyone to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). God certainly does not predestinate someone to hell. Hell was created for the devil and his angels after they had fallen.

However, there is the free will of man, and knowing the end from the beginning, God knows how a man will use his free will. Therefore, God can prophesy the future because to God the future is just like the present. God can see all things and He knows all things. He knows what a man will do even before he is born. Josiah (1 Ki. 13:2) and Cyrus (Isa. 44:28-45:1-4) are two examples of this. God prophesied what they would do hundreds of years before they were born. These things must be taken into account when we consider God’s dealings with Jacob and Esau.

Why did Rebekah have twins, and not just one son? I do not pretend to give the full explanation here, but this is something that I offer for your consideration. When Rebekah and Isaac were united in marriage, two lines were joined. Rebekah’s brother, Laban, was a deceiver. There was much in the line of Rebekah that was displeasing to God. If all those problems had gone into Jacob, he would have had terrible problems, especially if he was to carry on Abraham’s lineage.

Thus two children were born, and in the womb, the two lines were separated. Esau had the opportunity to inherit the blessings because he was the firstborn. Yet, as so often happens throughout Scripture, the one who is given the opportunity does not take it. Vashti was the queen of Persia, but she lost her throne to Esther through defiance and disobedience. Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob, and could have inherited all the promises, but he lost the birthright because of immorality. The opportunity to excel was given to Esau, but he rejected it.

Parents will acknowledge that their children are different from each other. Each child is a composite of the two lines, of his father and mother, who formed him. There is no reason why God cannot give grace to overcome any problem in a person's lineage, because Romans 5:20 says that "where sin abounds, grace does much more abound." If we have problems, there is grace to overcome. We cannot say that we have problems only because our parents had them. God has provided the means to overcome those inherited problems. We are what we are because of our lineage, but we need to press in to receive grace to overcome those problems. *You are not destined to fail!*

Consider the first children of the human race—Cain and Abel. Cain was the firstborn and had the birthright. He should have ruled over Abel. God told Cain that if he did what was right he would rule over his brother Abel (Gen. 4:7). Cain could have turned to God and received grace, and if he had, he would have inherited the blessings of God.

You see, we must recognise our problems and cry out for grace to overcome them. Cain, Reuben, Vashti, and Esau all had opportunities, but they did not take advantage of them. For one reason or another they disqualified themselves. However, where sin abounds, grace does much more abound! Esau despised his inheritance and sold it for a bowl of pottage (Gen. 25:29-34). Esau is a type of Christians who despise and sell their birthright. I have met many people who, like Esau, have had wonderful opportunities, but because they did not deal with things in their lives, they disqualified themselves from the positions they held.

Saul is a tragic example of this. He was anointed king over Israel, but because he did not obey the Lord, he was replaced by David. David was anointed by Samuel to be king while Saul was still reigning, but he did not take the throne until after Saul died. David's anointing by Samuel produced tremendous antagonism between Saul and David. Saul had a divided heart—he had a love for righteousness, but he was also disobedient. He loved David, but he also hated him because he knew that David was going to replace him. That love-hate syndrome manifests itself very often when people are replaced by others.

Esau sought repentance but he did not find it (Heb. 12:17). Why did Esau not find repentance? We read in Amos 1:11, “Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off

all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever.”

Christ clearly tells us that those who do not forgive their brethren will not be forgiven by their Father in heaven (Mt. 6:15). Esau was not forgiven because he could not forgive Jacob or let go of his hatred for him. In Genesis chapter 32, we read concerning how Jacob and Esau met, and although it appears that they were reconciled to each other, the Word of God tells us that Esau never forgave Jacob. Esau was nice to Jacob’s face, but he was not repentant and did not forgive him. It is for this reason that Obadiah pronounced judgment upon Edom.

1:2 - *“Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.”* The Lord said that He would make Edom small among the heathen and greatly despised. The nation of Edom diminished in significance over the years. Today, Edom is part of the country of Jordan.

1:3 - *“The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?”* The root problem of Esau and his descendants, the Edomites, was pride. The pride of their heart deceived them and prevented them from repenting. With pride comes deception—self-deception. Esau had great hatred for Jacob (Amos 1:11). In 1 John 2:11 we read, “He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded

his eyes.” Pride and hatred, the two prevailing sins of Esau, blinded his spiritual eyes.

“Who dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high.” The Edomites built their houses in high and rocky places. They arrogantly boasted that they were impregnable. They said, *“Who shall bring me down to the ground?”* Petra, the famed ancient city built in the rocks, is located in the region of Edom.

1:4 - *“Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.”* The Edomites dwelt high up in the rocks like the eagles, but God said that He would bring them down. God said to them, “It does not matter where you are or where you make your habitation; I will bring you down.”

1:5-6 - *“If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? How are the things of Edom searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!”* Edom was at the crossroads of a major transportation route. They charged a certain amount of money for every camel train that passed through their territory. For that reason they were very wealthy merchants. They put all their riches into the rocks.

The Lord said that if a thief comes into a house, he takes as much as he can gather, but he leaves some things behind that he cannot easily take with him. Thieves do not generally

steal everything in a house. In like manner, when vineyard workers gather grapes, they usually leave some grapes behind. However, God said: “That is not the way it is going to be with Me. I am going to cause people to come into Edom who will take everything away from you.”

1:7 - *“All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.”* Edom would be troubled by his own friends, those with whom they broke bread.

In the Arab world and in the Middle East, if a person breaks bread with another person, it means that they are brothers for life. Breaking bread is very sacred to them. Jesus and the disciples broke bread together and had communion. The Early Church would break bread together from house to house, signifying that they were brothers forever and would defend one another.

It is almost poetic justice that the Edomites were betrayed by their closest friends, because the Edomites had betrayed their relatives, the Israelites. The kingdom of Jordan is related to Israel. If there is one country in the Arab world that should defend Israel, it is Jordan, because they are Israel’s relatives. Jordan is composed of three nations—Ammon, Moab, and Edom. Esau (Edom) is Jacob’s brother. Ammon and Moab were descendants of Lot, who was Abraham’s nephew.

All three of these nations are related to each other and to Israel. The blood of Moab actually flowed through the veins of David and Christ through Ruth the Moabitess. They are related to Israel by blood. Therefore, because Edom had betrayed that blood relationship, God was going to cause their closest allies to betray them.

1:8-9 - *“Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.”* God said He was going to destroy all their understanding and their wise men. The inhabitants of Teman, one of the principal cities of Edom, were renowned for their wisdom. Jeremiah 49:7 says, “Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?” Eliphaz, the friend of Job, was a Temanite (Job 4:1).

1:10 - *“For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.”* In verse 10 we see the reason for Edom’s destruction. As a result of Edom’s violence against Jacob, shame would cover Edom and it would be cut off forever. God hates it when brothers fight. The Lord becomes furious when we attack each other. If you rise up against a brother in the Lord, you are breaking the brotherly covenant.

1:11-14 - *“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 was 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.”

This is referring to a specific historical event recorded in 2 Chronicles 21:8-10 and 2 Kings 8:20-22, in the days of Jehoram (848-841 B.C.). Because of Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab, his son Jehoram, married Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. Jehoram did wickedly because of the influence of his wicked wife, Athaliah (2 Chr. 21:6). As a result, the Edomites revolted against Jehoram.

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

and spoiled it. The Edomites rejoiced when Jerusalem was broken into, and because of that, God counted the Edomites as one of them.

In verse 12, there are three progressive degrees of pleasure. The Edomites looked on the day of their brother, rejoiced, and then spoke proudly. When Edom heard how Jerusalem had been broken into, they rushed in to Jerusalem and stole many things (Obad. 13). So from three degrees of pleasure in verse 12, they went to three degrees of action against Judah in verse 13. They entered into their gate, looked upon their affliction, and laid hands upon their substance.

Then they inflicted three degrees of punishment upon them in verse 14. When the Arabians and Philistines came into Jerusalem and Judah, many of the Jews fled towards Edom, but Edom stood in the crossways and slew them as they were trying to escape, and took others captive and gave them to the Arabians. Consequently, God pronounced judgment upon Edom.

Part Two

The Day of the Lord

1:15-16

1:15 - *“For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.”* God said to Edom, “I am going to do to you as you did to your brother.” The phrase, “the day of the Lord,” is a phrase that reoccurs throughout the Minor Prophets. What is the day of the Lord? Amos 5:18 says, “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.” The day of the Lord speaks of a period of judgments leading up to the Second Coming. God said that the day of the Lord would be upon all the heathen, including Edom.

1:16 - *“For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.”* When the Arabians overran Jerusalem and Judah, the Edomites came and broke into the wine cellars and drank the wine upon God’s holy mountain.

Consequently, God said that the same thing was going to happen to them. God said to Edom: “You have drunk on My holy mountain, so now the heathen are going to drink continually of Edom’s wine, and it will be as though you never existed. They are going to devour you.”

Part Three

The Restoration of Israel

1:17-21

In Part 3, Obadiah speaks of the ultimate restoration of Israel. When Israel is restored by the Lord, it will judge Edom.

1:17 - *“But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.”* God is looking forward to the Millennium, when Israel will be restored again. There will be deliverance and holiness on Mount Zion. However, this also has a spiritual application for the Church. As the Church presses on toward spiritual Mount Zion, there will be mighty deliverance and holiness. The message of Zion is holiness.

1:18 - *“And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it.”* This refers to the last days, as well as to the time of the Maccabees. Israel will overrun Edom when the Lord returns.

1:19 - *“And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.”* When he is speaking

of the south he is speaking of Judah. The Gaza strip (the plain of the Philistines) will become Israel's permanently after the Lord returns. Gilead is on the other side of the Jordan River.

1:20 - *“And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.”* These two cities are at the extremities of the kingdom of Israel. The prophet was looking ahead to the time when Josiah governed over these places. However, it will be fulfilled in its entirety in the Millennium.

1:21 - *“And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.”* This verse was partially fulfilled during the period of the Maccabeans. However, its ultimate fulfillment will be in the Millennium. *“The kingdom shall be the Lord's,”* is most definitely speaking of the Millennium.

Scripture develops the great destruction upon Esau when the Lord returns. Isaiah 63:1-4 says: *“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments,*

and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.” Bozrah is the capital of Edom.

In Isaiah 63, we have the ultimate fulfillment of the judgments that Obadiah pronounced upon Edom. Clearly, when we see that phrase “the day of vengeance,” we are alerted to Isaiah 61:2, which says, “To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.”

When He was presented with the book of Isaiah, the Lord Jesus stopped reading at a comma. After saying, “To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” Jesus stopped and did not continue the rest of the verse: “the day of vengeance” (Lk. 4:17-19).

Therefore, the day of vengeance is understood to be the time of the Lord’s Second Coming. There will be tremendous vengeance reaped upon Edom at the Second Coming. God is going to absolutely destroy Edom. The kingdom of Jordan is in for a blood bath when the Lord returns. In the spiritual sense, there will be saviours (in the plural), who come up to spiritual Mount Zion, and judge the carnal.

Romans 11:26 tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Deliverer, will come out of Zion. He will have many Christians with Him who have been transformed into His image and will come up to Mount Zion. They will be saviours to their generations. May you, dear reader, be a saviour to your generation and be used mightily of the Lord!

CONCLUSION

We have been presented with the lives of two brothers. The elder, Esau, should have had the inheritance, but he despised and rejected it. The younger, Jacob, treasured the inheritance and received it. He inherited the land promised to Abraham. Esau was given the land of Edom, which is east of Israel. Jacob was warned never to despise his brother, but Esau always had great violence and anger against Jacob and his descendants, the Israelites.

When the opportunity arose, the Edomites drank upon the mountains of Jerusalem, and rejoiced over the destruction of Israel. Consequently, God said through Obadiah that Edom would be completely obliterated, and Israel would be blessed.

THE BOOK OF JONAH

Introduction

Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel (793-753 B.C.), possibly between the years of 785-782 B.C. The book of Jonah is the account of an incident that took place in the life of a man who was ordained to be a prophet of God.

Jonah's name means "a dove." Second Kings 14:23-25 gives us some historical background about Jonah, and the times in which he prophesied: "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher."

We are told that Jonah was born in Gathhepher, of the tribe of Zebulun. Jonah prophesied of enlargement, which came through Jeroboam II. During the reign of Jeroboam II, Israel experienced the greatest enlargement that it had known since the days of Solomon. However, Jeroboam II was not a good king.

We must be careful concerning prophecy. People can receive a good prophecy, but that does not mean that they are godly people. God prophesied through Jonah that enlargement would come upon northern Israel, and it was fulfilled. Jeroboam II reigned the longest of the kings of Israel. Longevity, enlargement, and blessing do not mean that someone is right in God's eyes.

Manasseh, king of Judah, reigned for 55 years—the longest of any king—but he was the most wicked of all the kings of Judah. Because of Manasseh's sins, God brought destruction upon Jerusalem. Just because a person is blessed and lives a long life, it does not mean necessarily that he is godly.

The theme of Jonah is the prophet's mission to announce the imminent destruction of Nineveh. There is also an underlying theme that we must recognize in order to really appreciate this book—Jonah was told to go to Nineveh, but instead he went the other way to Tarshish.

The question that arises is, "Why did Jonah not want to go to Nineveh?" In order to understand Jonah's reaction to the word of the Lord, we have to understand the historical background of this time. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, Israel's primary enemy at that time. The Assyrians had been invading the land of Israel and ravishing it for many years.

Jonah did not want to preach in Nineveh, because he knew that the Assyrians would repent and that God would forgive them and spare them. Jonah had unforgiveness in his heart

toward the Assyrians, and he wanted to see them completely destroyed by God. Thus the lesson of forgiveness is a very important message that is seen in the book of Jonah.

Outline

Part 1 Jonah's Call to Nineveh and His Rebellion

Part 2 Jonah's Deliverance From the Belly of the Whale

Part 3 Jonah Sent to Nineveh

Part 4 Jonah's Reaction and God's Dealings

Part One

Jonah's Call to Nineveh and His Rebellion

1:1-17

1:1-2 - *“Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”* Why did Jonah not want to go to Nineveh? Well, what was Nineveh? Nineveh was the largest city of the ancient times and the capital of Assyria. It was built originally by Nimrod (Gen. 10:9-11). According to classical historians, it was much larger than Babylon. It was situated on the left bank of the Tigris River, and was about 12 miles in circumference.

Prior to and during the early days of Jonah, Assyria had come up against Israel. They were hated by the Israelites because of their terrible cruelty. Jonah was from the tribe of Zebulun, which was located in the north around the Sea of Galilee. The Israelites in this geographic area were the first to experience the attacks of the invading Assyrian armies. No doubt, Jonah had seen the violent attacks of the Assyrians firsthand.

This is why Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. He knew God and the character of God—that God is gracious and merciful. When he was told to go to Nineveh to declare

that Nineveh would be destroyed, he knew that God was giving Nineveh an opportunity to repent and escape judgment. However, Jonah did not want the Assyrians to be forgiven after all they had done to Israel (Jon. 4:1-2).

1:3 - *“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”* Instead of going northeast to Nineveh, Jonah went southwest to Joppa to get on a boat to go to Tarshish, which is believed to have been a Phoenician port in Spain. The land of the Sidonians, north of Israel, was called Phoenicia. (Tyre and Zidon were cities of Phoenicia.) These Phoenicians were merchants who had gone throughout the Mediterranean Sea; and one of their ports was Tarshish in Spain. Even though Jonah disobeyed and went to Joppa, God was not going to let him get away, because He had a purpose for him to accomplish.

1:4-5 - *“But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.”*

While on board the ship sailing toward Tarshish, Jonah fell asleep. Meanwhile, the Lord sent a great wind and storm to

rock the boat. The storm was so bad that the ship almost broke in half. Everyone on board was frightened, and they all began crying to their own gods. Then they threw the baggage and merchandise off the ship, which they would not have done unless their lives had been in danger, because this was a merchant ship.

Years ago we were in the Cameroons traveling in a boat to a certain village to preach. It was so loaded down with people and luggage, that you could put your finger over the side of the boat and touch the water. We went through several rivers and then came out into the sea, into an area where some people had previously died. There was a tremendous storm, and it was only the mercy of God that we made it to our destination alive. It is very scary to be on a boat that is sinking.

1:6 - *“So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.”* These people were very religious. They did not look at the storm as just a natural occurrence, but as having come from the gods. They did not know which one, but they had enough sense of the ways of the gods in the lives of men to know that this storm had come for a reason.

1:7-8 - *“And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence*

comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?" They all decided to cast lots to see who was the cause of the storm, and of course Jonah's lot was chosen. Then they all said to Jonah, "Who are you and what have you done that you have brought this great evil upon us?"

1:9 - *"And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land."* Jonah immediately put his God above the gods of all the other people on board the ship by calling his God the God of heaven. He said that his God had made the sea and the dry land.

1:10-12 - *"Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you."* After Jonah had explained to them how he had fled from the presence of the Lord, they asked him what they should do to him to appease God.

Jonah told them that if they threw him into the sea, the storm would stop. This was a very honorable and courageous thing for Jonah to do, and moreover the only responsible thing to do. He knew that he had caused everyone on board to suffer because of his disobedience, and that the only right thing

was for them to throw him into the sea. Jonah also knew that if God did not save, it would mean certain death in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

1:13 - *“Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.”* They must not have been very far out at sea because they tried to get back to land; but God caused the waves to go against them. They were trying to row against God, but He would not allow them to succeed. He had a purpose in all this, and He was going to make sure that it was fulfilled. You cannot escape from God when He has put you in a situation to deal with something in your life.

1:14-16 - *“Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.”*

These were very honorable men, who did not want Jonah’s blood on their hands; so they cried out to Jehovah, threw Jonah overboard, feared the Lord greatly as a result of His stopping the storm. They offered sacrifices unto Him and made vows to Him. Thus it appears as though everyone on board was converted to the Lord as a result of this. You

see, even in a terrible situation, God can bring good out of it. Out of Jonah's disobedience, all of these people came to know the Lord.

God can
even bring
good out
of terrible
situations.

1:17 - *“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”* God was not finished with Jonah—He had prepared a great fish to swallow him up. The New Testament tells us that this great fish was a whale. The story of Jonah has been greatly disputed, but the Lord Himself confirmed its authenticity in Matthew 12:40, “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.”

This became a type of how many days the Lord would be buried before He was resurrected. History also confirms that this incident was possible. There have been records of people in the eighteenth century who fell overboard into the Mediterranean Sea and were swallowed by whales, and came out alive several days later, confirming the authenticity of Jonah's story.

Part Two

Jonah's Deliverance from the Belly of the Whale

2:1-10

Jonah chapter 2 is a record of Jonah's three-day stay in the belly of the whale, his prayer to God, and his deliverance. There is nothing like being in the belly of a whale to make a person turn to God.

2:1-2 - *“Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.”* How did Jonah survive in the belly of the whale? Whales do not masticate like humans. They swallow fish whole; and inside their stomach there is hydrochloric acid used to dissolve the fish.

Can you imagine what Jonah experienced? He would have been in total darkness, surrounded by decomposing fish, trying to stay above the water. It appears that Jonah was able to breathe the oxygen that the whale breathed in through its air bubble. Jonah cried unto the Lord in the belly of the whale and the Lord heard him.

2:3 - *“For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.”* Jonah recognised and

acknowledged the hand of God in everything that had happened to him. He said that the Lord threw him into the sea, not the men on the boat. There was no bitterness or unforgiveness in him towards those men at all.

2:4-5 - *“Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.”* It is very interesting to note that the phrases that Jonah uses in his prayer are all adaptations of various psalms. Verse 5 is adapted from Psalm 18:5. Whales also feed on weeds; thus weeds were getting wrapped around Jonah’s head. When God wants to get our attention, sometimes He uses extreme measures.

2:6 - *“I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.”* Jonah says he went to the bottoms of the mountains. Psalm 77:19 speaks about the paths in the oceans. The bottom of the ocean is not flat. There are all kinds of mountains in the seas, and different levels. Jonah must have gotten very sick as the whale went up and down.

2:7-8 - *“When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.”* Jonah was thinking of himself; and he wanted judgment to come upon the Assyrians (Nineveh). He was forsaking his own mercy because he did not want to show mercy to the

Assyrians, and he did not want God to show mercy to them either. We have to be very careful about this in our personal lives. Many people do not want God to bless their enemies who have done evil to them. That is the wrong attitude that God was trying to deal with in Jonah's life.

2:9 - *“But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.”* Jonah had undoubtedly consecrated himself to the Lord. Perhaps he had vowed unto the Lord when he was a young man and had told the Lord that he would do anything He told him to do and would go wherever He sent him. However, he did not keep his vows when he fled to Tarshish. God remembers our vows and promises to Him. Therefore, in the belly of the fish, Jonah renewed his vows unto the Lord.

2:10 - *“And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.”* The Lord heard Jonah's prayer. There is an awesome price to pay for disobedience. This is clearly illustrated in the life of Jonah; however, God is very gracious and forgiving. The Lord spoke to the fish, and the fish vomited Jonah out upon dry land.

It is amazing to me that members of the animal kingdom respond and obey when God speaks to them, but men, made in His likeness, are so slow to obey the Lord. Because of Jonah's positive confession about the Lord, saying that salvation is of the Lord, the Lord delivered him from the belly of the whale.

God caused good to come out of Jonah's disobedience and terrible failure. He used the three-day stay in the belly of the whale as a sign of His three-day stay in the nether parts of the earth. God can cause something good to come out of bad circumstances, even out of our failures.

In the words of our Lord Jesus, Jonah was a sign. In Luke 11:29 and Matthew 12:40, the Lord says that the three days and three nights that Jonah spent in the belly of a whale were a sign of the three days and three nights that He would spend in the heart of the earth after His crucifixion.

Part Three

Jonah Sent to Nineveh

3:1-10

3:1 - *“And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time.”* God is the God of the second chance. In the business world, you would immediately fire someone who disobeyed orders like Jonah did. However, God is very forgiving, longsuffering, and patient with His people. God spoke to Jonah twice and gave him a second chance. As humans, we give up on people very easily, but God does not give up on people until the very end.

This can be illustrated by the marred vessel that the potter made again (Jer. 18:4). He did not throw away the marred vessel, but fashioned it anew out of the same clay. God gave Israel a second chance, as Isaiah 11:11 says, “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left...”

In Scripture, many people were given a second chance. John Mark failed (leaving Paul and Barnabas) when he was young, but God gave him another chance, and he became a very fruitful minister. The Prodigal Son was given a second opportunity.

My wife and I were married by a man who was a “second chancer.” He had been a missionary to Africa, where he had

been mightily used of God; but he left the mission field because of his children. For years he was out of the call of God; but at the end of his life, he returned to Africa and saw many great miracles take place.

God did not discard Jonah after he disobeyed. Instead, He went to extreme measures to cause Jonah to return to Him. He caused a storm to arise, and the mariners were forced to throw all their valuable possessions and merchandise into the sea. The shipmaster must have lost a great deal of money, but probably gained his own soul in the end. Our disobedience is often very costly, and others often suffer because of it as well.

3:2 - *“Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.”* God commissioned Jonah again and renewed his calling. He gave him a second chance to go to Nineveh and preach the message of repentance. It is important to note that Jonah did not just come out of the belly of the whale and go straight to Nineveh. He had to be *recommissioned* first. Thank God for second opportunities.

The gifts and callings of God are without repentance (Rom. 11:29). God’s desire is to restore those who have backslidden. He wants to give them a second chance. Restoration must be one of the central themes of our messages. God not only wants to restore people to salvation, but as in the case of Jonah, He wants to restore them to their original callings.

3:3 - *“So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great*

city of three days' journey." Jonah had suffered because of his disobedience the first time; and he did not want to return to the whale's belly. So this time he obeyed God and went to Nineveh.

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which was the world power at that time. Scripture says that it took a three days' journey to cross the city. A day's journey in Jonah's time for a very fit man would be 30 miles. So we can reasonably say that a day's journey was 20 miles. Thus 20 miles a day for three days would equal 60 miles. That means that Nineveh was approximately 60 miles in circumference.

How do we reconcile this with the fact that classical historians record that the city of Nineveh was 12 miles in circumference? Well, there were literally four cities in this valley area. Nineveh had suburbs, and these cities composed the hub of the empire. It appears that it took a three days' journey (60 miles) to cross Nineveh, its suburbs, and the other cities in this valley.

3:4-5 - *"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."* The Spirit of the Lord was upon Jonah. His message was very simple, but very direct and to the point, saying, "In forty days Nineveh is going to be destroyed, and everyone is going to die."

This anointed message by the prophet brought all the people to their knees. They believed in the Lord and repented. Jonah

must have been a sight to behold. Can you imagine what Jonah looked like after being in the whale for three days and then being vomited out? Yet the power of the Lord was upon him, and the people repented at his preaching (Mt. 12:41).

3:6-9 - *“For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”*

Here we have a description of what real repentance and real revival is like. They proclaimed a fast. However, a fast by itself is not sufficient; people must turn away from iniquity and violence. That is what happened in Nineveh. The only solution to violence, crime, and iniquity is a God-given revival.

There was national repentance—everyone in Nineveh, including the king, repented. The king decreed that they were to turn away from violence and their evil way. (The Assyrians were notorious for their cruelty and violence.) When a king makes a decree, it affects everyone in his province. We see this in the history of the children of Israel. When there was a godly king, generally the whole nation

became godly and kept the Passover; but when there was a wicked king, the entire nation backslid. That is the power and influence of leaders.

3:10 - “*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.*” God repented of the evil that He said He would bring upon Nineveh. He did not judge them because they turned to Him and repented of their wicked ways.

We read in 2 Chronicles 7:14, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” The whole key to revival is *repentance*. If a nation repents, then God will spare the people from judgment and heal their land. That is why it is vital that the whole body of Christ around the world to pray for worldwide revival.

**The only solution to violence, crime,
and iniquity is a God-given revival!**

Part Four

Jonah's Reaction and God's Dealings

4:1-11

4:1 - *“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.”* In chapter 4 we see Jonah’s reaction to the repentance of Nineveh. He became very angry. Although he had preached to them, he did not want them to repent.

4:2-3 - *“And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.”* Jonah could not stomach the fact that God had forgiven his national enemy. The thought that it was his preaching that led them to repentance was unbearable to him. His hatred for the Assyrians had not changed, even after being in the belly of the whale.

Jonah’s attitude toward Assyria was not unique. Many countries had a hard time forgiving Germany after World War II. Jonah could not bear living with the fact that his enemy had been forgiven. He said he would rather die than see God bless the Assyrians.

Do you see how dangerous it is to harbor an offense against someone? Jonah was given a second chance by God, but he did not want God to be merciful to his enemies, the Assyrians, because there was unforgiveness in Jonah's heart toward them.

We have to realise that this is the whole reason why the book of Jonah exists. If Jonah had obeyed immediately and simply gone to Nineveh, we might have had a verse or two tucked away in the Kings or in the Chronicles, and that would be all that was mentioned about this incident. After all, he had prophesied for a long time and his prophecies of prosperity were contained in one small verse in 2 Kings 14.

What would have happened if Jonah had gone to Tarshish? He most likely would have become a merchant, living the rest of his life outside of God's will. His previous life would not have been remembered. He would have been cast away as one who forsook the ways of God. Our attitudes can cause us to miss the will of God.

The theme of Jonah is that God wants us to be gracious, to have mercy and forgiveness toward our enemies, and seek their restoration. God wants us to be able to rejoice in the repentance of others, even if they have done us evil. This is more important to God than anything else, it is what He wants to implant in our spirits.

4:4-5 - *“Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry? So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow,*

till he might see what would become of the city.” God asked Jonah if he had a right to be angry. Jonah walked out of the city and sat down to see if the city would be destroyed. It is wonderful to have a heart that is free from all offenses, so that we can think of every person who has ever done us wrong and have only love in our hearts for them instead of hatred.

4:6 - *“And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.”* A gourd is similar to a squash. The Lord miraculously caused a gourd to grow very large, so large that it gave Jonah shade from the sun, which made Jonah very happy.

4:7 - *“But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.”* The next morning, the Lord caused a worm to come and eat the gourd. It must have been a very large worm which ate the whole gourd. Do you see the extent to which God went to in order to turn Jonah’s heart toward Him?

4:8 - *“And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.”* Then God caused an east wind to come and the sun beat upon Jonah’s head. The heat was so intense that Jonah wanted to die. This reminds me of Elijah, who also asked the Lord to let him die when he was discouraged. Mercifully, God does not give us everything we ask for.

4:9 - *“And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.”* Jonah was full of anger. He told God that he had a right to be angry because the gourd had withered and his shade from the heat had been taken away. Jonah did not say as did Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

4:10-11 - *“Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?”*

The Lord orchestrated this whole event with the gourd to illustrate to Jonah his heart condition. Although Jonah had felt bad that the gourd, which he did not labour for, had withered, he did not care about all the people in Nineveh that were going to die. Should not God care for 60,000 people who could not discern their right hand from their left? It is amazing that God was even concerned about the animals in Nineveh.

God hears prayers even for animals. Let me tell you a story to illustrate this. In Switzerland many years ago, I ministered in several home meetings in a certain house. The owners of the house had a cow which could not get pregnant, and consequently did not produce any milk. Their livelihood depended upon this cow. One evening before the meeting, in obedience to the Lord, I went out into the field and laid my

hands on their cow. I prayed that God would cause it to calve. I came back about eight weeks later, and the cow was pregnant. God can do anything; He can even make a cow pregnant and cause a gourd to grow.

CONCLUSION

The book of Jonah is a timely message for our generation. We need to learn the lesson of forgiveness. We all struggle at times with forgiving our enemies, but as we cry out to the Lord, He will enable us to let go of our offenses and will cause us to be gracious to our enemies. By God's grace, that we may not have to learn it the hard way as Jonah did.

THE BOOK OF MICAH

Introduction

Micah (whose name means “who is like the Lord?”) prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and Pekah and Hoshea, the last two kings of Israel. Jotham reigned from 750-735 B.C., and Ahaz reigned from 735-715 B.C. (being co-regent with Jotham from 735-732 B.C.). Hezekiah reigned from 716-686 B.C. Pekah reigned from 752-732 B.C. Hoshea reigned from 732-722 B.C.

Therefore, the parameters of Micah’s ministry are from about 750-686 B.C., although he probably did not minister the whole time. A conservative time frame for Micah’s ministry is 750-710 B.C.

Isaiah and Hosea were contemporary prophets of Micah. However, Micah only began to prophesy after their ministries had been established. They prophesied during the time of Uzziah. The prophecies of Micah and Isaiah dovetail. They prophesy similar things because God confirms His messages through two or three witnesses. Every major prophecy in Scripture is confirmed by other prophecies.

Micah was not killed when he prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah, but when Jeremiah gave the same prophecy, the people in his day wanted to kill

him. Certain elders of Judah quoted Micah 3:12 in defense of the prophet 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 mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls” (Jer. 26:18-19).

Let us consider the historical background of the book of Micah. After the prosperity of the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II, which had been prophesied by Jonah, the Lord sent affliction upon Judah and Israel. In the reign of Jotham, God sent Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, against Judah (2 Ki. 15:37). They also came against Ahaz (2 Ki. 16:5), but could not overcome Jerusalem (Isa. 7:1; 8:13).

Then followed the Assyrian campaigns against Israel, the decimation of the Northern Kingdom, and the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. The Assyrians then brought Judah into subservience in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, finally overrunning Judah and besieging Jerusalem in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah’s reign.

In the days of Ahaz, the people of Judah were very afraid of foreign invasion but God gave them a promise that they would

not fall (Isa. 7:4-7). The Lord promised them in Isaiah 7:8, “For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.” Sixty-five years from Ahaz is several years beyond 722 B.C., the fall of Samaria, which is well into the reign of Ezar-haddon, king of Assyria. After the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C., Ezar-haddon took the Israelites out of northern Israel and dispersed them among the nations.

Isaiah 7:8 says that at this time they ceased to be a people. Why did it take such a long time to deport the Jews? King Sennacherib was responsible for overrunning Judah, but because he was on a campaign, he could not afford the luxury of halting the momentum. Sennacherib was moving south, and he had to continue on his campaign towards the south before he could return north to deport the Jews. Sennacherib continued south and surrounded Jerusalem. At that time God slew 185,000 of Sennacherib’s army, and Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, his capital, where he was assassinated by two of his sons.

Ezar-haddon then ascended the throne of Assyria, and gave the command for the Jews in northern Israel to be deported to other lands. Micah prophesied of the fall of Samaria before it took place, and he lived to see his prophecy fulfilled. He also prophesied of the fall of Jerusalem, which he did not live to see.

Outline

Micah consists basically of three messages, each beginning with a call to hear (1:2; 3:1; 6:1-2).

Part 1 The Impending Judgment Upon Israel (1:1-16)

Part 2 Israel's Punishment and Subsequent Restoration
(2:1-13)

Part 3 Condemnation of the Princes and Prophets (3:1-12)

Part 4 The Coming Glory and Peace of Jerusalem (4:1-13)

Part 5 The Suffering and Restoration of Zion (5:1-15)

Part 6 Prophetic and Religious Life of the People Contrasted
(6:1-16)

Part 7 Exhortation to Trust Not in Life's Values, but in God
Alone (7:1-20)

Part One

The Impending Judgment upon Israel

1:1-16

1:1 - *“The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.”* Micah was called the “Morasthite.” According to Strong’s Concordance, this means “an inhabitant of Moresheth-Gath,” which is mentioned in verse 14. Moresheth-Gath was a village located in Judah, southwest of Jerusalem. Micah prophesied concerning Samaria and Jerusalem, the capitals of the two kingdoms. In other words, Micah prophesied concerning all Israel.

1:2-4 - *“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. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.”* This is very similar to the prophecies of Amos, who prophesied before Micah.

Verse 2 forms the introduction to the prophet’s address. Deuteronomy 32:1 and Isaiah 1:2 also call heaven and earth

as witnesses against God's people. The contest between good and evil—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan—is watched by the angels in heaven and men below. The earth and all of God's creation tremble at His presence. Because He is a consuming fire, the very elements melt before Him.

1:5 - *“For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?”* The purpose of God's judgments is seen in this verse. Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom, was filled with idols and wickedness. Moreover, Ahaz, the king of Judah, was a very wicked man. Wicked people invariably turn to idols instead of God. When Ahaz turned to Assyria for help against Syria, he went to Assyria, saw the idols, and had them duplicated in Jerusalem.

What is the sin of Samaria? Idolatry and wickedness. Where were the high places of Judah? They were in Jerusalem, which was filled with idols as well. This situation is regretfully identical to the condition of many churches today, which are full of spiritual idolatry and wickedness.

The high places had existed in Jerusalem and in Judah since the time of Solomon. Although Solomon built the Temple of God, he also built high places on hills opposite Jerusalem. Then he built other temples and other altars for heathen gods. His wives turned his heart away from serving fully the only true God, the Holy One of Israel; and he turned to the gods of the heathen nations. Those high places became a snare to the

people of God, as there they would offer incense and sacrifices to other gods.

1:6 - *“Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.”* The Lord said He was going to obliterate Samaria, the capital city of Israel, and make it like a vineyard—a plowed field.

1:7 - *“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.”* In the temples that the Israelites made to worship other gods, especially Baal, there was cultic prostitution. It is hard to believe that the children of God, whom He had brought out of Egypt and redeemed by His own hand, had degenerated to such a terrible state.

1:8-9 - *“Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls. For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.”* Because of their great idolatry and wickedness, God said that their wound was incurable. What a terrible state to be in.

The Lord is speaking of Israel from a physician’s point of view. There are times when a physician must declare

that he can do nothing more for a person because the disease or illness is incurable and terminal. That was God's diagnosis of the state of Israel. God said that their sin and iniquity were deeply rooted in them and He could not cure them.

This is similar to God's description of His people in Isaiah 1:4-6, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

The sin of Israel was like leprosy or some other incurable disease that had spread throughout the whole body. Their wounds (iniquity) were incurable. Sometimes God says that of a church, because sin is not dealt with. If God says that a certain church or person is incurable, we should not try to cure them. If He cannot cure them, we most surely cannot either.

At a very large church in France many years ago, there was a certain lady who would come to service and ask for healing, but she was never healed. Then the Lord spoke to a man in the congregation that the reason she was not healed was

that she had a religious spirit. They prayed for her to be delivered of that demon, but she did not want to let it go. As a result, she was never healed and never set free of those demons. Some people are incurable. We must hear very clearly from the Lord before we give up on someone.

Because Israel refused to be cleansed of their iniquities, God had to remove the whole nation. The tribes of northern Israel were scattered all over the world, and even to this day many of them have never returned to their land.

If you have a plague, it does not stay in one place. It spreads like cancer. Verse 9 says that the incurable disease of Samaria came down into Judah, and then into Jerusalem. Idolatry started in Israel, and then it penetrated into Judah, and even came unto the gates of Jerusalem. God said there was only one thing that could be done—He had to cut off northern Israel so their iniquity of idolatry did not permeate Judah. He even had to cut off some of the cities of Judah that had been incurably infected with idolatry.

In order for a surgeon to save a person with cancer, he must completely remove the cancer. This is what God had to do with His people, Israel. If there is sin in a church, often God will remove everyone who is infected to preserve the church.

The English translation of verses 10-16 makes it very difficult to understand what Micah is saying. Therefore, we have to refer to the Hebrew because there is a play on words in several of the verses.

1:10 - *“Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.”* This is the same thing David said in 2 Samuel 1:20 when Saul had been slain: “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.” Why did they not want to declare it at Gath? Gath was an outpost of the Philistines very near Israel and Judah. They had a listening post there to find out what was happening in Judah and Israel, hoping to hear something which they could use to their advantage.

Then Micah said, “In the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.” Aphrah, which means “the house of dust,” is called Beth Ophrah in the NIV, and Beth-le-aphrah in the RSV and NASB translations. In other words, Micah was making a play on words, saying, “In the house of dust, roll around in the dust.”

1:11 - *“Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Bethazel; he shall receive of you his standing.”* Saphir means “beautiful” or “a beautiful town.” Zaanan means “sheep pastures.” Bethazel, also called Beth-ha-Etsel, means “the house of the side” or “house of the leader.” The location of these ancient towns is unknown, but the important thing to catch is the wordplay that Micah is making.

1:12 - *“For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem.”* Maroth means “bitter” or “bitter springs.” The inhabitants of Maroth were expecting good, but evil would come instead.

1:13 - *“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.”* The ancient city of Lachish was located in the lowlands southwest of Jerusalem. The city of Lachish was an important Canaanite city, which was conquered by Joshua (Josh. 10:5,23,32-33). Later Lachish was given to the tribe of Judah.

In Nineveh, there is a mural of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, taking Lachish. The Assyrians encountered great fortifications at Lachish, so they had to build up earthworks. The army advanced when the earthworks were ready. That is how the Romans took Masada. Lachish is called the “beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion” because it was there that the idolatry of Israel entered into Judah.

1:14 - *“Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moreshethgath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel.”* Moresheth-Gath means “a possession of Gath.” It was a city of Judah, but apparently was located very near the Philistine city of Gath. It also appears that it was the hometown of Micah. Achzib means “deceitful.” It was the name of a brook, which dried up in the summer, and deceived travelers who came expecting to find water. What it simply means is that it will not be a source of support to the kings of Israel. As wordplay, it means that the houses of deceitfulness will be deceitful.

1:15 - *“Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel.”*

Mareshah means “summit” or “place at the top.” It was the hometown of the prophet Eliezar, who prophesied against Jehoshaphat for joining with Ahaziah (2 Chr. 20:37). It is apparently one of the cities that Rehoboam fortified (2 Chr. 11:8). The thought here is that the Lord was going to bring a king to Mareshah who would destroy it.

About the city of Adullam:

1. It is an ancient city.
2. Judah’s friend Hirah was from Adullam (Gen. 38:1,12).
3. It was later conquered by Joshua (Josh. 12:15).
4. David took refuge in the cave at Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1).
5. King Rehoboam fortified Adullam and stationed soldiers there (2 Chr. 11:7).
6. It was inhabited by some of those who returned from Babylonian captivity (Neh. 11:30).

Micah used Adullam, where David sought refuge, to tell the Israelites that they would flee to Adullam as well, seeking to escape from their enemies who would rise up against them.

There are ten cities mentioned in verses 11-15 that surrounded Jerusalem (excluding Gath the Philistine city)—five cities to the north of Jerusalem and five cities to the south. The fact that there are ten of them speaks of a complete judgment. The enemy was going to devastate Jerusalem and the surrounding areas.

1:16 - *“Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.”* God told them to mourn for their children because they were going to die. In olden times, shaving one’s hair was a sign of mourning.

Part Two

Israel's Punishment and Subsequent Restoration

2:1-13

2:1 - *“Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.”* The Israelites were so given over to wickedness that they spent the night hours on their beds contemplating the wicked things that they were going to do. As soon as dawn broke, they would quickly get out of bed to start performing those evil things that they had imagined upon their beds. They did these things because it was in their power to do so. In other words, God did not restrain them. He let them go their own way and allowed them to perform wickedness.

2:2 - *“And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.”* The Israelites were very covetous. They would stop at nothing to get what they wanted, even if it belonged to someone else. They took things by violence. This is like Ahab, who oppressed Naboth because he wanted Naboth's vineyard. Because Naboth refused to give his inheritance to Ahab, Ahab killed him and took his vineyard by violence (1 Ki. 21). These are the great social sins of Israel that are delineated in Micah.

2:3 - *“Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, against this family [or the whole nation] do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil.”* Because of their wickedness and haughtiness, the Lord determined to bring evil upon that generation. He was going to put a heavy yoke around their necks, from which they would not be able to free themselves; and they would not be able to walk loftily any more.

Isaiah 3:16 says, “Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet.” God is saying, “I am going to take your pride away from you.” Isaiah and Micah dovetail beautifully and confirm each other’s messages.

2:4 - *“In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me! turning away he hath divided our fields.”* There would be lamentation and mourning in Israel, because of the judgments of God that would come upon the land. God was going to change the possession of Israel’s inheritance, the land of Canaan, and cause the heathen to possess the land. God would take away all their fields and give them to the heathen.

2:5 - *“Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the Lord.”* There were

no judges to lay a cord by cord. In other words, they were going to lose everything.

2:6 - *“Prophesy ye not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame.”* The false prophets were telling the people that God was not going to judge them. Micah told them to stop prophesying because they were not going to escape from God’s punishments.

2:7 - *“O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?”* God said that all these attacks and destructions were His doings. The Lord said in Isaiah 10:5-6: *“O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.”* It is God who brought the Assyrians against Israel and Judah.

God says that He gave them His words, but what did His words do to them? They did not allow His Word to apprehend them and change them; so it brought judgment against them. God’s Word does good to those who walk uprightly, but it brings judgment upon those who do not walk uprightly.

2:8 - *“Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by*

securely as men averse from war.” Now the prophet describes the terrible social sins of Israel. Violence was so widespread in Judah and in Israel that a man could be walking along minding his own business and be suddenly attacked and robbed of his robe. It was very dangerous at that time to travel (or even to walk on the streets) because there were robbers everywhere. The Israelites were violating Exodus 22:21, which says, “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

2:9 - *“The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.”* *The women of my people* refers to widows. Widows were the prey of everyone. They were even thrown out of their own houses. There was no law and order in Israel. The fatherless orphans were oppressed as well.

2:10 - *“Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.”* God was saying to Israel, in effect: “I brought you into the land of promise, and I told you it was your rest and you could stay there forever, but not any more. It is no longer your rest. You are going to be thrown out of the land because it is polluted.” The Lord had told Israel that the land of Canaan would be their place of rest (Deut. 12:9-10), but because of their sins they were going to be cast out.

When a crime is committed in a certain place, it actually stains that place or piece of ground. The Israelites had polluted the

land. It was filled with sin, and it was going to thrust them out, just as the land had cast out the Canaanites before because of their wickedness (Lev. 18:25,28). God told them to arise and depart because they were going to leave the land as captives.

2:11 - *“If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.”* The New King James Version reads: “If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, ‘I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,’ even he would be the prattler of this people.”

There were false prophets in the land who said that God was going to give wine and strong drink in abundance, whereas the true prophets were saying that judgment was coming. There was a tremendous mixture. The people loved those who would prophesy what they wanted to hear because it eased their conscience.

2:12-13 - *“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. The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them.”*

Chapter 2 ends with a note of hope. God had pronounced judgment upon Israel for their sins, but now He gives them

a promise of restoration to their land. God will assemble His people and restore them to their land. The Lord will gather His people together and multiply them as the sheep of Bozrah, which was well known for its abundance of sheep at that time.

In verse 13 we are told that the Lord will be Israel's liberator (or the One who breaks up their siege), leading them out of captivity. As their mighty King, He will go before them and lead the procession. This speaks of the ultimate restoration of Israel after the Second Coming of Christ.

Part Three

The Condemnation of the Princes and Prophets

3:1-12

Now we come to the second message in chapter 3. The prophet addresses the leaders of Israel. The corruption of the leaders had affected virtually every aspect and level of leadership. Both the civil rulers (the princes) and the spiritual leaders (the priests and the prophets) were corrupt and wicked. In 3:1-4, the prophet addressed the princes of Israel; in 3:5-8, Micah addressed the prophets of Israel; and in 3:9-12, he addressed all three classes of Israel's leaders: the princes, prophets, and priests.

3:1 - *“And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?”* The prophet Micah takes the princes and leaders of Israel to task because they had forsaken judgment and justice. Upholding justice in the land of Israel was their responsibility, but they were corrupt. The princes of Israel had perverted justice and oppressed the poor.

3:2-3 - *“Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron [or kettle].”* In

verses 2-3, there is a graphic description of the terrible wickedness of the leaders of Israel. They hated the good, but loved the evil. They were so wicked that they even flayed their own people. This is literal and also figurative. They devoured the people in the sense that they stole everything they had from them.

3:4 - *“Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.”* Because of Israel’s continual pattern of wickedness, the Lord would not hear them when they cried out to Him. He would hide His face from them.

Proverbs 1:28 says, “Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.” If we are sinning, God will not hear our prayers until we come to repentance. If we persecute others and perform wickedness, the Lord will not hear us in our day of trouble.

We must realise that sin separates us from God’s presence. We read in Isaiah 59:1-2, “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”

The prophet Isaiah told Israel that the problem was not that God could not hear or that His hand was not able to reach unto them, but that their iniquities had separated them from

God. Their sins caused God to hide His face from them. After David sinned with Bathsheba, he cried out to the Lord, “Cast me not away from thy presence...” (Ps. 51:11). David did not want to be separated from God because of his sin.

3:5 - *“Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.”* In verse 5-8, Micah addressed the prophets of Israel. The prophets had strayed from the Lord, and were causing the people to err.

The majority of the prophets of Israel at this time were corrupt. They persecuted those who would not give them something to eat. For a morsel of bread, they preached a popular message, saying there would be peace and prosperity in Israel, instead of a message of repentance. These prophets told the people that God was a God of love and that He would not judge them, encouraging the people to continue in their sins so that the people would love them and bless them financially.

There are many ministers today who are like this. They compromise the pure word of the Lord for personal gain. They want the acclaim and fame of this world, and they want everyone to love them. So they do not tell people the truth, for fear that they might lose their love and financial support. There are people everywhere proclaiming peace and prosperity, but the truth of the matter is that there are going to come terrible judgments upon the world in these last days, especially upon America and Israel, which will cause them to turn to the Lord.

It was not only the secular rulers (the princes) who were corrupt, but also the spiritual leaders (the prophets). That is very much like today. Not only are the princes and government leaders wicked, but also many of the spiritual leaders of the Church are causing people to err through false doctrines, such as divorce and remarriage.

3:6-7 - *“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.”* Those who have spoken lies and false prophecies will be punished with darkness. When people ask these prophets for a word from God, they will be ashamed because they do not have a word from the Lord.

3:8 - *“But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.”* Micah contrasted himself with the false prophets. Micah was full of the power of the Spirit. He confronted Israel with their sins. We will see this happen in the last days. The godly will arise and rebuke the wicked for sin. Those who do not compromise will be full of the power of the Spirit. What a glorious hope for the true prophets of God in these last days. The Lord is going to anoint us with His Spirit and power.

3:9-10 - *“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.” In the time of Micah, the people were building up Zion and Jerusalem, the religious headquarters of Judah, with blood and iniquity.

3:11 - *“The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us.”* The judges accepted bribes, and the priests and prophets ministered for money. They felt that they would not be punished because God was with them. When religious leaders leave the paths of righteousness, they usually seek to become wealthy. They want money to build their little kingdom. They often use all kinds of gimmicks to obtain money.

3:12 - *“Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.”* Because of their sin, God said that He was going to destroy Jerusalem and Zion.

Part Four

The Coming Glory and Peace of Jerusalem

4:1-13

4:1 - *“But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.”* This is speaking of the Church in the last days, and Israel in the Millennium. These next few verses pertain to the last days.

Chapter 3 ended with God saying that He was going to destroy Zion and Jerusalem, but in chapter 4 He says that Jerusalem is going to flourish and to exalt Zion. That, of course, refers to the last days. With prophecy, you have to understand the specific time period of its fulfillment.

God will fulfill His Word. His purposes are always fulfilled. If one generation does not respond, the Lord raises up their sons or grandsons, and they respond. God’s *ultimate* plan is never thwarted. When He determines to do something, it always comes to pass. Some people do not fulfill the purpose of God for their lives, but their calling does not die with them. Instead, God raises up someone else to fulfill that call. Many times it is someone in the same family who fulfills the call.

**God’s ultimate plan
is never thwarted!**

4:2 - *“And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”* This is a very important prophecy pertaining to the last days. It is repeated in Isaiah 2:2-3. The vision of Zion is primarily for the last days, and it is only now beginning to be revealed. This is going to be fulfilled in the last days in the Church. The nations shall come to Zion, the mountain of the Lord, and be taught His ways. The Church that presses on toward Mount Zion will teach the nations. This has a literal fulfillment for Israel during the Millennium.

4:3 - *“And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”* This is repeated in Isaiah 2:4.

We must see prophecies in their true perspective because Joel prophesies the exact opposite of Micah 4:3 in Joel 3:10, saying, “Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears.” Some people say that this is a contradiction, but it is not. Joel was prophesying of the last days, when Israel will be attacked by many nations. Micah is referring to the Millennium, when there will be peace and not wars. However, before there can be peace, there must be a battle.

4:4 - *“But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth*

of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.” This a beautiful picture of the Millennium. There will be peace, tranquility, and quietness. None will be able to make the people of God afraid.

4:5-7 - *“For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever. In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted. And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.”*

Micah, in essence, says, “No matter what everyone else around us is doing, we will trust in the Lord and walk in His name.” He continues by speaking of God healing the afflicted, and of those who have been driven out. This is speaking of the millennial reign of Christ, when Christ will reign from Mount Zion. The Lord will make Israel a strong nation once again.

4:8 - *“And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.”* All the prophecies and promises in Scripture are for Zion and those who abide in Zion. Zion will have the dominion and the preeminence in the last days.

4:9 - *“Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have*

taken thee as a woman in travail.” God now changes His train of thought. He tells Israel that they asked for a king, and wanted a king to rule over them instead of God. Now, where is their king to deliver them? God is speaking concerning the judgment that was going to shortly come upon them.

4:10 - *“Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.”* This important verse is confirmed by Isaiah. Micah is speaking of the Babylonian captivity that lasted 70 years, from 606 B.C. to 536 B.C. Moses also spoke concerning this in Deuteronomy 28:49-52.

Verse 10 shows us an extremely important principle of God. Since the time it was built by Nimrod, Babylon has been the center of witchcraft, spiritualism, and idolatry. In fact, all idolatry came from Babylon. Now Israel had become filled with idols, with at least one on every street in Jerusalem. God wanted to purge the Israelites of idolatry. How was He going to do it? By sending them to the centre of idolatry, Babylon.

You see this same principle at work in the life of Jacob. What was Jacob’s problem? Deceitfulness. His name even means “supplanter.” How did God cleanse Jacob from deceitfulness? He sent him to his uncle Laban, who was the epitome of

deceitfulness. Laban deceived Jacob over and over again, and that did a purifying work in Jacob's life and cleansed him of deceitfulness. Many times that is how God deals with a certain area in our lives.

4:11 - *“Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.”*

We must be conscious of the fact that the prophets did not prophesy in chronological order. We must know what time period they are speaking about; otherwise we will be very confused. In 4:1, Micah prophesied about the Millennium. In 4:9, he spoke of the Babylonian captivity (606-536 B.C.). In 4:11 he speaks of the last days. God is going to bring the nations against Jerusalem in the last days.

4:12-13 - *“But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. 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.”*

This is a prophecy concerning the last siege of Jerusalem prior to the Second Coming of the Lord. I have seen parts of the Second Coming in a vision. There will be much blood shed in Jerusalem, but the one place that is not overthrown is Mount Zion. The armies will break into Jerusalem, but Zion will not fall. It is the defenders of Zion that will see the Lord when He comes.

In verses 12-13, the Lord says to the nations that will come against Israel in the last days: “You do not understand what I am doing. You do not know My thoughts. I love Jerusalem. I love Judah and Israel. I am just using you to purify them, and I am going to bring you against Jerusalem, and you will rejoice. But you do not know My thoughts, for I am going to come and strengthen them, and Zion will thresh you down.” All the substance of the heathen will be dedicated unto the Lord.

Part Five

The Suffering and Restoration of Zion

5:1-15

5:1 - *“Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.”* Who is the judge of Israel? Jesus. This is prophetic of the time when Christ was struck by the guards in Matthew 27:30, just prior to His crucifixion.

5:2 - *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”* Everyone understood this verse to be referring to Christ. When Herod asked the scribes and priests where the Messiah would be born, they all unanimously said in Bethlehem of Judah (Mt. 2:3-6). All the Jews knew that Bethlehem was the birthplace of Christ.

The tragic thing is that the Jews missed their Messiah when He came. The majority of the population believed that Jesus had been born in Nazareth because He was raised there (Jn. 1:45-46; 7:52). They did not realise that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem means “the house of bread,” and Jesus is the Bread of Life.

5:3 - *“Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.”* God said that He was going to give Israel up. When would they be returned? When the travail comes up before God. The travail comes in the last days upon the people of Israel during the days of the last siege; and at His Second Coming the Lord will deliver them.

“The remnant of the brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.” This has two meanings. First of all, Jeremiah 30 speaks of the return of the remnant of Israel to their land, which we see today. However, there is also another return after the Lord comes again.

5:4 - *“And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.”* Micah is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah 7:15 says of Christ, “Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.” His name will be great unto the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6).

In verses 1-4, Micah has covered a myriad of topics. He starts off by prophesying the birthplace of the Messiah. In verse 3, he prophesies concerning the Second Coming of Christ. In verse 5, the prophet changes his train of thought and speaks of the Assyrian period.

5:5 - *“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.” *Seven and eight* is a Hebrew form of speech. It symbolises completeness. Micah says, “This man shall be the peace.” Which man is he referring to? Obviously, he is referring to Christ. Micah told the people that when the Assyrians came against them, the Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah, would be their peace.

When Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, came against Jerusalem, Hezekiah told the people to trust in the Lord because He was going to deliver them from the hands of Assyria. Hezekiah said in 2 Chronicles 32:8, “With [Sennacherib] is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.” Their confidence in the Lord preserved Hezekiah, Isaiah the prophet, and all of Jerusalem during this time (2 Ki. 18:20-22).

Jerusalem and Judah were reduced greatly by the Assyrians. The king of Assyria said to them in 2 Kings 18:23 that he would give them 2,000 horses, if they had that many men to ride them. Another description of the utter desolation of Jerusalem is found in Isaiah 1:8, which says, “And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.” Judah was reduced to virtually one city, Jerusalem. The Assyrian army had completely overrun Israel and Judah, but Hezekiah and Isaiah had unmovable confidence in the Lord.

Surrounded by the Assyrian army, Hezekiah said in 2 Chronicles 32:7, “Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him.” What an incredible statement to make! May we, too, have that same confidence in the Lord in our time of need and desperation.

5:6 - *“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 prophesied of how the angel of the Lord would slay 185,000 men of the Assyrian army camped around Jerusalem (Isa. 37:36). Then he looked further in time to the ultimate destruction of Nineveh by the Babylonians.

God can raise up a country to do His pleasure and bring judgment upon another, but the time comes when that nation will be judged in turn. There had to be a Judas to fulfill Scripture, but look what happened to him as a result of his actions. He was punished by God. The Assyrians were raised up by God to judge Jerusalem, but the Assyrians were in turn destroyed by the Babylonians.

That is why we must never rise up against someone else, even if they are wrong, because if we do, we will be punished in turn. Never rise up against a leader. Look what happened to Miriam when she rose up against Moses—she was cursed with leprosy.

5:7 - *“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.”* This description is very different than previous descriptions of the complete desolation of Israel. That is why we must discern between Israel and Judah. Judah will be a blessing wherever they go, but Israel will be a curse.

5:8 - *“And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.”* God scattered the Jews among the nations worldwide, but they have always risen to the top, no matter where they are. The Jews have influenced many nations. Nehemiah, Esther, and Mordecai rose to the top in Persia; and Daniel was promoted to be the Prime Minister of Babylon. Even though God has scattered the Jews, they still rise to the top wherever they are.

5:9-15 - *“Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. 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: And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds: And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers: Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. And I will pluck up thy*

groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.” These verses concern the tremendous destruction of the land of Assyria by the Babylonians. It concerns Assyria because it speaks of the fury of God upon the heathen.

Part Six

Prophetic and Religious Life of the People Contrasted

6:1-16

6:1-4 - *“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. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. 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.”*

This is the third and last message of Micah. As He so often does in the prophetic books, the Lord rehearses the history of the Exodus and the journey of the children of Israel. He tells them that it was He who delivered them out of Egyptian bondage and slavery. He sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam before them to lead them and guide them to the Promised Land. The Lord asks Israel what He has done to them that they have become weary and tired of Him.

6:5 - *“O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.”* The Lord told them to remember what Balak

had done to them when he hired Balaam to pronounce a curse upon them (Num. 22-24). However, Balaam was unable to curse Israel, because God had blessed Israel. The Lord turned the curse into a blessing (Deut. 23:5). God brought them across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land to Gilgal, where the people were circumcised.

6:6-8 - *“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”*

King David said in Psalm 40:6-8, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

When we consider Micah 6:6-8 and Psalm 40:6-8, we clearly see what the Lord wants. Even in the Old Testament, the Lord revealed in glimpses what He really wanted. What really pleases and delights His heart? It is not sacrifices and offerings, but those who walk uprightly—those who do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God. Without the necessary ingredients of justice, mercy, and humility, all our sacrifices are unacceptable to the Lord.

6:9 - *“The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.”* The rod refers to Assyria. Isaiah 10:5 says, “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.” It is clearly the Lord who sent Assyria against Israel. Israel should listen to the Lord, the one who hath appointed the rod (Assyria).

6:10-11 - *“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?”* Here again we see the terrible deceitfulness that there was in the commercial community in Israel at that time. They acquired treasures through deceitful practices. They would make the quantities smaller than they were supposed to be and overcharge people by using false balances.

God commanded in Leviticus 19:36, “Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.” The Lord said in Deuteronomy 25:14-16, “Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God.”

6:12 - *“For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is*

deceitful in their mouth.” Not only did the rich merchants deceive their customers, they were also full of violence. The inhabitants of the land were liars.

6:13-15 - *“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.”* The Lord was going to punish them severely. He was going to make them incurably sick. They would eat, but they would not be satisfied (Lev. 26:26). They would sow, but they would not reap their harvest. They would have olives, but would not anoint themselves with oil (Deut. 28:40). They would have wine, but would not be able to drink it. They would be totally devastated.

6:16 - *“For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.”* Omri was Ahab’s father, and more wicked than all his predecessors.

We read the Lord’s description of Omri in 1 Kings 16:25, “But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him.” Omri and his son Ahab promoted Baal worship in Israel during their reigns. Ahab

erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria (1 Ki. 16:31-32). The Israelites walked in the ways of Omri and Ahab, and as a result, the Lord brought desolation upon them and made them a reproach.

Part Seven

Trust Not in Life's Values, but in God Alone

7:1-20

7:1 - *“Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit.”* Micah is speaking about the economic difficulties of Israel. He compares their state to that of harvesters after harvest time when there is absolutely nothing left.

7:2 - *“The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.”* No place was safe in Israel. People would lay in wait to kill those passing by, even killing their own brothers and relatives.

7:3-4 - *“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.”* The people performed wickedness with both of their hands. The princes and the judges asked for bribes. The best of them were like thorny briars. God said He was going to bring the day of visitation upon them for all their wickedness.

7:5-6 - *“Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”* There was treachery everywhere in Israel. Not even a person’s own friends could be trusted. There was no faithfulness, not even between husband and wife.

Families were divided. The sons and daughters dishonored their parents. A man’s enemies were those of his own household. In Matthew 10:21,35-36, the Lord quotes Micah 7:6 to describe the conditions that will exist on earth just prior to the Second Coming.

7:7 - *“Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.”* Seeing all the wickedness around him, Micah decided to wait upon the God of his salvation. We have to realise that God will not permit wickedness to continue forever. Habakkuk said, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me” (Hab. 2:1). In the midst of all these difficulties, the key is to get alone with God and wait until He speaks to us.

7:8 - *“Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.”* Micah is speaking on behalf of the nation. He tells Israel’s enemies not to rejoice when Israel falls because it will rise again.

7:9 - *“I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.”* In verse 9, the prophet takes on the sins of the people, much like Daniel did. We read the words of the prophet in Daniel 9:5, *“We have sinned, and committed iniquity.”* Daniel was one of the most righteous men who has ever lived, but like Micah, he confessed the sins of his nation and asked God to forgive them.

7:10 - *“Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.”* All of Israel’s enemies, like Moab, Ammon, and Edom, that rejoiced when Jerusalem was overrun, will suffer the same punishment. The prophet says that the time has come when he will see them trodden down.

7:11-13 - *“In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.”* God is going to rebuild Israel and punish those who rejoiced over its calamity. The nations of the earth will be desolate because of their wickedness.

7:14-15 - *“Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of*

Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things.” The prophet prays that the Lord will feed His people with His shepherd’s staff. Micah is praying: “Oh, Lord, bring us back. Feed us and watch over us as in days past.”

7:16-18 - *“The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee. 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.”*

The great desolation that has come upon Israel in the past is going to be repeated again, but the end of the matter is that the remnant of Israel will inherit the land. God will not retain His anger against Israel forever. In His mercy He will forgive the Jews and restore them to their land.

7:19 - *“He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”* What is God’s purposes in His judgments upon Israel? Daniel 9:24 says, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

The purposes of God's judgments upon Israel are to purify Israel, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. God will cast their sins into the depths of the sea, as He does with our sins when we are born again.

7:20 - *"Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."* God will fulfill His promises to Abraham, His promises for the Church, and His promises for Israel. It is because of His covenant with Abraham that God says that He will show mercy to Abraham's seed.

CONCLUSION

Micah declared God's judgments upon Israel, but also its restoration and millennial blessings. In Micah, we see the cycle of events of a nation that was once faithful to God—but turned away from God and sinned generously. Israel experienced tremendous judgments, and then finally returned to God.

However, we should not be lulled into thinking that this will be the case with all believers who depart from God. Some never make it back to God, but instead go to hell. Therefore, we should take heed to these warnings. It is far better to "by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2:7).

In so doing, we will receive the commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE BOOK OF NAHUM

Introduction

Nahum means “comforter” or “consoler.” He prophesied after the fall of Thebes (No-Ammon), which was captured in 664/663 B.C. by Ashurbanipal (who reigned from 669-627 B.C.). However Nineveh, which fell in 612 B.C., was still standing when Nahum was prophesying.

He was a contemporary of Zephaniah and Jeremiah. He prophesied during the reigns of Manasseh (the end of his reign) and Ammon, and the beginning of Josiah’s reign. Many of the prophets prophesied for a long time, but the dates that we have are the only recorded part of their ministry.

The book of Nahum is a prophetic description of the destruction of the city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. Nahum’s message is very straightforward. In actuality, it is a prelude of God’s destruction and judgments upon all the heathen in the last days.

Outline

- Part 1 A Declaration of Judgment (1:1-15)
 - A. The burden (1:1)
 - B. A description of God's majesty (1:2-8)
 - C. A declaration of judgment to come (1:9-15)

- Part 2 The Siege and Destruction of Nineveh (2:1-13)
 - A. The description of the enemy that overthrew Nineveh and the opening of the river gates (2:1-6)
 - B. The capture of the queen (2:7)
 - C. The flight of the strong men (2:8)
 - D. The looting of the city (2:9-10)
 - E. The agony of the Ninevites who were formerly like lions (2:11-12)
 - F. God's judgment upon the city (2:13)

- Part 3 A Further Description of Nineveh's Wickedness and Overthrow (3:1-19)
 - A. Nineveh's sins (3:1-4)
 - B. Nineveh's destruction (3:5-19)

Part One

A Declaration of Judgment

1:1-15

1:1 - *“The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.”* The book of Nahum starts out in verse 1 with the burden of Nineveh. Nahum was an Elkoshite. An Elkoshite is an inhabitant of Elkosh, in Galilee. That part of the country had been overrun many times by the Assyrians. Thus, the people had experienced the cruelty and ravages which the Assyrian army had brought upon Israel.

1:2 - *“God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.”* We do well to contemplate God’s ways. The Word of God says clearly that vengeance belongs to God. Hebrews 10:30 says, “Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.” Clearly, God is a God of vengeance.

1:3 - *“The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.”* This is almost a direct quotation from Exodus 34:6-7, where it speaks of the graciousness and longsuffering of God.

When we contemplate Nineveh, we see the graciousness of God to that city in past generations. He sent Jonah to Nineveh,

and gave Nineveh an opportunity to repent, an opportunity which they took. Yet, because they returned to their wicked ways, judgment had to come upon them, for God does not acquit the wicked. Exodus 34:7 says concerning the Lord, “Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, and unto the third and to the fourth generation.” This is also brought out in Ezekiel chapter 20.

God looks at a nation as a compact entity. Therefore, when God looks at America, He looks at it from its inception in 1776 and onwards. All the generations of a nation are like one in the eyes of God. He looks at Israel in this same perspective. In the book of Nahum, God looks at Nineveh in its entirety. We have a tendency to divide generations. God does not do that; He looks at the whole of a nation, city, or family.

We must look at things from God’s point of view. When God deals with people and nations, He is looking at the whole time spectrum as being one entity. God judges a nation according to its entire existence. If a nation is good, the last generation reaps the blessings of all the previous generations, but if a nation is wicked, the last generation reaps all of the judgments of the previous generations when the cup of iniquity is filled up.

Christ said in Matthew 23:36 that all the iniquities of the Jewish race and past generations would come upon that generation. The generation that was living at the time of Christ filled up the cup of iniquity of past generations. Christ was crucified in A.D. 30.

Forty years later in A.D. 70, which would have been the next generation, the Romans crucified nearly 4,000 men when they destroyed Jerusalem. That generation received the judgment of the previous generation, which had crucified Christ.

This same principle also applies to the United States. Terrible judgments are going to come upon the United States. Unfortunately, we are in the generation that will receive the judgment of all the sins of past generations. When the cup of iniquity fills up, God is going to pour out His judgments upon the United States, but the United States will also experience the greatest revival ever in the history of mankind.

Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh because he knew that they would repent and God would forgive the Ninevites and not destroy them. Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and it was spared because the cup of iniquity did not fill up. God had decreed judgment upon them, but since they repented, the judgment did not come in their generation. However, judgment came at a later time when successive generations filled up the cup of iniquity. Thus there came a day of reckoning in 612 B.C. when Nineveh fell. About 150 years passed from the time they repented in Jonah's time to the time when God destroyed Nineveh.

We reap what we sow. That is an irrevocable principle of nature. If a man sows an oak seed, it will produce a mighty oak tree. The process can be slow or fast according to weather conditions, but it will produce an oak tree. The seed of a nation is going to produce what it is.

Judgment is going to come upon the United States because of what we have been sowing over the years. Nevertheless, America has a godly seed. It was founded upon righteousness, and it will ultimately be blessed by God. However, America will have to pay for all of its wickedness. It is the same with Israel. Because Abraham was the founding father of the nation of Israel, it has a godly seed, and Israel will be restored to God and blessed after it suffers the consequences of its sins.

When Nineveh was given an opportunity to repent at the time of Jonah, it repented, and God spared the city from destruction. However, after a time, the inhabitants of Nineveh returned to their wicked ways and filled up the cup of iniquity. Therefore, in the days of Nahum, many years after the ministry of Jonah, Nineveh had backslidden and was destined for destruction. God gave Nineveh an opportunity to repent, which they did for a time; but unfortunately their repentance was not long lasting, and in the end God destroyed them in 612 B.C.

1:4 - *“He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.”* Rivers were a great defense for cities in olden days. Nineveh, which was situated on the east bank of the Tigris, used canals and moats to protect the city, as did Babylon. Yet in the destruction of both of these cities, God caused the waters to dry up.

1:5-6 - *“The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and*

who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.” This is speaking principally of Nineveh, but there is also an application of God’s ultimate destruction of the heathen (Rev. 6:17).

1:7 - *“The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.”* In the midst of times of judgment, God’s comfort is seen in verse 7. We must understand that judgment comes from God. It is God who raises up one nation against another to fulfill His vengeance and judgments upon that nation. However, when God judges a nation, He declares that He will protect those in that country who trust in Him. Even during the Great Tribulation, the righteous will be protected by God, for God is a stronghold in the day of trouble.

1:8-9 - *“But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies. What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.”* He is speaking of the Assyrian army that surrounded Jerusalem, saying that they would not come back because He was going to destroy them. Nineveh was completely destroyed by the Babylonians.

1:10 - *“For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.”* God uses drunkenness to bring people down. He used drunkenness to destroy Nineveh and Babylon. God smote the inhabitants of both cities with the spirit of

drunkenness when they were surrounded by their enemies. That is what happened to Nineveh when it was surrounded by the Babylonians. God said in Jeremiah 51:39 that He would also smite Babylon with the spirit of drunkenness when it fell to the Medes and Persians. Drunkenness gives people a false sense of security.

1:11 - *“There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.”* This applies to several Assyrian kings, but to Sennacherib in particular. Sennacherib was the one who sought to overthrow Jerusalem. Nahum says that he imagined evil against the Lord because Jerusalem was God’s city. Therefore, Sennacherib not only attacked the Jews, but he attacked the Lord Himself.

1:12-13 - *“Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.”* There is always confirmation of true prophecy. Isaiah 10:27 confirms Nahum 1:12-13: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.”

Isaiah 10:5 says, “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.” At the time of Hezekiah, Sennacherib was being used by God to purify and punish Jerusalem. We read in Isaiah 10:12, “Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole

work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.”

God brought Sennacherib against Jerusalem to purify the Israelites. When He had finished His work in His people, He punished Sennacherib. The angel of the Lord slew 185,000 Assyrians that were encamped around Jerusalem, and Sennacherib returned to his own land where he was killed.

1:14 - *“And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.”* That is speaking about the royal house of Assyria, which would not arise again. The Assyrians were conquered by the Babylonians and have never risen to prominence again. Nineveh is very insignificant today.

1:15 - *“Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.”* Assyria was completely cut off. This was achieved in two parts. It had a partial fulfillment when God sent out His angel and destroyed the Assyrian army in the days of Hezekiah, but the ultimate fulfillment was the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C.

However, this is not only historical. The Lord is saying to us that if we will be wholehearted and perform the seven feasts

of the Lord (and seek to walk in the truths of those seven feasts), then God will cut off the wicked from our midst. We must spiritually keep all of the seven feasts of Israel in order to have victory. The seven feasts of the Lord, which are developed in Leviticus 23, are:

1. The Feast of Passover
2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread
3. The Feast of Firstfruits
4. The Feast of Pentecost
5. The Feast of Trumpets
6. The Feast of Atonement
7. The Feast of Tabernacles

The message of the seven feasts of the Lord will lead us into holiness, giving us clarity concerning revival and the last days. We ourselves want to experience all seven of the feasts and lead our churches into them as well.

(Please refer to our Study entitled *Feasts and Offerings* for further study.)

Part Two

The Siege and Destruction of Nineveh

2:1-13

In chapter 2 there is almost a joyfulness on the part of the prophet concerning the destruction of Nineveh, which he prophesies with great accuracy.

2:1 - *“He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily.”* This verse refers to the Babylonians who revolted against their masters the Assyrians and destroyed Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria.

2:2-6 - *“For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.”*

This is a description of the attack of the Babylonian army against the city of Nineveh, which was surrounded by water. Nineveh and Babylon are very similar. Nineveh was protected by the Tigris River, while Babylon was protected by the Euphrates River. Both appeared impregnable, but when God determines to destroy a city, nothing can save it. God sent a spirit of drunkenness upon the Assyrians, and the Babylonians were able to take the city. The gates (or dikes) controlled the flow of water from the Tigris River around Nineveh. They could not let the whole of the Tigris flow or it would completely wash away the walls. The Babylonians opened up the dikes (or gates), and flooded the walls of Nineveh, enabling them to easily take the city.

2:7 - *“And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts.”* The queen, Huzzab, was led away captive, along with her maids.

2:8 - *“But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back.”* The inhabitants of Nineveh would try to flee from the Babylonians, while others would cry, “Stand, stand with us,” but nobody would listen to their cry.

2:9 - *“Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture.”* This gives you an idea of the luxury there was in Nineveh. Sennacherib, as well as the other Assyrian kings, ravaged other kingdoms and took all their furniture, gold,

and silver and took it back to Nineveh. The Assyrians were extremely wealthy.

2:10 - *“She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.”* Nineveh would be left in a state of utter hopelessness after the Babylonian attack.

2:11 - *“Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion’s whelp, and none made them afraid?”* A lion does not fear anything. Any other animal will back down from humans, even elephants, but a lion will not. The lion is the king of the beasts. The prophet likens the Assyrians to lions. The old lion represents Sennacherib.

2:12 - *“The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.”* The thought here is that these kings ravished everyone. For centuries they went out into the neighboring countries and overran them, but the Lord said that it was their turn now to be overrun and ravaged by others.

2:13 - *“Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.”* Verse 13 speaks of the absolute destruction of Nineveh. God completely destroyed Nineveh because of the wickedness of the Assyrians.

Part Three

A Further Description of Nineveh's Wickedness and Overthrow

3:1-19

3:1-3 - *“Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses.”* The Babylonians rushed into the city of Nineveh and slew the Assyrians.

3:4 - *“Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.”* The Assyrians were renowned for their spiritism. They were guided by spiritism in their battles and other activities. They were very much like the Babylonians. We need the discerning of spirits in these last days because spiritism has a very strong influence upon many nations and peoples.

3:5 - *“Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.”*

Assyria was a mighty empire. It was thought to be impregnable, but God overcame it through the Babylonians.

3:6-7 - *“And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?”* Nineveh was completely destroyed and broken down. There was no one left to even mourn for her.

3:8-10 - *“Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.”*

King Ashurbanipal of Assyria overran Thebes, a strong royal city of the Pharaohs situated upon the Nile River. For almost 700 years it had been strengthened. The Assyrians dammed up the river at Thebes and conquered that great city, which seemed impenetrable. God is saying, “I overthrew Thebes, and I am going to overthrow Nineveh too.”

We will see this same thing take place in the Church. People who have large “empires” or ministries will fall if they do

not walk uprightly. There are many large churches that are built on iniquity, and God is going to expose their wickedness and bring them down. There is absolutely no substitute for humility and holiness.

3:11 - *“Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.”* Drunkenness was the key to the destruction of Nineveh.

3:12 - *“All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.”* All the other cities that were around Nineveh were linked in defense. They were all shaken by the Babylonians. He is likening their strongholds to fig trees. When the firstripe figs come, the husbandmen shake the tree and all the figs fall off. God is saying that the strongholds are going to be shaken and fall like the figs from the fig trees.

3:13 - *“Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.”* Fear was going to overcome them and cause their men to be like women. God used the spirit of drunkenness and the spirit of fear to break down Nineveh. The thought in the latter part of verse 13 is that all the strong gates of Nineveh had been thrown open. The Babylonians set fire to the city. Ashurbanipal was the next to the last king. Sinsariskun, a very cruel king, was the last king of Assyria. He actually burned to death in the destruction of Nineveh.

3:14 - *“Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln.”* God told the Assyrians that even if they tried to prepare for the siege, it would not help them. Nothing could deliver Nineveh from God’s judgment.

3:15 - *“There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts.”* In spite of their precautions, the city was destroyed by fire.

3:16 - *“Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away.”* Nineveh was not only a strong military city, but also a rich commercial city. The Church must be careful not to get involved with commerce because it can be very destructive.

3:17 - *“Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.”* God said the kings and the captains were just like grasshoppers.

3:18 - *“Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them.”* Those who had been watching over the Assyrians were slumbering in darkness. The rebels would be brought down into the dust and the people would be scattered to the mountains.

3:19 - *“There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?”* Nineveh has never risen again. In the last days, many nations and systems that were thought to be impregnable, like Nineveh, are going to fall. There is no substitute for holiness and humility. Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Pride will cause a person or a nation to fall, but humility brings honor and preservation. This is what happened to Nineveh. They were very proud, thinking that they could never fall. Therefore, God totally destroyed them.

CONCLUSION

The destruction of Nineveh resembles the manner in which God will destroy the heathen in the last days. The main theme of this book is that although God gave the heathen (Nineveh) an opportunity to repent in the time of Jonah (which they did), after some time had passed, they went back to their old ways; and so God destroyed them. Let us learn from these lessons of the book of Nahum.

Humility brings honor and preservation

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

Introduction

Habakkuk means “embrace.” He prophesied in the late days of Manasseh and the early days of Josiah, possibly from 650-628 B.C., although a later date is also possible. However, we must not be too precise on the exact dates of Habakkuk’s ministry because Scripture does not give them. There are about 38 years between the death of Manasseh and the first captivity in the fourth year of Jehoiakim’s reign.

Habakkuk and Zephaniah are prophets of what is called the Chaldean Period. They portray Babylon as the primary enemy. The book of Habakkuk takes place nearly 80 years after the fall of Samaria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Therefore, Habakkuk concentrates on Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. Habakkuk prophesied before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Outline

Part 1 The Cry of the Prophet Concerning Lawlessness
(1:1-4)

Part 2 The Chaldeans Raised Up In Judgment (1:5-11)

Part 3 The Prophet Cries Out that the Chaldeans are Worse
Than Israel (1:12-17)

Part 4 The Prophet Waits for God to Speak (2:1-4)

Part 5 The Song of Woes (2:5-20)

Part 6 A Psalm of God's Judgments Upon the Nations
(3:1-16)

Part 7 A Song of Triumph of the Redeemed in Times of
Distress (3:17-19)

Part One

The Cry of the Prophet Concerning Lawlessness

1:1-4

The first part of Habakkuk is the prophet's cry concerning lawlessness. This directs us to the period of time in the late years of Manasseh and the early years of Josiah before the reforms of Josiah had been implemented.

Although Israel had sinned, there was a godly seed, a remnant of people who still feared the Lord. God had brought the Israelites back to their land (Jer. 30) for basically two reasons: to be purified and to be judged by God for their sins. God raised up heathen nations to judge Israel. After God completes His work in Israel, He will punish those same heathen nations.

It is the same in the kingdom of God concerning His dealing with the Church. God uses those who are carnal to purify those who have problems but want to move on with God and be transformed into His image. God's whole purpose in everything He does is to purify the godly.

1:1-2 - *"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!"* Lawlessness and violence had crept into Judah, and had taken hold of the people. They were corrupt.

1:3 - *“Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.”* The fruit of the godly is peace (Ps. 37:37, Gal. 5:22). Strife and contention were in Judah because they had forsaken the ways of the Lord.

1:4 - *“Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.”* The terrible conditions of Israel that brought about their dispersion and captivity by God at the hand of the Assyrians have now taken hold of Judah. What was God’s answer for the terrible condition of Judah? He was going to use a foreign nation to punish them, hoping to purify them. God’s people were ripe for judgment. However, it is not the Assyrians that God raised up against Judah, but the Babylonians.

Part Two

The Chaldeans Raised Up in Judgment

1:5-11

Who did God raise up to purify and judge Judah? Babylon, as we see in verses 5-11. Moses prophesied of the Babylonian captivity of Judah about 900 years before it took place (Deut. 28:49-52). Although Moses did not mention the Babylonians by name, his prophecy clearly refers to Babylon. Jeremiah also spoke of the 70 years of captivity.

You see, the Babylonian captivity was declared in many parts of God's Word. This principle is important in Biblical interpretation, because if a doctrine is true, it will be confirmed in other parts of the Word of God.

1:5-6 - *“Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs.”* Everything originates with God. Nebuchadnezzar is called the servant of God in Jeremiah 25:9 because he performed the will of God by attacking Jerusalem and destroying it, since it was beyond cure.

In the days of Hezekiah, the Lord delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians and Sennacherib, but by the time of the prophet Habakkuk, the southern kingdom of Judah was so backslidden that there was no more hope of deliverance. God had determined that He would destroy Jerusalem because of its sins; and His people would be in Babylonian captivity for 70 years to purify them of idolatry.

God determined judgment upon Jerusalem because of the sins of King Manasseh (2 Ki. 21:11-14), but He gave revival in the time of Josiah. Between the reign of Manasseh and the destruction of Jerusalem was the greatest revival Jerusalem had ever known. However, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoichin, and Zedekiah succeeded Josiah and they turned the hearts of the people against the Lord. Just because God gives revival, it does not necessarily mean that judgment will not ultimately come. God is going to send revival to the United States, but judgment will also come.

1:7-8 - *“They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.”* The prophet is speaking of the cruelty of the Babylonians. We must remember that at this point the Babylonians have not yet arisen. The prophet is prophesying as though these events have already taken place.

1:9 - *“They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.”* In other words, nation after nation had been given into the hands of the Chaldeans by God.

1:10 - *“And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.”* As we have seen in Nahum, the Babylonians completely destroyed the great fortress of Nineveh.

1:11 - *“Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.”* At the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians were conscious that it was God who had raised them up. However, at the time of Belshazzar they said that it was their gods who had given them the victory. As a result, God destroyed them. God raised up Assyria against Israel, but then judged the Assyrians because they very proud and attributed their power to themselves (Isa. 10:5,12-13). We must always give all the glory and honor to God, realising that everything we accomplish is only by the strength of the Lord.

Part Three

The Prophet Cries Out that the Chaldeans Are Worse than Israel

1:12-17

1:12 - *“Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.”* God raised up the Babylonians to destroy the Assyrians and then to destroy Jerusalem. When God was through with Babylon, He destroyed it as well because of its tremendous wickedness.

God will raise up Babylon again in the last days. Revelation speaks of Mystery Babylon, which will emerge at the time of the Antichrist. It is a false religious system, as well as a war-faring state. Babylon will again attack Israel in the last days, but then God will destroy Babylon forever.

Before Israel entered the land, God had already declared judgment upon the heathen. Many times we wonder why God does not deal speedily with those who are doing evil to us. We must be patient with God and allow Him to accomplish His purposes in our lives through our enemies. Our enemies have been sent by God to purify us, but after they have served their purpose, God will destroy them.

**After our enemies
have served their
purpose, God will
destroy them!**

1:13 - *“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”* The prophet is saying that God has ordained the Chaldeans (or Babylonians) for judgment. God is using them for correction, but they are actually devouring people who are more righteous than they. God gave me these verses from Habakkuk when the Argentinians took over the Falkland Islands. God told me that He would fight for Great Britain. There was a mighty revival on board the British warships there. God sent doves to visit the British warships before Mirage air raids. As soon as they saw a dove, the British soldiers knew that a Mirage fighter plane was coming and they prepared their guns. The Lord actually prepared the British for the Argentinian attacks because the British were more righteous.

1:14-15 - *“And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.”* The Babylonians actually searched out the Jews in the caverns in Jerusalem where they were hiding, and killed many of them.

1:16-17 - *“Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?”* They were actually praising their own strength and giving glory to their own gods. The Babylonians had devastated many nations and did the same to Jerusalem.

Part Four

The Prophet Waits for God to Speak

2:1-4

Now we come to Part 4 of Habakkuk. In chapter 2, the prophet waits for the Lord to speak to him.

2:1 - *“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov’d.”* In the last days, we should hide ourselves away in our prayer closets and wait upon the Lord to speak to us. When you ask the Lord a question, patiently wait for Him to give you the answer.

The Lord says in Jeremiah 29:12-13, “Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” If we seek the Lord with all of our hearts, we will find Him and He will answer our prayers.

2:2-4 - *“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 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. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just*

shall live by his faith.” If we wait upon the Lord, He will speak to us as He did to the prophet Habakkuk.

Verse 3 emphasises the importance of writing down the vision and making it clearly understood so that those who read it may run. We need to impart to people a clear vision for their lives. Do not try to complicate the Gospel, but make it easy to be understood by the common people so that they can take the vision and run with it.

In verse 4 there is one of the most fundamental and important truths in all of God’s Word. The just shall live by his faith. The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in Romans 1:17 as the basis for his doctrine of justification by faith. We cannot live by our own faith; we must live by the faith of the Son of God.

In the Old Testament, the Lord showed what He really desires. He wants His people to live by faith, in contrast to those who lift themselves up in pride. Yet, as Deuteronomy 32:20 says, the children of Israel were children in whom was no faith. God wants a people who live by faith. It is faith that will bring us to maturity and perfection in Christ.

Part Five

The Song of Woes

2:5-20

2:5 - *“Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people.”* This is the description of the Babylonians. Nothing could satisfy them. They overran every nation, and yet they were never satisfied. This is also a description of the Antichrist.

“He transgresseth by wine.” Wine is very dangerous; it often leads to transgression. *“He enlargeth his desire as hell.”* Be careful what you desire. One of the attributes of hell is that it is never satisfied. Hell wants more and more damned souls. Be content with what God provides and ask the Lord to cleanse you of a love for worldly possessions.

2:6 - *“Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!”* The thought here of *“he ladeth himself with thick clay”* means that he builds tremendous fortresses.

2:7 - *“Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties*

unto them?” This refers to the Medes and Persians who were raised up by God to destroy Babylon. Even before Babylon destroyed Assyria, and replaced it as the dominant power, the prophet Habakkuk declared that another nation, Persia, would destroy Babylon.

2:8 - *“Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men’s blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.”* This is speaking of the Chaldeans who were very violent and bloody people. The *“remnant of the people”* referred to the Persians, who came in and spoiled the Babylonians.

Isaiah prophesied concerning the destruction of Babylon as well. Isaiah prophetically declared name of the Persian king (Cyrus) who would destroy Babylon about 150 years before he was even born (Isa. 45:1-4). Isaiah, who lived during the time of the Assyrian empire, prophesied that the Babylonian empire (which succeeded the Assyrian empire) would fall to the Persian Empire. We need that same prophetic mantle in these last days.

2:9 - *“Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!”* The Babylonians coveted the possessions of others and took them by force. Covetousness leads to violence. They raided other countries and brought back their riches to Babylon to build up their kingdom.

2:10-11 - *“Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.”* Babylon brought about its own destruction by killing many people. The sins of the Babylonians absolutely polluted their palaces. That is why God decreed that it would never be built again, but that it would be the habitation of owls and wild beasts. Even the very stones of Babylon would testify against it.

2:12 - *“Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!”* This is exactly how Babylon was founded and established, upon iniquity and with blood. The Babylonians made Babylon such a great city through violence and bloodshed.

2:13 - *“Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?”* The prophet says, “Is it really God’s will for people to weary themselves for the vanities of Babylon?”

2:14 - *“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”* This beautiful little verse is tucked away in the middle of all these terrible judgments upon Babylon. The last days will be a time of great judgment, but the Church will see the glory of the Lord cover the earth. There will be a worldwide manifestation of the glory of God in these last days. We read in Numbers 14:21, “But as truly

as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.”

2:15 - *“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!”* The Lord quickened this verse me when the head of the FBI was trying to tempt some of the U.S. senators in order to cause them to fall. It is a terrible thing to seek to cause others to fall. We do not want to be a stumblingblock to others; we want to lead them to salvation.

2:16 - *“Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD’S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.”* Babylon fell to Persia during the reign of Belshazzar because it was filled with the spirit of drunkenness.

2:17-19 - *“For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men’s blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.”* God said that their idols, made of wood and stone,

were foolish. Babylon was destroyed because of its idolatry and violence.

2:20 - *“But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.”* Keep silence before the Lord. This is an expression used to denote a time of profound judgment upon the earth. It is analogous to a king sitting upon his throne preparing to pronounce a judgment or make a decree. Everyone is in complete silence until after he speaks. Habakkuk saw the King of Kings enter into the Holy of Holies in heaven above. All the world keeps silence and awaits His judgments.

Part Six

A Psalm of God's Judgments upon the Nations

3:1-16

3:1-2 - *“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”* This prayer was actually answered during the great revival in the reign of Josiah prior to the first siege of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. and its final destruction in 586 B.C. The greatest revival that Israel had ever experienced took place in the days of Josiah (2 Chr. 35:18), about 40 years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

This prayer of Habakkuk for revival speaks not only of the revival of Josiah, but also prophetically of a great last-day revival before the Great Tribulation. As the prophet Joel declared, we will experience the “latter rain” outpouring of the Spirit of God in these last days. The last day revival is going to be the greatest revival ever in the history of mankind, and after that revival, there will be tremendous judgments because revival always precedes judgment.

3:3 - *“God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.”* Teman was a city in Edom renowned

for its wisdom. It was near Bozrah (Isa. 63:1). This speaks of God's judgment upon that part of the land.

3:4 - *“And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.”* This thought of horns symbolises the power of the Holy Spirit.

3:5-7 - *“Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.”* Cushan and Midian are in Saudi Arabia. This is certainly speaking of the tremendous judgments that God is going to bring upon those nations at His Second Coming.

3:8-9 - *“Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation? Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.”* This also speaks of the Second Coming in a certain sense. Zechariah develops this further.

3:10-12 - *“The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went,*

and at the shining of thy glittering spear. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.” This speaks of judgment upon all the nations that are going to come against Jerusalem in the last days.

3:13 - *“Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.”* God waits for the cup of iniquity to fill up, and then He comes to deliver His people. There will be a tremendous bloodshed around Jerusalem when God comes again to fight for His people and deliver them at His Second Coming.

The siege of Jerusalem from 605 B.C. to 586 B.C., and the eventual fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., is a type of the last siege of Jerusalem before the Lord comes. Jerusalem will be under siege again in the last days and will fall, with the exception Zion. Then the Lord Jesus will return.

The purpose of all these judgments upon Israel is to purify Israel. False doctrine also has this same effect. Unfortunately, many people are deceived by false doctrines and teachings, but through these heresies the Lord purifies His Church of those who do not love the truth.

Josiah went to fight against Pharaoh Necco of Egypt. Pharaoh Necco warned him by the Spirit of God not to come and fight with him because he would be slain (2 Chr. 35:20-24). He told Josiah to get out of the way because God had commanded

him to go against Charchemish (the Babylonians), but Josiah would not listen to him. Josiah went out against him, and was slain at Armageddon, in the valley of Megiddo.

I believe this is a strong warning for believers. We should not devote our time to fighting the enemy. When God has finished His purposes with our enemies, He will destroy them. Josiah died prematurely and the revival stopped because he fought an enemy that God had not called him to fight. As believers, we should not get sidetracked with causes and crusades. Do not campaign against things like abortion, because it is a spirit of murder, which we cannot fight with flesh and blood. Do not campaign against evil; just preach the truth.

Many years ago in New Zealand, I knew a man who took a pastorship in a certain city where there were many people involved in spiritism. He stirred up the local Christians against the spiritists and organised a march against them. Tragically, this man ended up falling into adultery and losing his ministry because he was on a “crusade.” The crusading church is usually the one that is backslidden. Yes, we must stand up for righteousness, but we should not have a crusading spirit.

3:14 - *“Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.”* He is speaking of the terrible wickedness of the nations that would be judged.

3:15-16 - *“Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters. When I heard, my belly*

trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.” The prophet said, “Oh, that I may be at rest in the day of trouble.” We want to come into rest in these last days when there will be trouble on every side (Zeph. 2:3).

Part Seven

A Song of Triumph of the Redeemed in Times of Distress

3:17-19

Habakkuk speaks about perilous times that were coming upon Israel in his day, and in our day too, but he ends with a note of victory.

3:17 - *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.”* This is a terrible famine. One could not have a worse economic disaster than this, but it is emblematic of what the last days will be like.

3:18 - *“Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* Habakkuk says that he is going to rejoice in this time of trouble. We want to have a rejoicing spirit. Even though there are terrible judgments upon the earth, and we go through trials in this life, we should rejoice in the Lord at all times.

3:19 - *“The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.”* In other words, we want to rejoice in the Lord

and walk upon the high places, while the rest of the world is undergoing judgment. There is tremendous victory if you have joy and rest in your spirit, no matter what is happening around you. In the eye of the storm, there is calm.

**We should
rejoice in
the Lord at
all times!**

CONCLUSION

Habakkuk begins by speaking about the Babylonian invasion of Judah and Jerusalem. Then he speaks about the great judgments that would come upon Babylon, which are a type of the judgments upon Mystery Babylon, the Antichrist, and all the heathen in the last days. However, Habakkuk ends with a note of victory. There is deliverance and joy for the righteous in these last days.

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

Introduction

The religious state of Judah had deteriorated since the days of Hezekiah due to the idolatry of Manasseh and Ammon. The boy king Josiah, sought the Lord, purged the temple, and held the greatest Passover ever in Judah.

The start of Assyria's woes was caused by the Scythians, who were a part of Persia. Due to their attack in 632 B.C. during the last days of Ashurbanipal (669-627 B.C.), the Assyrians' grip upon Judah and Israel diminished. Josiah was able to take back much of the territory of Israel under the United Kingdom that the Assyrians had occupied for several years because the Assyrians had to retreat to defend their territories that were being attacked from the north by the Scythians.

Assyria was further weakened through Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon, who conquered Nineveh in 612 B.C.

Zephaniah lived during the Babylonian or Chaldean period when Babylon was the primary enemy of Judah. A key to understanding the messages of the prophets is to know the significance of their names, because their names reveal the theme of their messages. Zephaniah means "Jehovah hides" or "he whom Jehovah hides."

The theme of the book of Zephaniah is "to be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger" (Zeph. 2:3). Zephaniah exhorts us to

do certain things so that God will hide us in the Day of Judgment. Therefore, his message is one that we really need to concentrate on so that we may be spared in these last days when God's judgments come upon the earth.

There was a national revival in the days of Josiah that serves as a type of the last-day revival. However, in spite of Josiah's revival and territorial conquests, Zephaniah warned of coming judgments (as did Huldah the prophetess), which occurred after the death of Josiah. Because of Josiah's godly life, God promised that the judgments would come after Josiah's death.

The greatest revival that Israel had ever known took place in the eighteenth year of Josiah, when he was 25 years of age (2 Chr. 35:18). Jeremiah was possibly 27 years old, and Zephaniah was probably younger. Thus this revival was led by three very young men—Josiah, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah. Huldah the prophetess also had an instrumental role in the revival (2 Chr. 34:21-28).

Zephaniah has been called "the resume of all the prophets" because many of the main themes of the other prophets can be found in his book. Zephaniah starts off with a theme of judgments. It is important to understand that following Josiah, there was Jehoahaz (who reigned for a few months), Jehoiakim (11 years), Jehoichin (a few months), and Zedekiah (11 years). Thus, after the death of Josiah there were only 22 or 23 years before the total destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. There was a mighty revival before the siege of Jerusalem. This is so important because the Word of God is filled with types and anti-types.

There are three principal sieges and destructions of Jerusalem. The first one was in 586 B.C., during the reign of the last king of Judah, Zedekiah. The next one was in A.D. 70, by the Romans, led by Titus. This was prophesied by Christ (Mt. 24:1-2). The last siege of Jerusalem, will be in the last days, just prior to the Second Coming of Christ, as we are told by Zechariah.

We have already stated that revival precedes judgment. How do we prove that from the Word of God? Well, just before each siege of Jerusalem there were mighty revivals. Just before the first siege in 586 B.C., there was a mighty revival under Josiah. Then before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, there was the revival under the ministry of Christ, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Early Church (the former rain of Joel 2).

Therefore, we can deduce that prior to the third and final siege of Jerusalem, there will be a mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God, and the greatest revival that the world has ever known. This is one of the reasons why we are waiting for and expecting a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in these last days. Joel spoke of this revival as the latter rain. The latter rain brings the crop to maturity; and that is the purpose of the last day revival. Zephaniah ministered during a time of revival and warned of coming destruction.

In the siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and in the siege of A.D. 70, the inhabitants were told to flee Jerusalem. Jeremiah told the inhabitants to go out of Jerusalem. King

Jehoichin did and he was well treated. In A.D. 70, the Romans soldiers paused on their way to Jerusalem, and the Church had prophecies to get out of Jerusalem. Thus the Christians escaped out of Jerusalem prior to the destruction by the Romans.

The Lord Himself said in Matthew 24:15-16, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation... let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” In the sieges of 586 B.C. and A.D. 70, those who listened to the Lord were spared. Therefore, those who listen to what the Lord says will be spared in the last siege of Jerusalem.

The last days are times of great delusion and judgment on one hand and great glory on the other. We read in Isaiah 60:1-2, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.” There will be judgment, darkness (delusion), and light in the last days all at the same time. The glory of God will shine upon His Church in darkness.

Daniel 12:3 says, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” This is spoken in the context of the Great Tribulation, during a time of great darkness and great trouble (Dan. 12:1). Therefore, it is very clear from Scripture and history that revival precedes judgment.

Outline

Part 1 The Day of the Lord's Judgment (1:1-18)

- A. The Day of the Lord's Sacrifice
- B. The Great Day of the Lord
- C. The Voice of the Day of the Lord
- D. The Day of Wrath
- E. The Day of Trouble And Distress

Part 2 The Admonition To Seek To Be Hidden (2:1-3)

Part 3 Judgment Upon Different Nations (2:4-15)

- A. Philistines (2:4-7)
- B. Moab and Ammon (2:8-11)
- C. Ethiopia (2:12)
- D. Assyria (2:13-15)

Part 4 Woe Upon Jerusalem For Refusing To Seek God and Repent (3:1-8)

Part 5 The Remnant Shall Be Redeemed In Purity (3:9-20)

Part One

The Day of the Lord's Judgment

1:1-18

1:1 - *“The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.”* Verse 1 speaks of Zephaniah’s genealogy and the times in which he prophesied. We have already commented on these things in the introduction.

1:2-3 - *“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.”* This can only have its ultimate fulfillment in the last days, because I am not aware of any time in history when the seas and the fish came under judgment, although it is prophesied of in the book of Revelation (Rev. 8:8-9; 16:3-4). Zephaniah was speaking of the time of the Babylonian judgments, but he also prophesies of the last days as well.

1:4 - *“I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests.”* The Lord said He was going to *“cut off the remnant of Baal from this place.”* To

understand this phrase “the remnant of Baal,” we have to go back into the history of Israel to the time of Solomon, who erected temples to heathen gods on the Mount of Olives and in other places. A duality of worship came into the kingdom because his heart was taken away by strange women. He worshipped Molech and other gods.

Second Kings 23:5 says that the kings of Judah appointed priests to minister in these heathen temples. Because of that there continued to be a duality of worship, except in Josiah’s reign. Nobody did away with that duality of worship except Josiah. The last great revival removed idolatry, at least for a time. The Minor Prophets give us an insight, not only into the historical events of Israel, but into last day events. Josiah’s revival brought a restoration of true and undefiled worship just before the siege of Jerusalem. Therefore, we can expect that the last-day revival will bring a restoration of true worship in the Church.

Josiah was a remarkable king. He was prophesied of by name nearly 300 years before he was born (1 Ki. 13:2). Cyrus was prophesied of by name 150 years before his birth; the Lord Jesus was prophesied of by name beforehand, too. One of the things prophesied concerning Josiah was that he would obliterate the altars erected to false gods. Obviously, there were still some heathen worshippers (a remnant of Baal) in Judah, but the Lord spoke through Zephaniah saying, “I am going to cut off the remnant of Baal—the remnant of those who are still worshipping other gods.” The Chemarims are basically the

black-coated priests who served at the altars of Baal. They were going to be cut off too, along with the false priests.

1:5 - *“And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham.”* Among Muslims, a certain sect worships the sun and their other gods upon their housetops early in the morning. That was a common practice in false religions. Those who worship other gods, upon their housetops, are going to be destroyed.

1:6 - *“And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for him.”* The Lord says that all the sinners are going to be destroyed. Notice though, that included in this list of those to be destroyed are those who have not sought the Lord.

1:7 - *“Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.”* This is historical and prophetic. Historically, this is speaking of the time when the Babylonians came against Jerusalem, causing a lot of bloodshed. Prophetically, this is speaking of the last siege of Jerusalem. Isaiah 34:1-8 coincides with this. Isaiah 34:6 speaks of a sacrifice also, referring to a slaughter. That thought of a sacrifice is repeated in the book of Revelation. It speaks of a time of tremendous slaughter, when the Lord bids all His guests, all the fowls of the air, to come feed off the carcasses of the slain.

1:8 - *“And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD’S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.”* Strange apparel means foreign clothing. It has a dual connotation. There were two political parties in Jerusalem at this time. One looked towards Egypt, and the other party looked towards Babylon.

In England, during World War II, we were expecting a German invasion. Some of the people in England were learning German, so that when Germany invaded England, they would be able to talk to them and receive preferential treatment.

This is what some of the Israelites were doing. Some of the princes wore clothing like the Egyptians, and some wore clothing like the Babylonians. If the Babylonians did invade them, they would be wearing Babylonish garments. They thought that in so doing they would get preferential treatment. There is of course, a spiritual connotation to this. The saints are clothed, spiritually, with long white garments, but there is other clothing.

One time when we were in Greece, two female preachers had been to the place before we arrived. A godly woman in the assembly said that she had her eyes opened, and she saw the white, spiritual garments of these two ladies, but then she saw the garments under those white garments, and they were black. We must make sure that our spiritual garments are pure white.

1:9 - *“In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit.”* The phrase “all those that leap on the threshold” speaks of what actually happened, especially in the heathen temples. In the temples of Dagon, the priests actually leaped over the threshold.

The priests’ servants would go out and steal, getting wealth by violence and deceit. Then they would bring those possessions into their masters’ houses, and they would both leap in triumph of their gain, leaping on the threshold. The Lord said that He was going to bring judgment.

1:10-11 - *“And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.”* Maktesh was a little suburb of Jerusalem where all the wealthy merchants lived. They had gotten rich through commerce, using very deceitful practices.

As you study the book of Revelation, you see that there is going to be great affluence in the last days, too. God says He is going to judge all the deceitful merchants.

1:12 - *“And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.”* Many of the Jews at

that time were saying that the Lord was not going to do evil, but neither was He going to do good. They said neither judgment nor revival was going to come.

Let us look at the phrase “I will search Jerusalem with candles.” When the Babylonians came into Jerusalem, they literally had lamps and torches (candles), and went down into the underground caverns, into the sewers and the tombs, where a lot of Jews were hiding, and killed them. They could not escape the Babylonians. The Lord said that nobody was going to get away. When God determines to bring judgment, nobody can escape or hide from it. He will even search them out with torches and lamps, and judge them.

1:13 - *“Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.”* The Babylonians tore down their houses. Everything they had worked so hard for, their possessions and the pleasures of their wine were going to be given to the Babylonians.

1:14-15 - *“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. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”* The day of God’s judgment is a time of great darkness and gloominess. The Lord was saying that Babylon was going to completely destroy Jerusalem.

1:16 - *“A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.”* The trumpets were to sound when an enemy was breaking in, and God was saying that the enemy was going to come against them.

1:17 - *“And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.”* They were groping around blindly, not knowing where to go (Isa. 59:8-15). They had no knowledge as to what was truth and what was not. They had lost their vision and sight because they had sinned. This actually happened.

1:18 - *“Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.”* They thought that they could receive their freedom by giving gold in the day of trouble, but the Lord says, “Gold will not spare you in the day of My wrath. The only way you can be hid in the day of My wrath is to remain in My presence, and to seek righteousness and meekness” (Zeph. 2:1-3).

Many years ago we were in Greece, where every girl has to store up her own dowry. The British government mints for Greece (and some other countries) small gold coins called “English sovereigns.” Each girl buys up these small English gold sovereigns, and puts them in a stocking. The more gold

sovereigns she gets, the better class of husband she can buy. Gold is very precious in Greece. Girls try to save it to increase their dowry.

A certain godly lady there had a vision of some girls tossing these stockings up in the air, and letting the gold fall, because it was not going to buy them deliverance in the day of the Lord's anger. This is what people are doing today. They are building up gold supplies and investments, but it will not spare them when God begins to judge.

Part Two

The Admonition to Seek to Be Hidden

2:1-3

These first three verses were given to us when I first came to the United States over 30 years ago. This is going to come to pass very quickly.

2:1 - *“Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired.”* God told Israel that He would enable them to find favour with the other nations if they would obey, but they did not. Instead they sinned and rebelled against the Lord, so the Lord caused them to be hated by all the nations around them.

Israel is still hated, with a passion, by the surrounding nations, who desire Israel’s total destruction. Although this verse was spoken to Israel, many years ago the Lord quickened it to me concerning America.

America has a godly seed, but it has turned away from following the Lord, just like Israel. Thus God has turned the other nations of the earth against her. America is becoming a nation not desired. Years ago, everybody loved America (mostly for economic purposes). The dollar has to fail because the strength has to go to Europe. All the commerce and gold must go back to Europe, to prepare the

way for the Antichrist. Europe must become again the center of finance, because that is where the Antichrist rules from; and Daniel distinctly says that, "*he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver*" (Dan. 11:43).

Most countries today hate America; even Europe is going to push America away. The Lord is speaking to America to gather herself together and seek the Lord, so that He might pour out His Spirit upon her once again and fight for her.

2:2 - "*Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you.*" This is speaking of the day of the Lord's judgment.

This is also seen in Isaiah 24:5, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." The governments of this world, and especially in America, have changed the laws of God. The law permits divorce, homosexuality, and abortion, all of which violate God's Word. Therefore, God has to bring judgment.

2:3 - "*Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.*" The ultimate fulfillment of the day of the Lord's anger is in the Great Tribulation, but before that comes, the Lord counsels us to seek to be hidden in the day of His wrath.

This verse is speaking to Christians and also to the godly in Zephaniah's time, because the ungodly are certainly not meek. There were godly people living in the time in which this was prophesied. There is always, throughout time, a faithful remnant.

Ezekiel 9 speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem, and states the fact that there is going to be a great slaughter. Ezekiel 9:4 says, "And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." God marks those who are godly, and they are protected in the Day of Judgment. That does not mean that they do not suffer, but the Lord protects them in the Day of Judgment.

The theme of Zephaniah's book is to be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. This message is so pertinent to our days. He shows us the qualifications for being hidden in the day of the Lord's anger. People say, "How can I be hid during judgment?" By seeking these two qualities—meekness and righteousness. Thus this verse tells us what we should be doing, as the time of the Great Tribulation is quickly approaching. We are to hunger and thirst after His righteousness and His meekness (or gentleness). King David said in Psalm 18:35, "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

Part Three

Judgment upon Different Nations

2:4-15

The Philistines (2:4-7)

2:4 - *“For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.”* Now the Lord turns to the other nations and tells them that they will not escape either.

2:5 - *“Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.”* The Lord told them that the Babylonians would destroy them too. The Palestinians (Philistines) will not escape either, especially in the last-day judgment. The Philistines are the modern-day Palestinians; therefore, one cannot possibly have peace with them. Since the days of Samson, God has decreed war against the Philistines.

2:6-7 - *“And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.”*

Historically, when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem, he did three things. He slew a lot of people, took prisoners to Babylon, and then left all the poor in Israel, so that wild beasts would not overrun the country. This is also prophetic of the Millennium, when Israel will lie down in safety in their own land again, and God will restore the remnant of the children of Israel to their land.

Moab and Ammon (2:8-11)

2:8 - *“I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border.”*

Moab, Ammon, and Edom are the modern day kingdom of Jordan. Moab and Ammon came from Lot through his incestuous relationship with his daughters. Much of the bloodshed that will take place when the Lord returns again will be upon the kingdom of Jordan. The Antichrist will not touch them (Dan. 11:41), but the Lord Himself will judge them, because they reproached and hated Israel. They mocked the children of Israel when they were judged—so they are going to be judged too.

2:9-10 - *“Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves*

against the people of the LORD of hosts.” There was also great destruction upon Moab and Ammon by the Babylonians, but again there are several fulfillments of prophecy. At the time of the Maccabeans, this was fulfilled in a measure. Judah possessed the lands, but of course the ultimate fulfillment of this is when the Lord comes again.

2:11 - *“The LORD will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.”* Here Zephaniah is looking again to the time of the Millennium when God will deal with idolatry, and judge the gods of this earth.

Ethiopia (2:12)

2:12 - *“Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword.”* Ethiopia is a very wicked country, which will be judged. Even though there is a mixture there of Christianity, they will be judged, too. The Ethiopians in the last days are a mixture. Psalm 68:31 says that they stretch out their hands unto the Lord. Then you find in Daniel 11:43 that they will make alliance with the Antichrist. Thus there was a period when the Ethiopians had an opportunity to come to the Lord.

Assyria (2:13-15)

2:13-15 - *“And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. And flocks shall lie*

down in the midst of her; all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand."

The prophets confirm one another. Nahum's prophecy was directed towards the judgment of Nineveh, and Zephaniah confirms it. Nineveh and Assyria were completely destroyed by the Lord. Nineveh is still in total desolation today.

Part Four

Woe upon Jerusalem for Refusing to Seek God and Repent

3:1-8

3:1-2 - *“Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.”* Jerusalem was chosen by God, but she despised this privilege of drawing near to Him.

3:3 - *“Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.”* The rulers and princes of Judah were wicked, obtaining wealth through violence.

3:4 - *“Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.”* The prophets were also wicked. They violated the law and lowered God’s standards with their prophecies.

3:5 - *“The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.”* God constantly reproved them, right up until the very end, but the unjust knew no shame. God said, “I am just, I am very upright. I continually warn.” Yet they did not listen to the Lord.

3:6-7 - *“I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.”*

God told them through Jeremiah that if they repented and stopped oppressing the people, Jerusalem would not be destroyed. God was saying to them, “I have shown you how I deal in awesome judgments against these other cities. Surely you will take instruction from what I have done to these other cities, that I might spare you.” God wanted to spare Jerusalem. Right up until its destruction He was warning them, but they would not listen to His instruction and change from their wicked ways.

3:8 - *“Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.”* God said He was going to gather the nations, and bring all nations against Jerusalem and judge them. This has two fulfillments. It was fulfilled in 586 B.C., when Jerusalem was destroyed, but it is also prophetic of the last siege of Jerusalem just before the Lord comes again.

Part Five

The Remnant Shall Be Redeemed in Purity

3:9-20

3:9 - *“For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.”* God’s purpose in judgment is to have a remnant that has pure language and will serve Him with one consent.

3:10 - *“From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suplicants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.”* God is saying that in the Millennium the children of Israel will come to Israel from where they have been taken prisoners with a pure offering.

3:11 - *“In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.”* The Jews were very proud. They said that this was God’s holy mountain, so it did not matter how they lived, because God would take care of them. Isaiah said in Isaiah 33:14, “The sinners in Zion are afraid.” We must not trust in a geographic place, or a building as

God is going to have a pure remnant in His Church.

the Jews did. In a final sense, this is speaking of the Millennium, but it has a certain fulfillment for the Church, too. God is going to have a pure remnant in His Church.

3:12 - *“I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.”*

This is speaking of the time when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C., taking the people back to Babylon captive, and leaving the poor people in the land so that it would not be overrun by wild beasts.

3:13 - *“The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”* God is going to have a remnant, in Israel and in the Church, that is pure; and we want to be a part of that remnant. So we have to seek meekness and righteousness, that we may be a part of that remnant.

Ultimately, revival starts and is centered around a nucleus, a remnant, who have been purified. The nucleus is made up of those who are poor and afflicted, in the sense of Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is what God is doing today. He is purging and pruning His Church, and purifying it, and reducing it, so that revival might come around a good nucleus.

3:14-15 - *“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.” This is the triumphant cry of the Church in the last days. It is a purified Church, and the Lord is dwelling in the midst of it. There comes a time when God says He is going to turn everything around and defeat our enemies. This has its ultimate fulfillment for Israel in the Millennium.

3:16-17 - *“In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.”* This happens for Israel at the coming of the Lord. These verses also apply to the Church in the last days. The Church is being purified and is coming up to Zion, and the Lord is causing His joy to come upon the Church.

3:18 - *“I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.”* God takes notice of those who mourn because of iniquity (Ezek. 9).

3:19 - *“Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.”* God is going to turn the captivity of Israel and Zion in the last days, and everywhere the Jews have been scattered, God is going give them a name of glory.

3:20 - *“At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.”* This applies to us. After we have been in a time of captivity or difficulty, when God breaks that captivity, He transforms our lives. All these verses are historical and futuristic, natural and spiritual. All of these have their absolute fulfillment when the Lord returns, but the Lord can quicken these verses to us that we may also have this experience now. This is really a message for the Church.

There is going to be a turning of the captivity of Israel in the Millennium, but also a turning of the captivity of the Church in the last days. Psalm 126:1-3 says, “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

**MINOR
PROPHETS
APPENDIXES**

APPENDIX 1

The Kings of United Israel

KING	YRS.	DATES
Saul	40	(1050-1010)
David	40	(1010-970)
Solomon	40	(970-930)

KINGDOM DIVIDES

Kings of Judah

Rehoboam	17 yrs.	(930-913)
Abijah	3 yrs.	(913-910)
Asa	41 yrs.	(910-869)
Jehoshaphat	25 yrs.	(872-848)
Jehoram	8 yrs.	(848-841)
Ahaziah	1 yr.	(848)
Athaliah	6 yrs.	(841-835)
Joash	40 yrs.	(835-796)
Amaziah	29 yrs.	(796-767)
Uzziah	52 yrs.	(792-740)
Jotham	16 yrs.	(750-735)
Ahaz	16 yrs.	(732-715)

Kings of Israel

Jeroboam I	22 yrs.	(930-909)
Nadab	2 yrs.	(909-908)
Baasha	24 yrs.	(908-886)
Elah	2 yrs.	(886-885)
Zimri	7 days	(885)
Omri-Tibni	4 yrs.	(885-880)
Omri	8 yrs.	(885-874)
Ahab	22 yrs.	(874-853)
Ahaziah	2 yrs.	(853-852)
Joram	12 yrs.	(852-841)
Jehu	28 yrs.	(841-814)
Jehoahaz	17 yrs.	(814-798)
Joash	16 yrs.	(798-782)
Jeroboam II	41 yrs.	(793-753)
Zechariah	6 mos.	(753)
Shallum	1 mo.	(752)
Menahem	10 yrs.	(752-742)
Pekahiah	2 yrs.	(742-740)
Pekah	20 yrs.	(752-732)
Hoshea	9 yrs.	(732-722)

Hezekiah	29 yrs. (715-686)	722 B.C. - Fall of Samaria. The ten northern tribes were scattered during the Assyrian invasion.
Manasseh	55 yrs. (679-642)	
Amon	2 yrs. (642-640)	
Josiah	31 yrs. (640-609)	
Jehoahaz	3 mos. (609)	
Jehoiakim	11 yrs. (609-598)	
Beginning of Exile		
Jehoiachin	3 mos. (598,597)	
Zedekiah	11 yrs. (597-586)	
586 B.C. - Jerusalem Destroyed.		
Judah went into Babylonian captivity.		

* Some of the dates overlap when kings co-reigned together.

** All dates are approximate

APPENDIX 2

The Kings of Syria

	(B.C.)
Hiram I of Tyre	979-945
Rezon	955-925
Hezion	925-915
Tabrimmon	915-900
Ben-hadad I	900-860
Ethbaal I of Tyre	898-866
Ben-hadad II	860-843
Hazael	843-796
Ben-hadad III	796-770
* Jeroboam II of Israel dominates Syria	770-750
Rezin	750-732
* Damascus falls to Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria	732

APPENDIX 3

The Kings of Assyria

	(B.C.)
Shalmaneser I	1274-1245
Tukulti-Ninurta I	1244-1208
Adad-shumaidina	1224-1219
Nebuchadrezzar I (Babylonia)	1124-1103
Tiglath-pileser I	1115-1077
Ashur-dan II	933
Ashurnasirpal II	883-859
Shalmaneser III	859-824
Tiglath-pileser III	745-727
Shalmaneser V	727-722
Sargon II (Fall of Samaria in 722)	722-705
Sennacherib	705-681
Esarhaddon	681-669
Ashurbanipal	669-627
Sinsariskan	627-612
* Nineveh falls to Nabopolassar of Babylon	612
Ashurballit (Held out at Haran)	612-609
* End of Assyrian Empire	609

APPENDIX 4

The Kings of Babylon

	(B.C.)
Nabopolassar	626-605
Nebuchadnezzar	605-562
Amel-Marduk (Evil Merodach)	562-560
Neriglassar	560-556
Labasi-Marduk	556
Nabonidus	556-539
Belshazzar	553-539
* Babylon falls to Medes and Persians (Cyrus)	539

APPENDIX 5

The Kings of Persia

	(B.C.)
Cyrus	539-530
Cambyses	530-522
Smerdis	522
Darius I	522-486
Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	486-465
Artaxerxes I	464-423
Darius II	423-404
Artaxerxes II	404-359
Artaxerxes III	359-338
Arses	338-336
Darius III	336-331

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