

A STUDY OF

Minor Prophets

(Including surveys of Exile and Inter-Testament Periods)

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Fall 2009 – Winter 2010 Quarters**

OVERVIEW OF MINOR PROPHETS

	<u>World Power</u>	<u>To Israel</u>	<u>To Judah</u>	<u>Foreign Nations</u>
911 – 800 BC	Neo-Assyrian Empire	Elijah Elisha	Joel	Obadiah (Edom)
800 – 700 BC		Amos Hosea	Isaiah Micah	Jonah (Assyria)
700 – 606 BC			Zephaniah Jeremiah Habakkuk	Nahum (Assyria)
606 – 539 BC	Neo-Babylon (Chaldean) Empire	Ezekiel (to Jews in Babylon)		Daniel (Babylon)
539 – 400 BC	Medes & Persians	Haggai, Zechariah, & Malachi		

SYNOPSIS OF MINOR PROPHETS

The period of the divided kingdom is one of unrest. Sin, corruption and injustice are everywhere. False prophets abound; priests are lazy; kings rule according to selfish ambitions; and judges are bribed. There is little help for the common man.

And yet there is hope. God’s message is a beacon of light in this dark culture. He sends messengers to encourage and strengthen the fainthearted, rebuke those living in sin and to evangelize God’s love and hope to those who are faithful.

When studying the prophets, the reader witnesses the pure nature and character of God; God’s abundant love for all people; his special interest in the poor, strangers, widows and orphans; his mercy to give people a second chance; his promise to destroy a wicked people who do not repent; and his assurance that genuine repentance will bring about forgiveness and restoration. God calls through the prophets for people to repent, to obey, to grow in faith and trust and to love others.

When we finish our study of the 12 Minor Prophets in six months, you will know something about each prophet and their prophecy; you will know some things in the cultures of Israel, Judah, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Edom that help to better understand the circumstances in which the Minor Prophets lived; you will gain a better understanding of OT chronology surrounding the exile; you will have more confidence in studying the OT; you will see the same loving characteristics of God in the OT as you see in the NT; and you will have a better appreciation of the NT for many of its writers quoted from or alluded to their oracles. You will also gain insight to some of the customs that arose during the Inter-Testament Period – subject to our depth of coverage.

I am glad you have chosen to study the Minor Prophets with me for this next quarter.

~David A. Paher
September 7, 2009

OUR STUDY SCHEDULE

DATE	BOOK(S)/PROPHET(S)	ASSIGNMENTS:
September 13	Introduction/Obadiah	Read 1 chapter; Q & A
September 20	Obadiah/Joel	Read 3 chapters; Q & A
September 27	Joel	Review Joel
October 4	Jonah	Read 4 chapters; Q & A
October 11	Nahum	Read 3 chapters; Q & A
October 18	Amos (Part 1)	Read 9 chapters; Q & A
October 25	Amos (Part 2)	Review Amos
November 1	Hosea (Part 1)	Read 14 chapters; Q & A
November 8	Hosea (Part 2)	Review Hosea
November 15	Hosea (Part 3)	Review Hosea
November 22	Micah (Part 1)	Read 7 chapters; Q & A
November 29	Micah (Part 2)	Review Micah
December 6	REVIEW	REVIEW
December 13	Zephaniah	Read 3 chapters; Q & A
December 20	Habakkuk	Read 3 chapters; Q & A
December 27	Exilic Period	
January 3	<i>Survey of Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther</i> Handouts	
January 10	Haggai	Read 2 chapters; Q & A
January 17	Zechariah (Part 1)	Read 14 chapters; Q & A
January 24	Zechariah (Part 2)	Review Zechariah
January 31	Zechariah (Part 3)	Review Zechariah
February 7	Malachi	Read 4 chapters; Q & A
February 14	Inter-Testament Period (Background to New Testament)	
February 21	<i>Events of the Inter-Testament Period</i> Handouts	
February 28	REVIEW	REVIEW

OBADIAH

“God’s Servant”

(848 – 844 BC)



Cave-dwellers, Petra or Edom
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BACKGROUND STUDY

We know almost nothing about Obadiah or his ancestry – only that his name means “Servant of Jehovah.” At the height of the Assyrian world domination, he prophesied to the Edomites, the descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:1). Esau’s name means “red” which was the color of his hair at birth; the Edomites dwelt in the cliffs of rocks which had a reddish appearance. It was their misplaced trust in their cliffs that caused their pride, which in turn led to their destruction.

The Edomites and the Israelites shared a tumultuous history since before their ancestor’s births. Jacob and Esau struggled in Rachel’s womb (Gen. 25:22-26). During Esau’s life, he gave his birthright to Jacob (Gen. 25:29-34) which paved the way for Jacob to receive God’s blessings (Gen. 27). Years later when Jacob and Esau met, fear and shame still prevailed in Jacob’s mind for all he had done (Gen. 32-33).

The dissension continued among the descendants of Jacob and Esau even though they were brethren. When the wandering Israelites wanted to pass through Edom because it was a shortcut to Canaan, the Edomites came out in force to detour them (Num. 20:14-21), but were allowed to pass through at a later time (Deut. 2:5-8). The Israelites were forbidden to loathe the Edomites (Deut. 23:7), and they were allowed to accept Edomites into their assembly after the third generation (Deut. 23:8).

Centuries later, Saul battled the Edomites (1 Sam. 14:47), David conquered them (2 Sam. 8:13-14) and Solomon made two seaports for his ships (2 Chron. 8:17-18) from which precious metals and valuables were transported (1 Kgs. 9:26-28; 10:22; 22:47-48). Edom revolted during King Jehoram’s reign (2 Kgs. 8:20-22; 2 Chron. 21:8-10), but King Amaziah destroyed them (2 Kgs. 14:7).

In later history, Rezin, King of Damascus, drove all the Jews out of Edom in 735 BC (2 Kgs. 16:6). When Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC and carried most Jews into captivity, the Edomites moved into the southern regions of Judah. Under Persian control, Edom became a province called Idumaea. At the end of the fourth century BC, Edom fell into the hands of the Nabataeans, an Arabian tribe who were former allies with Edom, in fulfillment of Obadiah’s prophecy in Obadiah 1:8. The Edomites slowly scattered away in history.

OUTLINE

- I. The Doom of Edom Pronounced (1:1-16)
 - A. The certainty of Edom's overthrow (1:1-9)
 - B. The cause of Edom's overthrow (1:10-14)
 - C. The character of Edom's overthrow (1:15-16)

- II. The Deliverance of Judah Promised (1:17-21)
 - A. The triumph of Judah over her enemies (1:17-18)
 - B. The treasures of Judah in their possession of the land (1:19-20)
 - C. The triumph of Judah as the Lord possesses the kingdom (1:21)

CHRISTOLOGICAL VALUE

Christ is pictured in this small book as both the Savior and possessor of the land. The latter verses of the book promise restoration to the people of God. Edom will be overthrown, but Judah will prosper. In the end, all people will look unto Jesus for salvation and deliverance.

SINS OF EDOM

Fill-in-the-blank:

1. Edom trusted in _____ (vv. 3-4).
2. Edom trusted in _____ (vv. 5-7).
3. Edom trusted in _____ (vv. 8-9).
4. Edom trusted in their _____ (vv. 3, 17).

EDOM'S TRANSGRESSIONS AGAINST JUDAH

In your own words:

1. Against Judah, Edom _____ (v. 11).
2. Against Judah, Edom _____ (v. 12).
3. Against Judah, Edom _____ (v. 13).
4. Against Judah, Edom _____ (v. 14).

LESSONS FROM OBADIAH

In your own words:

1. There is no defense against God's wrath.

What three kinds of people (or sins) will receive God's wrath according to Romans 1:18?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

2. Pride precedes destruction.

What two things precede destruction according to Proverbs 16:18?

a) _____

b) _____

What attitude precedes a fall according to 1 Corinthians 10:12?

c) _____

3. To gloat over the misfortunes of others is sin.

May Christians boast acceptably? If so, how? See 1 Corinthians 1:31 & 2 Corinthians 10:17

a) _____

What attitudes should guide Christians in dealing with others? See Romans 12:14-16

b) _____ (v. 14).

c) _____ (v. 15).

d) _____ (v. 15).

e) _____ (v. 16).

4. Through Christ, God's kingdom will triumph. See Matthew 11:2-6

What does Christ do to all nations according to Revelation 11:15?

a) _____

JOEL

“Jehovah is God”

(840 – 830 BC)



BACKGROUND STUDY

873 – 735 BC

Clearly, the Golden Age of the United Kingdom is a distant memory. The events surrounding Joash's reign paint the horrifying picture of the times – a scene that begins with Joash's great-grandfathers: Ahab, evil king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, righteous king of Judah. Ahab was a gifted leader and an eager builder but his political marriage to Jezebel was his downfall. Jezebel's father, Ethbaal, was king of the Phoenicians, who worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth. She was all too happy to introduce her native gods to Israel. She promoted pagan worship, equated Baal with God, built a temple for Baal (1 Kgs. 16:33), opposed true worship of God, destroyed God's altars and killed God's prophets. Her ruthless influence on Ahab and the nation caused Elijah to run for his life (1 Kgs. 19:3).

Ahab and Jezebel had three children all of whom were evil in God's sight because of the influence of their mother. Ahaziah succeeded his father but died from complications of a fall after reigning only two years. His brother, Jehoram, reigned for 12 years in his place. Although he continued to offer sacrifices to Baal, he did manage to restrain Baal worship. Athaliah married Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, and became Queen of Judah influencing the throne wickedly after the manner of her mother. Jehoram's marriage to Athaliah was his downfall. He promoted Baal; he caused Judah to prostitute themselves (2 Chron. 21:11); and he committed mass murder on his brothers and many government officials (2 Chron. 21:4).

When King Jehoram of Judah died, his son, Ahaziah, began his very short reign and followed after his grandfather, Ahab, in doing evil (2 Kgs. 8:7). Ahaziah, cultivated relations with his uncle, King Jehoram of Israel, Athaliah's brother. Then God anointed the prophet Jehu to become the new king of Israel, but he first had to kill all of Ahab's descendants in Israel and Samaria fulfilling Elijah's prophecy (1 Kgs. 21:29; 2 Kgs. 10:17). This mission included Athaliah's brother, King Jehoram of Israel (2 Kgs. 9:24); her son, King Ahaziah of Judah (2 Kgs. 9:27), who was in Israel at the time; and finally her mother, Jezebel (2 Kgs. 9:30ff). King Ahaziah reigned for only a year.

Upon learning of her son's death, Athaliah quickly murdered the entire royal family – her grandchildren – because she wanted the throne for herself (2 Kgs. 11:1ff). However, her step daughter, Jehosheba, Ahaziah's half-sister and the wife of Jehoiada the high priest, hid Joash in the house of the Lord for six years because he was the sole heir to the throne. During this time, Athaliah continued her ruthless tyranny wherein she introduced Baal in Judah as her mother had done in Israel, and she destroyed part of the temple. When Joash turned seven, Jehoiada, the high priest called upon many powerful officials along with the priests who proclaimed Joash the new and rightful king of Judah (2 Chron. 23:1-11). He then had Athaliah taken from the house of the Lord and executed for her role in idolatry and wickedness (2 Chron. 23:14-15).

King Joash inherited a kingdom full of treachery, blood, unrest and idolatry, but Jehoiada was a good priest and servant of God who yielded a powerful influence upon the child-king, and many positive changes were made. Joash and Jehoiada destroyed Baal worship and tore down the Baal temple, and he restored true religion (2 Kgs. 11:18-21). He made repairs to the Temple restoring it to its former glory (2 Kgs. 12:4ff; 2 Chron. 24:1ff). However, Jehoiada's influence ended when he died at the age of 130. The people buried him in the tomb of the kings for all his wonderful accomplishments and the good he had done (2 Chron. 24:15-16).

But Joash began to turn from the Lord. He gave the sacred gifts from the treasuries of the house of the Lord to Hazael, king of Syria (2 Kgs. 12:18), and he allowed idolatry to grow (2 Chron. 24:18). When Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the high priest, stood up publically to rebuke Joash, the king had him stoned (2 Chron. 24:20-22). (Zechariah's mother was Jehosheba, who hid Joash from Athaliah; and since Jehosheba was a daughter to King Jehoram of Judah, Zechariah and Joash were cousins. These were truly darkening times.)

The evil influence of Joash's grandmother, Athaliah, and his great-grandmother, Jezebel, proved too much for the sake of him and his offspring seeing that the wicked seed they planted blemished the record of the next four righteous kings: Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah and Jotham. The high places were never removed, and the people were allowed to continue their sacrifices and offerings to idols (2 Kgs. 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35). In addition, Joash abandoned God for Asherim later in life, and he killed the son of his priest-mentor (2 Chron. 24:18-22). Amaziah brought Edom's gods to Judah (2 Chron. 25:14). God punished him later for it (2 Chron. 25:20), and he was assassinated by his enemies (2 Chron. 25:27). Uzziah later in life rebelled against God when he burned incense in the temple. God struck him with leprosy, and he lived in solitude until he died (2 Chron. 26:18-19ff). Jotham was absent in the temple (2 Chron. 27:2). He was apparently absent at home, too, for his son, Ahaz, was one of Israel's most wicked kings because he participated in human sacrifice (2 Kgs. 16:3), even infant sacrifice (2 Chron. 28:3). He was the first of any Hebrew king in the biblical record to commit such abominations.

This history from Joash's great-grandfathers, Jehoshaphat and Ahab, to his great-grandson, Ahaz, spanned almost 140 years. Despite blatant sins and open rebellion in this family line, God preserved David's dynasty in Judah for David's sake as he had promised (1 Kgs. 11:36) because his line would eventually provide the Messiah.

Joel prophesied to Judah 35 years into this period when Joash was still very young and Jehoiada, the godly high priest, made policy and influenced the throne. Joel was familiar with temple worship, which cause many readers to suppose that he was a priest. His message was simple: repent or be judged. He called on the priests to implement true changes in the lives of the people ("rend hearts and not garments").

If they did not repent, the Day of the Lord would come in which God would send an army of locusts to devour everything. Drought and fire would follow. So complete and terrible was the prophesied destruction that no one had ever experienced such devastation. The tale of this destruction on the Day of the Lord would be repeated as legend to children and grandchildren because everyone, from priests to drunks, and everything, including vegetation and beasts, would be affected; but there would be hope.

Their repentance would yield a different conclusion. God promised to restore what Judah had lost in the devastation. They would experience years of plenty. Judah's glory would be restored. And ultimately, God's Spirit would be poured out on all people everywhere beginning on the Day of the Lord, which according to the Apostle Peter, was the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21).

OUTLINE

- I. The methods of the coming Day of the Lord (1:1-20)
 - A. Locusts (1:1-12)
 - B. Drought (1:13-18)
 - C. Fire (1:19-20)

- II. The immediate coming of the Day of the Lord (2:1-27)
 - A. Invasion of Judah described (2:1-11)
 - B. Conditional promise for Judah – “repent” (2:12-27)
 - 1. Change of heart that changes the lifestyle (2:12-15)
 - 2. People of all ages must repent (2:16-17)
 - 3. Evidence of God’s abundant mercy (2:18-27)

- III. The ultimate coming of the Day of the Lord (2:28 – 3:21)
 - A. The outpouring of God’s Spirit (2:28-32)—fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21).
 - B. Divine judgment on the oppressing nations (3:1:-16)
 - C. Triumph and peace come to God’s people (3:17-21)

CHRISTOLOGICAL VALUE

Christ is pictured in this short book as the one will bring in the ultimate Day of the Lord and restore the true glory of Israel found in Christians. Peter by inspiration attributed the events on the day of Pentecost to the prophecy of Joel. He said, “But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel...” (Acts 2:16) and quoted from Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:16-21).

PROPHESIED DESTRUCTION

Fill-in-the-blank:

1. What were the three forms of destruction that Joel promised?

a) _____ (1:4).

b) _____ (1:16-18).

c) _____ (1:19-20).

2. What are the four kinds of locusts described in Joel 1:4?

a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____

3. What do you think is represented by these four locusts?

a) _____

4. What four groups will be affected by the devastation?

a) _____ (1:5).

b) _____ (1:9-11).

c) _____ (1:17).

d) _____ (1:18).

5. How many times does Joel use the phrase “Day of the Lord”? (*A concordance will be helpful.*)

a) _____

GOD’S PROMISES

In your own words, what promises did God make to Judah according to the provided verses:

1. _____ (2:19)

2. _____ (2:20)

3. _____ (2:23)
4. _____ (2:25)
5. _____ (2:26-27)
6. _____ (2:32)

LESSONS FROM JOEL

In your own words:

1. Disasters and hardships serve to trigger change in men's hearts and move them closer to God.

Of what disaster does Exodus 3:19-20 speak?

a) _____

What changes was it to prompt? See Exodus 3:19 & Exodus 12:31-32

b) _____

What hardship came against the church in Acts 8:1? What change did it prompt in v. 4?

c) _____ d) _____

2. God's judgment against the wicked is inevitable.

What does "vengeance" mean? (A Bible dictionary will be helpful.)

a) _____

What will Jesus do when he is revealed according to 2 Thessalonians 1:8?

b) _____

What requests will the wicked make on the Day of the Lord (Judgment Day) according to Revelation 6:15-17?

c) _____

3. The Day of the Lord is conditional, based upon attitudes. It may be a day of terror or blessing.

What words will the righteous hear on the Day of Lord (Judgment Day) according to Matthew 25:34?

a) _____

What words will the wicked hear on the Day of Lord (Judgment Day) according to Matthew 25:41?

b) _____

What will be the reward of the righteous according to Matthew 25:46? Of the wicked?

c) The righteous will _____

d) The wicked will _____

4. God delights to include all men everywhere in the benefits of his grace.

Write from memory the words of Jesus in John 3:16:

JONAH

“Dove”

(ca. 760 BC)



BACKGROUND STUDY

The Pharisees ignorantly and incorrectly ridiculed Jesus when they claimed that Galilee had never produced a prophet (Jn. 7:52) for Jonah was a native of Gath-hepher of Zebulun near Nazareth. He had prophesied to Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II predicting resurgence of Israel's territory (2 Kgs. 14:25). But later God commissioned him to speak to Nineveh (Jon. 1:1).

Among all nations and empires recorded in history, Assyria ranks at the top among the worst for its genocide and torture. When God told Jonah, a man of God and fierce national patriot, to leave Israel for Nineveh to the east, he boarded a ship heading west. He planned to flee God's presence by traveling to the western most point on his map—Tarshish, in modern day Spain—the last port before the Atlantic Ocean. Later, after preaching to Nineveh, Jonah sat outside the city waiting for God to rain down his fiery wrath upon these wicked people.

Readers can easily sympathize with Jonah's plight of disobedience and his apathetic attitude toward Nineveh's penance when one explores Nineveh's crimes. Dr. H.L. Willmington quotes others in describing their corruption:

Some of the victims were held down while one of the band of torturers, who are portrayed upon the monuments gloating fiendishly over their fearful work, inserts his hand into the victim's mouth, grips his tongue, and wrenches it out by the roots. In another spot, pegs are driven into the ground. To these, another victim's wrists are fixed with cords. His ankles are similarly made fast, and the man is stretched out, unable to move a muscle. The executioner then applies himself to his task; and beginning at the accustomed spot, the sharp knife makes its incision, the skin is raised inch by inch till the man is flayed alive. These skins are then stretched out upon the city walls, or otherwise disposed of so as to terrify the people and leave behind long-enduring impressions of Assyrian vengeance. For others, long, sharp poles are prepared. The sufferer, taken like all the rest from the leading men of the city, is laid down; the sharpened end of the pole is driven in through the lower part of the chest; the pole is then raised, bearing the writhing victim aloft; it is planted in the hole dug for it, and the man is left to die. (Willmington's Guide to the Bible, pages 172-173)

Also,

Pyramids of human heads marked the path of the conqueror; boys and girls were burnt alive or reserved for a worse fate; men were impaled, flayed alive, blinded, or deprived of their hands and feet, or their ears and noses, while the women and children were carried into slavery, the captured city plundered and reduced to ashes, and the trees in its neighborhood cut down. (Willmington's Guide to the Bible, page 173)

Will Durant describes,

The loyalty of the [Assyrian] troops was secured by dividing a large part of the spoils among them; their bravery was ensured by the general rule of the Near East that all captives in war might be enslaved or slain. Soldiers were rewarded for every severed head they brought in from the field, so that the aftermath of a victory generally witnessed the wholesale decapitation of fallen foes. Most often the prisoners, who would have consumed much food in a long campaign, and would have constituted a danger and nuisance in the rear, were dispatched after

the battle; they knelt with their backs to their captors, who beat their heads in with clubs, or cut them off with cutlasses. Scribes stood by to count the number of prisoners taken and killed by each soldier, and apportioned the booty accordingly; the king, if time permitted, presided at the slaughter. The nobles among the defeated were given more special treatment: their ears, noses, hands and feet were sliced off, or they were thrown from high towers, or they and their children were beheaded, or flayed alive, or roasted over a slow fire. (The Story of Civilization: Our Oriental Heritage, page 271)

The book of Jonah describes Nineveh as a great city (Jon. 1:2) whose baby and toddler count exceeded 120,000 (Jon. 4:11). Some have speculated that the population was around 600,000, which is easily believable. The city's fortified walls were only about eight miles around, but it took three days to journey throughout the outlying suburbs and farms. This information leads some to speculate how a metropolitan city could repent at Jonah's eight simple words: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jon. 3:4).

However, events preceding Jonah's preaching helped prepare the hearts and minds of its citizens. Nineveh is similar to the Akkadian word *nunu*, which means "fish," and according to legend, it was founded by Dagon, a Semitic agriculture deity, who was half-man half-fish, whom they worshipped. Reports from Jonah's sailing comrades very likely arrived in Nineveh during Jonah's three-day confinement in the fish's belly; so when a fish-swallowed-man came to the capital of the fish-worshippers, they heeded his warning. In addition, a plague struck Assyria in 765 BC, and from 763-759 BC, their inhabitants were in constant revolt. Also in 763 BC, Assyrian citizens experienced a solar eclipse which would have likely prompted a religious revival. Nineveh was ripe for to hear God's message.

From Jonah's story, several lessons are learned about God's relationship to and his care for other nations. First, God prepared to judge Nineveh and hold them accountable for their actions. Second, God moved with a compassionate heart to warn Nineveh's citizens on imminent danger. Third, God's desire was to save them if they would repent. Fourth, their response shows that they were aware of their own wickedness. Fifth, their response shows that they had sufficient information about the living God of Heaven. Sixth, when these inhabitants repented there was only one God to whom they turned. Seventh, God heard the prayers of this penitent city. Eighth, he responded to them as with his own people with a message of forgiveness and mercy.

OUTLINE

- I. Jonah runs from God (1:1-17).
 - A. God's preparation advertised (1:1-2)
 - B. Jonah's plan exercised (1:3-4)
 - C. Mariners propensity terrified (1:5-6)
 - D. Desperate ploys nullified (1:7-13)
 - E. Nature's participation rectified (1:14-17)

- II. Jonah runs to God (2:1-10).
 - A. Jonah recognized his disposition (2:1-3).
 - B. Jonah reaffirms his devotion (2:4-9).
 - C. God redeems his deliverer (2:10).

- III. Jonah runs for God (3:1-10).
 - A. Jonah resent (3:1-2)
 - B. God's message reported (3:3-4)
 - C. Nineveh repented (3:5-9)
 - D. God relented (3:10)

- IV. Jonah runs ahead of God (4:1-11).
 - A. Jonah's prayer of disdain (4:1-4)
 - B. Jonah pities his disposition (4:5-9)
 - C. God's pointed dialogue (4:10-11)

CHRISTOLOGICAL VALUE

Some liberal scholars want to allegorize Jonah's big fish. Three reasons prevent the Christian from following suit. First, if God would create man from dirt (Gen. 2:7), then he could have easily prepared a fish to swallow a man and spit him out three days later. Second, Jesus believed in the literal account of Jonah and the big fish (Mt. 12:39-40). Third, Jesus pointed out that men of Nineveh believed it (Mt. 12:41). From the book of Jonah, we learn that Jesus is the resurrected prophet who brings mercy and compassion to a sinful people.

PROPHESIED DESTRUCTION

In your own words:

1. What miracles are recorded in the book of Jonah?

- a) _____ (1:4).
- b) _____ (1:7).
- c) _____ (1:15).
- d) _____ (1:17a).
- e) _____ (1:17b).
- f) _____ (2:10).
- g) _____ (4:6).
- h) _____ (4:7).
- i) _____ (4:8).

2. The Doctrine of Retribution states simply that if something bad happens, then you deserved it.

How did the sailors uphold this retribution doctrine in Jonah 1:7-10? Were they correct?

- a) _____
- b) _____

Read Job 4:7-8; 8:5-6; 11:13-14; 22:15. Of what did Job's three friends accuse Job?

- c) _____

Were they correct?

- d) _____

What accusations did Jesus' disciples make in John 9:2?

- e) _____

Were they correct? What did Jesus say was the reason?

f) _____

g) _____

LESSONS FROM JONAH

In your own words:

1. God's grace is universal.

To whom has God's grace appeared and brought salvation according to Titus 2:11?

a) _____

Read Acts 10:34-35 and fill in the blanks: (KJV phrased)

b) Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no _____ of persons: But in every _____ he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is _____ with him."

2. God believes in showing the valuable lesson of discipline.

According to Proverbs 22:6, who disciplines and who is to be disciplined?

a) _____ b) _____

What sins of Christians should be disciplined?

c) Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10 – _____

d) 1 Cor. 5:9-13 – _____

e) 2 Thess. 3:6 – _____

f) 2 Thess. 3:14; 2 Jn. 9-11 – _____

What is the motive behind all discipline according to Hebrews 12:5-6?

g) _____

What fruit does discipline yield according to Hebrews 12:11?

h) _____

i) _____

3. Preaching yields great results.

Write Jonah's sermon found in Jonah 3:4, and count the words.

a) _____

How many people repented? (Jonah 3:7, 10)

b) _____ c) _____

How many years did Noah preach? (Gen. 6:3) How many people were saved? (1 Pet. 3:20)

d) _____ e) _____

What do you think contributed to the different results?

f) _____

4. We can have the wrong attitude toward those who are lost.

What do you think Paul meant when he said, "I am a debtor..." in Romans 1:14?

a) _____

The soul who sins shall die (Ezek. 18:20), but...

...At whose hand will God require an impenitent man's blood if he is warned?

b) _____ (Ezek. 3:19, 21)

*...At whose hand will God require an impenitent man's blood if he is **not** warned?*

c) _____ (Ezek. 3:18, 20)

NAHUM

“Comfort”

(ca. 660 BC)



BACKGROUND STUDY

After repenting at Jonah's warning, Assyria experienced a revival and became a very powerful nation. History would remember Tiglath-Pileser III, who reigned from 745-727 BC, to be one of the most successful military commanders ever. He made many changes that greatly improved and strengthened Assyria's influence on the world. Around 734 BC, King Ahaz of Judah refused to align himself with King Pekah of Israel and King Rezin of Syria against the potent Assyrian empire. Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pileser III for help, and in 732, he answered Ahaz's distress call and destroyed Damascus, Syria's capital, and executed its king (2 Kgs. 16:5-9). Ten years later, his son, Shalmaneser V, besieged Samaria, Israel's capital, and began to carry away its inhabitants into captivity. God's longsuffering toward Israel's evil had ended, and this event in 722 BC marked the end of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Over the next century, Assyria's dominance would intensify, especially in Palestine, but then very rapidly fade into the night. Sargon II completed the deportation of Samaria (the northern kingdom), which Shalmaneser V had begun. Sennacherib would lead a major campaign against many cities in Palestine because of their constant revolts and their refusal to pay the necessary tributes. Sennacherib destroyed the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon and then moved south to punish Egypt. He moved into Judah and destroyed 46 cities and villages including the well-fortified city of Lachish before laying siege to the city of Jerusalem in 701 BC. Hezekiah prayed to God for deliverance, and the Lord's angel struck dead 185,000 of Sennacherib's army causing the defeated king to return to Nineveh in disgrace and where his sons later killed him in the temple of Nisroch (2 Kgs. 19:35-37). Years later, Ashurbanipal destroyed Thebes, Egypt's capital, in 663 BC, which event Nahum referenced (Nah. 3:8) to mirror Nineveh's final outcome if they did not repent.

Nineveh remained unchanged, and God would bring judgment upon her but not without repetitive warnings. Isaiah, who prophesied from 743 to 701 BC, would repeatedly bring her sins to remembrance (Is. 10:5-19; 17:12-14; 18:4-6; 30:27-33; 37:21-35). Nahum rebuked their sin and vileness (Nah. 2:11-3:4) and prophesied in detail that they would be left in ruin (Nah. 2:10, 13). In 627 BC, Zephaniah foretold that their land would be grazed by sheep (Zeph. 2:13-15). Habakkuk, who prophesied from 612-606 BC, complained how evil the Assyrians were (Hab. 1:2-4), but God answered his grievance by pointing to a work that would be unbelievable to hear (Hab. 1:5). He was raising up providentially the Chaldean (Neo-Babylonian) nation to judge the Assyrians (Hab. 1:6). (God also used them to judge other nations including Judah.)

Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, began to expand his kingdom and formed a coalition with the Medes and Scythians, and they jointly moved to destroy Nineveh in 612 BC. (Interestingly, the Medes would ally themselves with the Persians later in history to overthrow the Babylonian empire; Babylon's comrades would become their enemies.) Upon Nineveh's devastation, the Assyrians moved their capital to Harran, which quickly fell to Babylon, and then to Carchemish in northern Syria. Egyptian Pharaoh Necho II desired to come to Assyria's aid against Babylon by passing through Judah but was prevented access. King Josiah of Judah, who allied himself with Babylon and who felt threatened by the growing Egyptian power, engaged the army of Pharaoh Necho II in the Battle of Megiddo in 609 BC where Josiah was fatally injured (2 Kgs. 23:29-30; 2 Chron. 35:20-35). Judah was defeated, but Pharaoh's army suffered greatly. In 605 BC, in the Battle of Carchemish, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon annihilated the weakened Assyrian military remnants. Their Egyptian aids were also crushed in fulfillment of Jeremiah's

prophecy (Jer. 46). Judah's citizens would rejoice at this defeat and see it as retribution for the death of their beloved Josiah.

Nahum was one of the last of many holy prophets to deliver warnings to the city of Nineveh, and his prophecy against the cruelest nation was stern. Unlike other nations of that era that rebuilt after being destroyed, Nineveh would neither rise again (Nah. 1:9), nor threaten again (Nah. 1:15). And no one would mourn her demise or give her aid (Nah. 3:7) because she would be totally forgotten (Nah. 2:14). So complete was Nineveh's destruction that the region would only remember her greatest kings but even their stories would dissipate gradually. Two hundred years later, Xenophon's Ten Thousand, a Grecian army of mercenaries, marched over the mounds of Nineveh and never suspected that a large city had once existed there. Assyria was unknown to history until the 1840s, when ruins were found during archaeological digs. Before then, liberal scholars touted Assyria's biblical mention to discredit the Bible. One of Nineveh's ruin sites is marked by two mounds one of which is named *Nabī Yūnus*, which means "Prophet Jonah." God gave Nineveh a second chance through Jonah and prepared to do it again through Nahum, but their impenitence caused their existence to be wiped totally from the face of the earth.

Nahum prophesied Nineveh's destruction with amazing detail. The Assyrian fortresses surrounding the city would be easily captured (Nah. 3:12), which began happening in 614 BC. In addition, Nineveh would become victim to a flood (Nah. 1:8; 2:6, 8) and a fire (Nah. 1:10; 2:13; 3:15), and its people would be massacred (Nah. 3:3). Besieged Nineveh would prepare bricks and mortar for emergency defense walls (Nah.3:14), but the city gates would be destroyed (Nah. 3:13). In the final hours of the attack, Nineveh's inebriated citizens (Nah. 1:10; 3:11) would try to escape (Nah. 2:8). The leaders would also flee (Nah. 3:17) exposing the city to total ruin (Nah. 1:9, 14). The cities idols would be destroyed (Nah. 1:14), and its treasures would be plundered (Nah. 2:9-10).

Equally astounding to the prophecy's detail was that Nineveh was an impenetrable fortress—probably the strongest in its time. The residents numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and its city and suburbs were hundreds of square miles. Its walls were 100 feet tall with 1500 towers peering 200 feet in the air. Its walls were broad enough for three chariots to race side by side along the top. Breaching the stronghold was unimaginable. And yet, Nahum's oracle seemed to plague the minds of Nineveh's leaders and populace:

There was a prophecy received from their forefathers, that Nineveh should not be taken till the river first became an enemy to the city. It happened in the third year of the siege, that the Euphrates...being swollen with continued rains, overflowed part of the city, and threw down twenty stadia of the wall. The king then imagining that the oracle was accomplished, and that the river was now manifestly become an enemy to the city, casting aside all hope of safety, and lest he should fall into the hands of the enemy, built a large funeral pyre in the palace...and having collected all his gold and silver and royal vestments, together with his concubines and eunuchs, placed himself with them in a little apartment built in the pyre; burnt them, himself, and the palace together. When the death of the king (Sardanapalus) was announced by certain deserters, the [Babylonian] enemy entered in by the breach which the waters had made, and took the city. (From Adam Clarke's commentary quoting from Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian from the first century BC.)

The books of Nahum and Jonah differ in several ways and yet are united. The book of Jonah focused on the prophet; the book of Nahum, however, centered on the prophecy. Jonah ran away at first but then went into the city to preach; Nahum went immediately but declared his message from afar. In Jonah, the city of Nineveh obeyed and repented; in Nahum, its inhabitants disobeyed and rebelled. Water in Jonah's book was a means of deliverance; but in Nahum's oracle, it was a means of destruction. Both books, however, are written to the Assyrian chief city, Nineveh, and they both demonstrate God's love, compassion and mercy for humanity.

OUTLINE

- I. God is jealous: Nineveh will fall (1:1-15).
 - A. God's wrath to be extended to Nineveh and his goodness to his own (1:2-8)
 - B. Nineveh's plotting against the Lord to come to an end (1:9-11).
 - C. Judah's affliction to end because of Nineveh's destruction (1:12-15).

- II. God is judge: Nineveh's fall will be great (2:1-13).
 - A. The attack described (2:1-6)
 - B. The defeat and plundering deployed (2:7-13)

- III. God is just: Nineveh deserves to fall (3:1-19).
 - A. Her violence and deceit to result in shame (3:1-7).
 - B. Her treatment of Thebes to result in her own defeat (3:8-11).
 - C. Her defense efforts to be useless (3:12-19).

From Bible Knowledge Commentary and Wiersbe's Expository Outline of the Old Testament

CHRISTOLOGICAL VALUE

Paul said in Galatians 4:4, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (NKJV). For several centuries prior to Christ, every world empire contributed to the fullness of times, which prepared the world for the coming Messiah. The Hebrews meticulously preserved the scriptures. The administrative genius of the Assyrians developed systematic methods of communication. The Babylonians' temple prohibition prompted the introduction of the synagogue where religious ideas would later flourish. Christianity would be preached freely in the synagogues for many years. Persia's roads increased communication, and their stern adherence to law enhanced judicial awareness. The Greek's introduced their language throughout the empire setting precedent for a universal language. Rome built fabulous roads and cleared the seas of pirates, which increased travel across its empire. The collapse of Nineveh and Assyria initiated Jesus' coming and humanity's deliverance through him.

PROPHESED DESTRUCTION

In your own words:

1. What character in God's nature will result in Nineveh's destruction?

a) _____ (1:2).

b) _____ (1:3-6).

c) _____ (1:7).

2. What major catastrophic event will God use to destroy Nineveh?

a) _____ (1:8)

3. What specific promises does God make about Nineveh's existence after their fall?

a) _____ (1:9)

b) _____ (1:14)

c) _____ (3:7)

4. Can you explain the play-on-words that describe Nineveh?

a) "The emptiers [Babylonians] have emptied them out" (2:3) – _____

b) "The lions tore in pieces..." (2:11-12) – _____

c) "Because of...harlotries...I will lift your skirts" (2:11-12) – _____

d) "You are vile" (1:14); "I will make you vile" (3:6) – _____

e) "Your shepherds slumbered" (3:18) – _____

LESSONS FROM NAHUM

In your own words:

1. God is sovereign, and he commands both political and natural powers.

What does “sovereignty of God” mean? (A Bible dictionary will be helpful.)

a) _____

How did God show his sovereignty in the following passages?

b) Gen. 11:7-8 – _____

c) Ex. 14:4 – _____

d) 2 Kgs. 19:28 – _____

What did God offer David in 2 Samuel 24:13, and how does it show God’s sovereignty?

e) _____

How does Jesus’ reference to “hour” in John 8:20 show God’s sovereignty?

f) _____

2. God is just. The Assyrians got what they deserved.

What does “just” mean? (A Bible dictionary will be helpful.)

a) _____

What was Abraham’s point in Genesis 18:25: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

b) _____

What groups of people will God's justice call upon us to defend according to Psalm 82:3?

c) _____ d) _____ e) _____ f) _____

What instruments much every merchant use according to Proverbs 16:11?

g) _____ h) _____

3. God protects his people.

In Nahum's book, what promises does God make to his people?

a) _____ (1:15)

b) _____ (1:15)

c) _____ (2:2)

*The following verses describe how God protected his Old Testament people in physical battles: Ex. 14:4; Deut. 1:30; 3:22; 2 Sam. 5:24; 1 Chron. 5:22; 2 Chron. 20:29; 32:8; Neh. 4:20; Is. 30:22; Zech. 14:3. **What can be said about his protection for his New Testament people in spiritual battles according to 2 Corinthians 10:4 and Ephesians 6:12?***

d) _____

Through what trials will God's protection carry Christians according to Romans 8:35?

(List)

e) _____

What promises does God make for the Christian?

f) Rom. 8:37 – _____

g) 1 Jn. 5:4 – _____

What basic reasons can be offered as to why God can protect his people?

h) 1 Jn. 4:4 – _____

i) 2 Kgs. 6:16 – _____

AMOS

“Burden Bearer”

(760 – 750 BC)



BACKGROUND STUDY

Amos was from the desert town of Tekoa, which was positioned just south of Jerusalem and west of the Dead Sea in Judah. He admitted that he was neither trained as a prophet, nor was he raised in a prophet's home (Amos 7:14); but the Lord called him while he tended his flock and dressed the sycamore trees. He was a country preacher, who courageously condemned the wealthy citizens of the Northern Kingdom of Israel for their complacent and apathetic lifestyles. He made many pleas for righteous living but because of their attitude, his message is summed up in a single word—doom. He was called “The Great Reformer,” because he denounced sin and corruption on every level: socially, politically, morally and religiously.

People lived lavishly. The *have's* really had, and the *have not's* went without many basic needs. The more affluent members had summer and winter houses (Amos 3:15) and slept on beds of ivory (Amos 6:4). They oppressed the poor (Amos 5:7, 11) just to keep their lifestyle (Amos 4:1). They sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes (Amos 2:6; 8:6). They accepted bribes (Amos 5:12) and traded with dishonest scales (8:5-6)—an abomination in God's eyes (Prov. 11:1).

Israel's political structure had been strong at its foundation under Jeroboam I and later under Baasha, Omri and Ahab. Its final peak was experienced under King Jeroboam II, whose 41-year reign marked the beginning of the end. Israel would see a rapid decay from within (Amos 6:1ff). The leaders demoralized the citizens who were increasing in their immorality. Fathers and sons shared the same women (Amos 2:7). The menacing power of the Assyrian war machine that was growing to the east had turned its sights on a western campaign again, which brought Israel's end.

Add to that, Israel's religion was a façade. Worship had become an outward show; they were simply going through the motions. People observed all the particulars of worship, but they missed the heart. They robbed the poor to make outlandish gifts (Amos 4:4-5), but God rejected their fattened offerings because he knew they were merely easing their own consciences (Amos 5:22-25). The priests neglected their duties because they were not any more faithful to God than anyone else. The people corrupted holy men (Amos 2:12) because they despised any divine rebuke (Amos 5:10). Furthermore, the country was slipping into idolatry.

Israel was also filled with pride and false assurance, which was probably more serious than their unfaithfulness. They knew that they were God's chosen people and the true descendants of Abraham whom God released from Egyptian bondage (Amos 2:10; 9:7-8). They reasoned that God was with them (Amos 5:14) and that he was always going to take care of them (Amos 9:7). They couldn't fathom the notion of God allowing their demise (Amos 9:10). They also presumed that their regular worship observances would fortify their relationship with God (Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-24). However, God expected a change of heart, else he would bring a different kind of change—captivity.

The prominent feature of Amos' message is seen in God's repeated attempts to bring Israel's repentance. The same attribute is seen in Hosea's message, but in contrast to his fellow prophet, the Lord showed his concern for Israel by demonstrating tough-love. He sent famine (Amos 4:6), drought (Amos 4:7-8), disease and locusts (Amos 4:9), pestilence and war (Amos 4:10) and destruction (Amos 4:11); yet Israel remained impenitent. In addition, readers know in advance that Amos' oracles fall two years before an earthquake (Amos 1:1) which is an example of God's judgment against sin (Amos 8:7-8). This earthquake was so great and terrifying that Zechariah

referenced the pandemonium that it caused afterward with the understanding that his listeners would remember it even though 250 years had passed (Zech. 14:5). Whereas one supposes that citizens turn to the Lord in times of distress, Israel stubbornly and shamelessly rejected God despite his powerful demonstrations of loving care and in spite of Amos' message of doom.

Israel's transgressions naturally had much influence upon Judah, and God sent a total of four prophets around this time to rebuke, provoke and correct both nations. Amos (760-750 BC) was the first to sharply condemn Israel's transgressions followed by Hosea (743-722 BC), who preached until Assyria's King Shalmaneser V destroyed Samaria, Israel's capital city, in 722 BC. Micah (722-701 BC) began preaching in Judah about that year, and Isaiah preached to Judah during the complete tenures of both Hosea and Micah. Both Isaiah and Micah finished their warnings to Judah when, in 701 BC, Sennacherib's Assyrian army laid siege to Jerusalem. Hezekiah sought the Lord, and that night, God's angel struck dead 185,000 soldiers.

The messages of these four prophets presented a balanced picture of God. Amos emphasized God's righteousness. Hosea stressed God's judgment. Isaiah highlighted God's holiness and majesty. And Micah put emphasis on God's love.

OUTLINE

I. Judgments of Amos (1:1 – 2:16)

A. Against the Gentiles Nations

1. Damascus (1:3-5)
2. Gaza (1:6-8)
3. Tyre (1:9-10)
4. Edom (1:11-12)
5. Ammon (1:13-15)
6. Moab (2:1-3)

B. Against the Hebrew Nations

1. Judah (2:4-5)
2. Israel (2:6-16)

II. Reasons for the Judgment (3:1 – 6:14)

- A. The sins of God's people need to be punished (3:1-15).
- B. Economic exploitation and religious hypocrisy need to be dealt with (4:1-13).
- C. God's sovereignty, character and law necessitate for sin to have consequences (5:1-17).
- D. Indifference to injustice and unrighteousness bring judgment (5:18-27).
- E. Complacent attitudes must be corrected (6:1-14).

III. Results of Judgment – 5 visions & a narrative (7:1 – 9:10)

- A. A plague of locusts (7:1-3)
- B. A fire that devours the ocean (7:2-6)
- C. A plumb line used to measure the nation (7:7-9)
- D. An attempt to silence Amos (7:10-17)
- E. A basket of summer fruit that represents man's vice and God's punishment (8:1-14).
- F. A judgment of God who stands beside his altar (9:1-10)

- IV. Restoration (9:11-15)
 - A. Of Israel (9:11)
 - B. Of All Nations (9:12)
 - C. Permanently (9:13-15)

CHRISTOLOGICAL VALUE

Amos showed us how God does *not* want us to live. Rather, he wants us to live in holiness and righteousness. Amos emphasized individual responsibility, a message echoed in Jesus' teaching. He condemned retaliation but taught a gospel of love, prayers and blessings for one's enemies. Jesus is the true shepherd, who like Amos, came from humble beginnings to point humanity boldly toward a righteousness of God. Christ is the shepherd through whom Israel will be delivered.

In addition, In Acts 15:16-17, James quoted from Amos 9:11-12 to tell how God's plan for his kingdom included Gentiles. When Amos prophesied, he spoke of certain events that were to happen in his day. To be specific, David's dynasty would be rebuilt, and it would be restored in many ways to its former glory. Also, area nations would be included in the restored kingdom as they were in the days of the United Kingdom. Many Jews who lived since the return from captivity to the time of Jesus expected the coming Messiah to usher in a literal kingdom (see Acts 1:6). James' words directed by inspiration, however, enlighten Bible students to Amos' ultimate meaning: Canaan's area nations would be fulfilled in all nations of the world.

ORACLES OF JUDGMENT

1. Using a Bible map of Old Testament Palestine, where are the following nations positioned in relation to Israel and Judah?

a) Damascus (Syria) – _____ (1:3).

b) Gaza (Philistia) – _____ (1:6).

c) Tyre (Phoenicia) – _____ (1:9).

d) Edom – _____ (1:11).

e) Ammon – _____ (1:13).

f) Moab – _____ (2:1).

2. Why does God promise judgment?

a) Damascus – _____ (1:3).

b) Gaza – _____ (1:6).

c) Tyre (2 sins) – _____

_____ (1:9).

d) Edom (3 sins) – _____

_____ (1:11).

e) Ammon – _____
_____ (1:13).

f) Moab – _____ (2:1).

g) Judah (2 sins) – _____
_____ (2:4).

h) Israel (4 sins) – _____

_____ (2:6, 7, 8, 11-12).

3. What unique reason does Amos give as to why Israel will be judge?

a) _____ (3:1)

4. Who will bring the calamity upon Israel?

a) _____ (3:6)

5. What promises does God make in the time of calamity or judgment?

a) _____ (3:11)

b) _____ (3:11)

c) _____ (3:12)

6. What two types of people does Amos condemn?

a) _____ (3:14; 4:4-5)

b) _____ (3:15; 4:1-3)

7. What powerful acts did God perform without any response (repentance) from Israel?

a) _____ (4:6)

b) _____ (4:7-8)

c) _____ (4:9)

d) _____ (4:10)

e) _____ (4:11)

What terrible event is left to come?

f) _____ (1:1)

8. Amos speaks as though Israel has already fallen (5:2) and yet they haven't. (This is called the prophetic perfect – speaking about something in the future as if it has already happened in the past.) Is it too late for Israel to repent? What verses in chapter five would you give to show your answer?

a) _____ b) _____

9. What specific sins are mentioned or alluded to in chapter five?

a) _____ (5:5)

b) _____ (5:7, 12)

c) _____ (5:10)

d) _____ (5:11)

e) _____ (5:12)

10. What two certainties does Amos make about God's judgment in Amos 5:16-20?

a) _____ (5:16-17)

b) _____ (5:19)

11. What had Israel forsaken that God promised would come according to Amos 5:24?

a) _____

b) _____

12. Which class of Israel's citizens will be carried into captivity first?

a) _____ (6:7)

13. What is the point of the following visions?

a) Locust Plague (7:1-3) – _____

b) Fire (7:4-6) – _____

c) Plumb line (7:7-9) – _____

d) Basket of Ripe Fruit (8:1-14) – _____

e) God's judgment (9:1-10) – _____

14. Of what does Amaziah, the priest, accuse Amos? How does Amos respond?

a) _____ (7:10-13)

b) _____ (7:14-17)

15. What promises does God make against Israel because of their sin?

a) _____ (8:2)

b) _____ (8:7)

c) _____ (8:11)

d) _____ (8:14)

16. **Further Study:** Can you explain the imagery used?

a) "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear" (3:12; Ex. 22:10-13) – _____

b) "Come to Bethel, and transgress" (4:4; 1 Kgs. 12:28-29) – _____

c) “The banquet of those who stretch themselves shall be removed” (6:7; consider 5:16-17) –

d) “You who rejoice in Lo-debar” (6:13) – _____

e) “By our own strength captured Karnaim” (6:13) – _____

RESTORATION PROMISES

17. What rewards does God promise?

a) _____ (9:11)

b) _____ (9:12)

c) _____ (9:13)

d) _____ (9:14)

e) _____ (9:15)

LESSONS FROM AMOS

In your own words:

1. Privilege demands responsibility.

Saul was anointed king, but he was irresponsible three times. What sins did he commit?

a) _____ (1 Sam. 13:8-9)

b) _____ (1 Sam. 14:28-32)

c) _____ (1 Sam. 15:3, 9)

The privilege of having money comes with certain responsibilities:

d) “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not _____, nor _____ in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do _____, that they be rich in good _____, ready to _____, willing to _____; laying up in store for themselves a good _____ against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19 KJV).

2. Elaborate worship is an insult to God when people do not live righteously.

What did God reject in Israel’s worship according to Isaiah 1:11-16?

a) _____ (v. 11) b) _____ (v. 13) c) _____ (v. 13)

d) _____ (v. 13) e) _____ (v. 15) f) _____ (v. 16)

What sins caused God to reject these signs of devotion according to Isaiah 1:21-23?

g) _____ (v. 21) h) _____ (v. 21) i) _____ (v. 21)

j) _____ (v. 22) k) _____ (v. 23) l) _____ (v. 23)

What true sacrifices does God accept according to Psalm 51:17?

m) A _____ spirit n) A _____ heart o) A _____ heart

According to 1 Samuel 15:22-23...

p) What is better than sacrifice? _____

q) Rebellion is the same as what? _____

Does God accept worship among brethren who can’t get along? What must one do?

r) _____ (Mt. 5:23-24)

s) _____ (Mt. 5:24)

What must we do when we observe the Lord's Supper? What will happen if we don't?

t) _____ (1 Cor. 11:28)

u) _____ (1 Cor. 11:29)

3. Justice between men is one of the foundations of society.

What led to Naboth's death in 1 Kings 21:13?

a) _____

What disappears as injustice increases?

b) _____ (Is. 59:14-15)

What final act (that would have saved Jesus) condemned a righteous man?

c) _____ (Mt. 27:26)

How does God consider false balances and unequal weights?

d) _____ (Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 11:1; 20:23)

4. Ease, luxury and idleness lead to sin.

The one-talent man is called what according to Matthew 25:26?

a) _____ b) _____

What happens to those who are lazy?

c) _____ (Eccl. 4:5)

d) _____ (Eccl. 10:18)

e) _____ (Prov. 10:4)

f) _____ (Prov. 16:27)

g) _____ (1 Tim. 5:13)

What are we explicitly commanded not to do for those who are lazy?

HOSEA

“Deliverance”

(743 – 722 BC)



BACKGROUND STUDY

Hosea was the son of Beeri (Hos. 1:1), who prophesied to his homeland around northern Samaria. He referred to it as Ephraim—used 37 times in the Hebrew—as they were the largest tribe in the Northern Kingdom. Readers will notice that much of his writing reflects an intimate knowledge of the priesthood and the temple causing some students to suppose that Hosea had been a priest. He cited the priesthood for the cause of Israel’s moral decay.

As with all prophetic messages, Hosea revealed God’s love and compassion for his people, Israel, in an attempt to stir repentance on their part. He charged them of committing spiritual adultery because they broke their covenant relationship with God in seeking idolatrous and false worship (Hos. 4:15-18; 5:4; 9:1),¹ but he continually pointed to God’s mercy and loving-kindness (Hos. 2:19; 4:1; 6:6; 10:12; 12:6). Furthermore, he emphasized the intimate knowledge that they should have for God (Hos. 4:6; 6:3, 6; 13:4).

Unlike most prophets, however, some were called upon by the Lord to demonstrate their message in bizarre ways to capture the attention of the nations. Ezekiel, for example, was called upon to play at war (Ezek. 4:1-3), to preach while lying on his side for over a year (4:4-17), to shave his hair and beard (5:1-4), to act like someone fleeing from war (12:1-16), to sit and to groan (21:1-7), and to have his wife die while being forbidden to mourn her loss (24:15-27). Hosea’s commission was given for his family to illustrate uniquely Israel’s sin and moral corruption. First, God told Hosea to take a prostitute, Gomer of Diblaim (Hos. 1:2), a charge that was repeated in Hosea 3:1. Second, he had two sons and a daughter to whom were applied names that reflected God’s relationship with Israel. He named his first son Jezreel, which meant “to be scattered” (Hos. 1:4). He named his daughter Lo-ruha-mah, which meant “no more mercy” (Hos. 1:6). He named his last child Lo-ammi, which meant “not my people” (Hos. 1:9). Using Hosea’s family, God’s message to Israel was “You are not my people anymore. Therefore, mercy will come to an end, and I will scatter you among the nations.” This promise came to fruition through Hosea who was the very last among God’s prophets to preach primarily to Israel.

Israel had experienced 200 years of relative peace and control, but Hosea’s message witnessed the last strong king of Israel, Jeroboam II, whose reign marked the beginning of that nation’s end. Stability led quickly to ruin, and in the 25 years following Jeroboam II reign, six different kings ruled Israel four of which were eliminated by assassination. Upon the death of Jeroboam II, Zechariah, his son, ascended to the throne in Samaria (2 Kgs. 14:29), but he reigned for only six months. A conspiracy east of the Jordan River arose against Zechariah, and their leader, Shallum, assassinated him and took control of the kingdom. This move ended Jehu’s dynasty (2 Kgs. 15:10) and fulfilled God’s promise to Jehu (2 Kgs. 10:30).

Shallum’s usurpation of the throne triggered civil war among the tribes in the Northern Kingdom. Shallum, whose name means “retribution,” reigned for only one month before he suffered retribution. Menahem, who had served as Zechariah’s military commander, rose up and killed Shallum, and he reigned over Israel for ten years. Pekah likely succeeded Shallum’s place as leader of the smaller rivalry kingdom that included parts of the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh. Since they refused to recognize the legitimacy of Menahem’s throne, he marched against the insurgence and inflicted terrible cruelties (2 Kgs. 15:16). It did not have the effect Menahem wished; the rivalry kingdom remained strong. His son, Pekahiah, assumed the throne upon his death, but in an attempt to silence the opposition, he made Pekah a captain in his

¹ Israel would have remembered their covenant marriage to God (Ex. 34:14-16; Deut. 32:16; Is. 62:5; Jer. 3:14).

military. Pekahiah reigned for two years before Pekah, in a coup d'état, killed him and seized control of the entire kingdom.

During this time, Assyria experienced resurgence under the leadership of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC), who made certain reforms to Assyria's provinces and army. Whereas Assyria had previously suffered from weak kings, the reorganization had caused some to refer to it as the beginning of the "Second Assyrian Army," and history would reflect on Tiglath-Pileser III (referred to as "Pul" in Bible history) as one of the most successful military commanders in the ancient world. Rebellions all around Assyria occupied their resources, but after subduing Babylonia to the south, the Neo-Hittites and Urartu to the north, and Media to the east, Tiglath-Pileser III was ready for a western campaign against Syria, Phoenicia, and Philistia. He exacted tribute from Menahem in 743 BC and made him a vassal-king to Assyria. In 735 BC, Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, formed a coalition with Edom and Philistia against the growing Assyrian threat. They requested a further alliance from Ahaz, king of Judah, but Ahaz refused. In response, they moved against Judah in the Syro-Ephraimite War, but Ahaz appealed to Assyria for assistance instead. (In truth, Rezin and Pekah wanted to replace Ahaz, son of David, with a Syrian king (Is. 7:6), who would assist their effort in deposing Assyria's Tiglath-Pileser III.) When they learned that the Assyrian army had been summoned, Israel and Syria withdrew carrying away 200,000 of Judah's citizens (2 Chron. 28:5-8). Obed, an obscure prophet of the Lord, rebuked Pekah for this treachery, and they left the captives in Jericho with their kinsmen. Tiglath-Pileser III, whose army was already preparing to march, moved against Syria in 732 BC, destroyed Damascus, their capital city, and carried their citizens into captivity. The tribe of Naphtali was also deported (2 Kgs. 15:29). Assyrian sympathizers within Israel were ready for a new king, and Tiglath-Pileser III placed Hoshea upon Israel's throne and received payment from him. In 727 BC, Tiglath-Pileser III died, and his son, Shalmaneser V, reigned in his place. Hoshea took advantage of this transfer of power and terminated their tribute to Assyria. Knowing that this move would invite the return of the cruel Assyrian army, Hoshea quickly made a foolish pact with Egypt who was too weak to offer any kind of support. In 725 BC, Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria, Israel's capital, for three long years, and it fell in 722 BC. That same year, Shalmaneser V died suddenly, but Sargon II, commander in chief of the Assyrian army, moved quickly to take the Assyrian throne. Although Tiglath-Pileser III began the campaigns around Israel and Shalmaneser V laid siege to Israel's capital, it was Sargon II who carried the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity in 721 BC. God's warnings ended; his judgment was final; Israel's fate was sealed.

Students of the Minor Prophets will notice that Israel was given ample opportunity to repent. First, God sent multiple prophets during the previous century: Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Jonah, Amos and Hosea. Second, their repeated condemnation of sin was evident as Israel's citizens grew tired of hearing them and attempted to hinder their divine messages. Third, Israel experienced brief reigns from multiple kings, and they suffered through civil war. These signs were fruits of internal decay showing the shortness of time. Fourth, Assyria's western campaigns grew more frequent and severe. God's promise of dealing with Israel's rebellion was unfolding quickly before their eyes. There were only two options: repent and stay in the land or rebel and be transported. History records their choice and God's answer.

Hosea uses several pictures to describe God's judgment: a swift eagle (8:1), the whirlwind's wrath (8:7), a scattered nation (8:8; 9:17), the burning of a fire (8:14) and one who reaps more than they have sown (10:12-15). Their sins, he named, were speaking falsely (4:1), their lack of intimate knowledge (4:6, 11), licentiousness or riotous living (4:11), murder (5:2), pride (5:5),

instability (6:4), theft (7:1), worldliness (7:8), backsliding (11:7), oppression (12:7) and idolatry (13:2), the last of which directly led to their captivity.

OUTLINE

- I. The Adulterous Wife & Faithful Husband (1:1 – 3:5)
 - A. Hosea describes his marriage to Gomer, an adulterous woman (1:2-9).
 - 1. The name of his wife is Gomer, which means “failure” (1:2-3).
 - 2. His first child was born a son, Jezreel, meaning “to be scattered” (1:4-5).
 - 3. His second child was born Lo-ruha-mah, meaning “no more mercy” (1:6-7).
 - 4. His third child was born Lo-ammi, meaning “not my people” (1:8-9).
 - B. Hosea discloses the application of his marriage to adulterous Gomer (1:10 – 2:13).
 - 1. The people will be gathered despite the sinful conduct (1:10 – 2:1).
 - 2. The mother’s sinful conduct is condemned (2:2-5).
 - 3. The mother’s sinful conduct will be punished (2:6-13).
 - C. Hosea declares there is mercy in spite of adultery (2:14 – 3:5).
 - 1. God will show mercy of Israel (2:14-23).
 - 2. Hosea will redeem his wife, who had slipped into harlotry (3:1-5).

- II. The Adulterous Nation & Faithful Lord (4:1 – 14:9)
 - A. Israel has committed spiritual adultery (4:1 – 6:3).
 - 1. Sins of Israel (4:1-19)
 - 2. Judgment of Israel (5:1-14)
 - 3. Eventual restoration of Israel (5:15-6:3)
 - B. Israel refuses to repent (6:4 – 8:14).
 - 1. They have willfully transgressed the covenant (6:4-11).
 - 2. They have willfully refused to return to the Lord (7:1-16).
 - 3. They have willfully committed idolatry (8:1-14).
 - C. Israel stands judged (9:1 – 10:15).
 - 1. Judgment of dispersion (9:1-9)
 - 2. Judgment of barrenness (9:10-17)
 - 3. Judgment of destruction (10:1-15)
 - D. Israel will be restored to the Lord (11:1 – 14:9).
 - 1. God describes his love for Israel (11:1-11).
 - 2. God indicts his people and will judge them relentlessly for their continual sin (11:12 – 13:16).
 - 3. God pleads for his people to return to the Lord (14:1-9).

CHRISTOLOGICAL VALUE

Hosea's ministry is like the work of Christ in several ways. First, Hosea was divinely instructed to redeem a harlot wife with whom he could begin a family. In choosing a wife, he was to look beyond the habit of sin to consummate a unique relationship. Jesus actively sought to redeem the lost (Lk. 19:10) going first to God's unique people – the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 10:6; 15:24). He taught his disciples to include everyone even the "Gomers" that live in the country roads and county lanes (Lk. 14:23). Second, Hosea would point out Israel's unfaithfulness and explain that God was going to do something unprecedented in their history – put them away for spiritual adultery. He would turn his back on them and allow them to be carried into captivity because of their constant rebellion. This subjugation was a successful lesson for they would never again struggle with idolatry. Although efforts should always be made to work through marital problems, Jesus recognized the legitimacy of putting away an unfaithful mate despite one's best efforts to hinder divorce (Mt. 19:9). Third, seeing that judgment was so near, Hosea was begging and pleading with Israel to return to God. He reminded them that God was ready, waiting and willing to restore their glory. Jesus is pictured as one knocking at the door waiting to be invited inside at which point he will share a supper with us (Rev. 3:20).

Also, God promises that his people will gather together again (Hos. 1:10 – 2:1). There are two applications to this pledge. First, God's mercy would ensure Israel would gather again in their land. Second, this prophet's words were applied in Romans 9:25-26 to Christ's church through which all people may find God's mercy (1 Pet. 2:10). In the Judgment Day, the church will be gathered together in one place that will be separate from the world (Mt. 25:32).

ORACLES OF JUDGMENT

1. What are the names of Hosea's children, and what do their names mean?

a) _____ – _____ (1:4).

b) _____ – _____ (1:6).

c) _____ – _____ (1:8).

2. Using the names of Hosea's children, describe God's message and warning to Israel?

3. What does God plead passionately for Israel to do? _____ (2:2)

4. What will God do if they are unresponsive? _____ (2:3)

5. What is the "Valley of Achor," and how will God use it? (Hos. 2:15; Josh. 7:26)

6. What deductions can be made for the price of Gomer's redemption & the price of a slave?

_____ (Hos. 3:2; Ex. 21:32)

7. What three sins of omission are specifically listed in Hosea 4:1? (*list*)

8. What five sins of commission are specifically listed in Hosea 4:2? (*list*)

9. Israel's sins are described in figures as what?

a) _____ (3:1)

- b) _____ (4:11)
- c) _____ (4:16)
- d) _____ (6:9)
- e) _____ (7:7)
- f) _____ (7:8)
- g) _____ (7:11)
- h) _____ (7:16)
- i) _____ (8:8)
- j) _____ (8:9)

10. Israel's sins stem from the people lacking in what?

- a) _____ (4:1, 6; 6:3, 6; 8:12)
- b) _____ (7:11; 11:5-7)
- c) _____ (4:4-6; 6:8-9; 9:7)
- d) _____ (11:1-4)

11. God rebukes Israel of what major sin in chapter four?

_____ (4:12-13, 15, 17)

12. One center for false worship was Bethel, which means "house of God." In Hosea 4:15, what is this city called, and what does it mean? (*A Bible dictionary will be helpful.*)

_____ – _____ (4:15)

13. Israel's sins prevented what favorable actions?

- a) _____ (5:4)
- b) _____ (5:6)
- c) _____ (5:11, 14)

14. Under Moses' Law, it was a sin to move territorial landmarks (Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Prov. 22:28). In light of the aforementioned sins, what spiritual landmarks did Israel move?

(5:10)

15. Hosea pictures God as a moth and worm to Israel. What does he say will occur?

_____ (5:12)

16. What appeals does Hosea make to Israel on God's behalf?

a) _____ (6:1-3)

b) _____ (6:4, 6)

17. What nation will be punished alongside Israel & Ephraim? _____ (6:11)

18. What point does Hosea's mention of the baker and kings (princes) tell of Israel's end?

_____ (7:4-7)

19. What is the point of the following figures?

a) Morning cloud – _____ (6:4)

b) Half-baked cake – _____ (7:8)

c) Gray hairs – _____ (7:9)

d) Silly dove – _____ (7:11)

c) Deceitful bow – _____ (7:16; Ps. 78:57)

20. What sins are listed (or alluded to) in chapter 8?

a) _____ (8:2)

b) _____ (8:3)

c) _____ (8:4)

d) _____ (8:5-6)

- e) _____ (8:11)
- f) _____ (8:12)
- g) _____ (8:14)
- h) _____ (8:14)

21. Because of specific sins, Hosea warns them of what?

- a) _____ (8:7)
- b) _____ (8:8)
- c) _____ (8:9)
- d) _____ (8:10)
- e) _____ (8:13)
- f) _____ (8:13)
- g) _____ (8:13)
- h) _____ (8:14)

22. **Fill-in-the-blank:** Israel had a false sense of _____ (9:1-2).

23. Therefore, what specific end does God make through Hosea?

_____ (9:3)

24. What verses in chapter nine show the prophetic perfect? (*see page 42, question 8*)

25. God describes how he found, led and nurtured Israel. What phrases show this love?

_____ (9:10)

_____ (9:13a)

_____ (10:1)

_____ (11:1)

26. In spite of what God has done previously, what will happen if they do not repent?

- _____ (9:11, 16)
27. God described his association with Israel as what? _____ (Hos. 11:1-4; Deut. 1:31)
28. What can one surmise about God's love and compassion?
_____ (11:8-9)
29. Israel's sins (Hos. 11:12) have brought what ramification from the east? What's the point?
_____ (12:1)
30. What four things does God want Israel to do? *(list)*
_____ (12:6)
31. What two events in Israel's history does God attempt to bring to their remembrance?
- a) _____ (12:12)
- b) _____ (12:13)
32. What four terms describe idolatrous Israel? *(list)*
_____ (13:3)
33. What meaning do these four terms convey?
_____ (13:3)

RESTORATION PROMISES

34. What promises (or certainties/guarantees) does God make to Israel?
- a) _____ (1:11)
- b) _____ (2:1, 23)
- c) _____ (2:15)
- d) _____ (2:16-17)
- e) _____ (2:18-20)

35. In your own words, describe Hosea's three-part closing:

a) General plea to Israel – _____ (14:1-3)

b) Promise to Israel – _____
_____ (14:4)

c) Specific appeal – _____ (14:8)

LESSONS FROM HOSEA

In your own words:

1. Marriage is sacred and must be honored by both partners.

a) "Marriage is _____ among _____, and the
_____ undefiled; but _____ and
_____ God will _____" (Heb. 13:4 NKJV).

b) Divorce is generally discouraged, but which specific kind of divorce does God hate?
_____ (Mal. 2:14-15)

c) What divine expectation does God have for married couples who experience trouble?
_____ (1 Cor. 7:10)

d) What two choices are available to couples who voluntarily elect to separate?
_____ (1 Cor. 7:11)

e) Consider why marriage may present God's true image for humanity? (Gen. 1:27)

2. Internal corruption is more dangerous than external enemies.

a) Nations tend to be crippled by internal factors than result in external failures

What cripples cities (countries) more efficiently than armies?

_____ (Prov. 25:28)

What brings reproach to nations? _____ (Prov. 14:34)

b) List some external pressures that families face: _____

What sins might affect families more than these things? *(list)*

_____ (Gal. 5:19-21)

c) The church has many foes, but what none that cause more harm than those from within.

What will happen in the last day?

_____ (1 Tim. 4:1)

From where were men to arise to draw away disciples?

_____ (1 Jn. 2:19) _____ (Acts 20:30)

What will motivate men to depart from the faith?

3 reasons – _____

_____ (Eph. 4:14)

3 reasons – _____

_____ (2 Tim. 4:3)

3. God SO loves his people. Hosea abundantly repeats God's loving nature for humanity.

God's love prompted what major event?

_____ (Tit. 3:4)

God's love has called Christian to what kind of living?

_____ (2 Tim. 1:9; see also 1 Pet. 2:22-23)

When did God show love to us?

_____ (Rom. 5:8)

God's love prompts what in us?

_____ (1 Jn. 4:19)

4. Genuine repentance will bring forgiveness and restoration.

Contrast the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow:

_____ (2 Cor. 7:10)

In the Parable of the Two Sons (Mt. 21:28-32), which son obeyed his Father's will?

_____ (Mt. 21:31)

What is the point of the Parable of the Two Sons in light of the context?

_____ (Mt. 21:23-27, 43-46)

Although written to OT Judah, what must God's people do for restoration?

“If My people who are called by My name will _____ themselves, and _____ and seek My _____, and _____ from their _____ ways, then I will _____ from _____, and will _____ their _____ and heal their _____. Now My _____ will be open and My ears _____ to prayer made in this place” (2 Chron. 7:14-15 NKJV).

MICAH

“Who is like God?”

(735 – 701 BC)



BACKGROUND STUDY

The collapse of Israel, the northern kingdom of God's people, represents one of the darkest times in Hebrew history, but it was also the golden age of prophecy. At least four writing prophets (Isaiah, Amos, Hosea and Micah) came to speak to Israel and Judah during this time period in an attempt to correct the people's deviancy. They likely knew of each other's work, but their message was unique. Their collective message, however, presented a balanced picture of God. Amos, a shepherd, emphasized God's righteousness. Hosea, likely a priest, stressed God's judgment. Isaiah highlighted God's holiness and majesty. (Tradition says that he was a cousin to King Uzziah.) And Micah, an obscure young man, put emphasis on God's love. He combined the teaching of all three of his contemporaries when he said "what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic. 6:8). It has been suggested that he had Amos' passion for justice and Hosea's heart for love.

Micah prophesied during ever-growing turmoil, strife, change and unrest. Revolution was the political message of his day because people worried about their homes, their nation and territorial alliances. Israel was engulfed in civil war which spilled into Judah forcing King Ahaz to call upon Assyria for help. Rampant idolatry in Israel also made its way to the southern kingdom. Judah's leaders were just as corrupt and covetous in Micah's day as Israel's leaders were in the day of Amos and Hosea. Judah's destruction was spared because of the great reforms made by King Hezekiah.

Add to that, Assyria was a growing super power. By 745 B.C., the Assyrian empire had settled rebellions all around them and had turned their attention toward Canaan. Their king, Tiglath-Pileser III, began his conquest of the west, from 743 to 738 B.C., because he wanted control of the entire region—Syria, Israel, Phoenicia, Philistia, Judah, Ammon, Moab, Edom and Egypt. In one such battle in 743 B.C. that is not recorded in Scripture, King Uzziah was unsuccessful in defending certain territories. Damascus (the Syrians) and King Menahem of Israel began to pay tribute at this time.

The time period of 734-732 B.C. proved extremely beneficial for the Assyrian king and humbling for the western kings around Israel. In 734, King Ahaz requested Assyria's aid against Philistine and Edomite raiders (2 Chron. 28:16), but instead of helping and supporting, Tiglath-Pileser III inflicted more pain and destruction (2 Chron. 28:20). Ahaz was forced to pay tribute. Next, King Pekah of Israel and King Rezin of Syria later defeated King Ahaz of Judah, and they were set on replacing Ahaz with a Syrian ruler so that a stronger alliance could be formed against Assyria. But King Ahaz moved quickly to appeal again to the Assyrian king, who responded with unyielding force. Tiglath-Pileser III dealt severely with Damascus and executed their king. With their capital destroyed, the Syrians were deported into Assyrian captivity along with the tribe of Naphtali (2 Kgs. 15:29). The two and a half tribes east of the Jordan River (Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh) were also carried into captivity at this time (1 Chron. 5:25). Finally, Assyria, led by King Shalmaneser V, marched again on Samaria in 721 B.C. to completely destroy the obstreperous citizens and to carry away the six and a half tribes that remained in Israel (2 Kgs. 17:4-6; 18:9-11). The land was resettled by people from Assyria and Babylon (2 Kgs. 17:24).

God allowed Assyria to continue moving further south into Judah because of their sins; but it was God who prevented Jerusalem's ultimate fall and complete destruction. Sargon II led Assyrian campaigns in 720 and 712 B.C. to crush additional rebellions in Syria (made up of

remnants), Phoenicia and Philistia; Judah and Egypt continued their tributes. His son, Sennacherib, squelched a rebellion composed of Egypt, Philistia, Phoenicia and Judah in 701 B.C. He devastated Judah's countryside by sacking 46 fortified cities and camped outside Jerusalem's gate. Isaiah and Micah preached boldly, and King Hezekiah led Jerusalem in prayers of repentance that together moved God's heart to spare them from destruction and starvation. God's angel struck dead 185,000 of Sennacherib's army that night. When the king awoke the next morning to see his defeated army, a demoralized Sennacherib returned to Nineveh (2 Kgs. 19:35-36). God had spared both King Hezekiah and Jerusalem for David's sake (2 Kgs. 19:34). King Hezekiah initiated great reforms in Judah thereafter (2 Chron. 29-31), but Micah continued to preach against superficial worship (Mic. 2:11).

The prophet Daniel spoke often that God rules the kingdom of men (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21), and that only God removes and sets up kings (Dan. 2:21). In 681 B.C., twenty years after Sennacherib returned to Nineveh in shame, his sons killed him in the temple of Nisroch (2 Kgs. 19:37). His youngest son, Esarhaddon, became king and set out to rebuild Babylon. Upon his sudden death in 669 B.C., his two sons ruled in his place. One son, Ashurbanipal, ruled over Assyria and was its last great king. Another son, Shamash-shum-ukin, ruled over Babylon. He rebelled unsuccessfully against his brother's Assyrian kingdom, but his failure very likely fueled the seeds of unrest which led to the uprising of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar II, ushered in a new dynasty and a new era in Babylon only two decades after Shamash-shum-ukin (Sennacherib's grandson) died. God was working behind the scenes all along; Micah was a witness to many of these changes that affected God's chosen people.

Micah's prophesy reflects his name. Out of the meaning, "Who is like God?" comes the question, "Who can save you?" The message is pointed. Can national leaders save? Can Sennacherib save? Can alliances with other nations save? Only God can save because there is no one like God (Mic. 6:9; 7:10, 18). And no one knows his thoughts (Mic. 4:12; cf. Is. 55:8-9).

Micah was a younger contemporary of the great Isaiah. He was from Morashath, a Judean city near the Philistine border. His message was directed initially to Israel's northern tribes (see Mic. 1:2-9), but upon witnessing their destruction and deportation into Assyrian captivity, he focused on the remaining two tribes—Judah and Benjamin. These citizens understood the condemnation of Israel's sins and justified their demise, but they were alarmed to see that prophetic attention turned to them.

His message was clear and memorable. He expressed contempt for the corruption among national leaders in Jerusalem. He reminded them of earlier history and the great things God had done (Mic. 3:9-10; 6:3-5). He also condemned their vain and empty religious practices (Mic. 6:6-8). He predicted that Jerusalem would be "plowed as a field" (Mic. 3:12), words that would be famously recalled 100 years later in the day of Jeremiah (Jer. 26:18). Yet Micah's message was filled with hope. Israel would be restored and the Messiah would not be far behind.

OUTLINE

- I. The Prediction of Judgment (1:1 – 3:12)
 - A. Against specific nations
 - 1. On Israel (1:2-9)
 - a. The events are described (1:2-7).
 - b. The emotions are displayed (1:8)
 - c. The effects are declared (1:9)
 - 2. On Judah
 - a. 12 cities denounced (1:10-15)
 - b. Change is the message (1:16)
 - B. Against groups of individuals
 - 1. On the wealthy class planning evil (2:1-5)
 - 2. On false prophets for silencing the true prophets (2:6-11)
 - 3. Contrast the remnant that will be saved (2:12-13).
 - 4. On civic rulers for their injustice (3:1-4)
 - 5. On false prophets again for covetous messages (3:5-8)
 - 6. On rulers, prophets and priests for their greed (3:9-12)
- II. The Promise of Restoration (4:1 – 5:15)
 - A. The coming kingdom of God (4:1-5)
 - 1. God's word will flow from Jerusalem to all nations (4:1-2).
 - 2. God's people will learn peace and not war (4:3-4).
 - 3. God's people will walk in the name of the Lord (4:5).
 - B. The returning captives (4:6-5:1)
 - 1. Their dominion (4:6-8)
 - 2. Their distress (4:9-10)
 - 3. Their deliverance (4:11-5:1)
 - C. The coming king (5:2-15)
 - 1. The arrival of the King (5:2-4)
 - 2. The influence of the King over the spiritual "Assyria" (5:5-6)
 - 3. The blessings of King's followers (5:7-9)
 - 4. The purging of the false trust (5:10-14)
 - 5. The judgment of everyone who is disobedient (5:15)
- III. The Plea for Repentance (6:1 – 7:20)
 - A. God's case (6:1-16)
 - 1. God pleads his case before witnesses (6:1-5).
 - 2. God lays out his expectation of his people (6:6-8).
 - 3. God condemns evil among the people (6:9-16).
 - B. Micah's message (7:1-20)
 - 1. The people are corrupt (7:1-6).
 - 2. "I will wait on the Lord to see what he does" (7:7-17).
 - 3. God's character is praised (7:18-20).

CHRISTOLOGICAL VALUE

Micah saw Israel as a woman who was preparing to deliver a child – the messianic deliverer (Mic. 4:10; 5:3); there were labor pains, delivery and then the baby. This mother, the people of Israel, would suffer persecution and be taken into captivity. The faithful remnant would return from exile and endure more suffering before the coming of the Messiah and the kingdom that would begin on Pentecost. Isaiah also presents this picture (Is. 66:4-8), and John reminded the church of this imagery (Rev. 12:1-6).

This prophecy would also have a literal fulfillment in Mary, the mother of baby Jesus. Herod's scribes knew well of Micah's prophecy and tried to thwart God's plan (Mt. 2:5-6). Isaiah also spoke of this virgin who would deliver a baby named Immanuel or "God with us" (Is. 7:14), which Matthew cited as being fulfilled in Jesus (Mt. 1:23). Paul said plainly, "in the fullness of time God sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law" (Gal. 4:4). This verse could only refer to Jesus.

This Messiah was to come from Bethlehem Ephrathah (Mic. 5:2). Bethlehem means "house of bread," and Ephrathah mean "fruitfulness" (coming from the meaning "to bear fruit"). Jesus said at the feeding of the five thousand that he was the bread of life (Jn. 6:35, 48). It is little wonder then that the house of bread would bring forth the bread of life.

Micah also prophesied the coming of the kingdom (Mic. 4:1-4). His words echoed Isaiah's message (Is. 2:1-4). He spoke of a day when a spiritual center would be placed in Jerusalem from which God's word would flow (Lk. 24:47). All nations seeking God would look toward this exalted mountain (Heb. 12:22, 28). God's people would not need instruments of warfare in the new era, but rather enjoy peace and security (Mic. 4:3). He spoke of men sitting under their fig tree (Mic. 4:4), which was an allusion to a place of safety (1 Kgs. 4:24-25). Interestingly, Nathanael sat under a fig tree when Jesus saw him. When Jesus told him of this truth, Nathanael recognized that Jesus was the Messiah in light of Micah's prophecy (Jn. 1:47-51).

ORACLES OF JUDGMENT

1. During the reigns of which kings did Micah prophesy?

_____ (1:1).

2. To which nations did Micah prophesy?

_____ (1:1).

3. Where is God pictured? (see also Habakkuk 2:20) _____ (1:2)

4. Will he stay there? Why? _____ (1:3)

5. What descriptive phrases show God's power?

a) _____ (1:4)

b) _____ (1:4)

c) _____ (1:4)

d) _____ (1:4)

6. The prophesy against Samaria (Israel) implies what about their destruction and captivity?

_____ (1:5-6)

7. The prophecy against Jerusalem (Judah) implies what about their repentance and change?

_____ (1:5)

8. The destruction of Samaria is certain (1:6-7). Describe Micah's emotional reaction?

(1:8)

9. Why has Micah responded this way?

_____ (1:9)

10. Informal names have been suggested for each city (1:10-15). What connections can be made between the city name (loose translation) and Micah's prophecy? (Use map for locations.)

- a) Gath – “Tell-town = _____
 _____ (1:10)
- b) Beth-le-aphrah – “Dust-town” (lit. “house of dust”) _____
 _____ (1:10)
- c) Shaphir – “Fair-town” (lit. “beautiful, glittering”) _____
 _____ (1:11)
- d) Zaanan – “March-town” (lit. “come out”) _____
 _____ (1:11)
- e) Beth-ezel – “Neighbor-town” (lit. “house of joining side”) _____
 _____ (1:11)
- f) Maroth – “Bitter-town” (lit. “bitter springs”) _____
 _____ (1:12)
- g) Jerusalem – “Peace-town” (lit. “vision of peace”) _____
 _____ (1:12)
- h) Lachish – “Horse-town” (lit. “who walks, or exists of himself”) _____
 _____ (1:13)
- i) Moresheth-Gath – “Possession-town” (lit. “possessor of Gath”) _____
 _____ (1:14)
- j) Achzib – “False-town” (lit. “deceitful, liar, lying”) _____
 _____ (1:14)
- k) Mareshah – “Heir-town” (lit. “summit”) _____
 _____ (1:15)
- l) Adullam – “Glory-town” (lit. “justice of the people”) _____

- _____ (1:15)
11. What is Micah's overall message to these cities? _____
 _____ (1:16)
12. What sins can you list from Micah 2:1-2? (*list*)
 _____ (2:1-2)
13. Explain in your own words the kind of people Micah is addressing:
 _____ (2:1-2)
14. Will they be able to escape this yoke of disaster that will befall them? _____ (2:3)
15. What is this yoke on their neck? _____ (2:3)
16. What song (or really parable) is expressed and why would Judah's enemies be singing it?

 _____ (2:4)
17. What is meant by "he changes the portion of my people"? What portion is being changed?

 _____ (2:4)
18. What attitudes do Judah's citizens have toward God's prophets?
 _____ (2:6)
19. What were the people saying God would not do?
 a) _____ (2:6)
 b) _____ (2:7)
20. Was the Assyrian army the real enemy of Judah or was there another? If so, who was it?
 _____ (2:8)
21. Why were they considered to be the real army?
 a) _____ (2:8)

- b) _____ (2:9)
22. What will happen to these real enemies?
_____ (2:10)
23. What kind of prophets did Micah acknowledge the people wanted?
_____ (2:11)
24. What message of hope does Micah provide?
_____ (2:12)
25. Who is the King? _____ (2:13; Eph. 2:14)
26. Micah's critics accused him of only preaching adversity. Why was this not true? _____
_____ (2:12-13)
27. What three groups of people are denounced?
- a) _____ (3:1)
- b) _____ (3:5)
- c) _____ (3:9, 11)
28. The rulers _____ the good and _____ the evil (3:2).
29. What serious crime did Micah compare their actions? _____ (3:2-3)
30. Will God hear their cries for help? _____ (3:4; 1 Pet. 3:12)
31. What determined the message of false prophets? _____ (3:5)
32. Will God have any message for the false prophets? _____ (3:6-7)
33. What is the difference between the source of Micah's messages (3:8) and the others (3:5-7)?
_____ (3:5-8)
34. The rulers, priests and prophets leaned on what in reality? _____ (3:11a)
35. Yet, they claimed to lean on God with what two statements?
- a) _____ (3:11b)

b) _____ (3:11b)

36. What great prophecy does Micah make about Jerusalem? _____ (3:12)

RESTORATION PROMISES

37. Will Jerusalem (Zion) be a center for worship again? _____ (4:1-2)

38. Why does Micah say that the mountain of Zion will be higher than others? _____
_____ (4:1-2)

39. What will be “the house of the God of Jacob?” _____ (4:2; Lk. 24:47)

40. Will there be a place for war and destruction in this new spiritual center? _____ (4:3-4)

41. Who will be the remnant of Israel that God assembles? _____ (4:6-7)

42. How does Micah illustrate Jerusalem’s pain when invaders come? _____
_____ (4:9-10)

43. What nation will capture Jerusalem in the future? _____ (4:10; Is. 39:1-6)

44. Will they return from captivity? _____ (4:10)

45. What three events must happen before the people return from captivity?

a) _____ (4:9)

b) _____ (4:10)

c) _____ (4:11)

46. What do the current enemies want Jerusalem to become? _____ (4:11)

47. Who does Micah say orchestrates these events? _____ (4:12)

48. What major battle is pictured in Micah 4:13-5:1? (*see background*) _____

49. From what insignificant city will the Messiah come? _____ (5:2)

50. Of what kind of trouble does Micah speak? (*see also 2 Cor. 10:3-5 & Eph. 6:17*)

_____ (Mic. 5:5-6)

51. In what two ways will the remnant be in the midst of the people?

a) _____ (5:7)

b) _____ (5:8-9)

52. What four things, in which Israel had placed its trust, will God remove?

a) _____ (5:10)

b) _____ (5:11)

c) _____ (5:12)

d) _____ (5:13-14)

53. Why would God destroy all of these things mentioned in Micah 5:10-15?

a) _____ (5:10-11)

b) _____ (5:12-14)

c) _____ (5:16)

54. What witness will hear God's indictment against his people? _____ (6:1-2)

55. In what way were the following events "saving acts" of God?

a) Exodus from Egypt – _____ (6:4)

b) Moses, Aaron & Miriam – _____ (6:4)

c) Balak & Balaam – _____ (6:5; Num. 22-24)

d) Shittim – _____ (6:5; Josh. 3:1)

e) Gilgal – _____ (6:5; Josh. 4:19)

56. What were the worshipers guilty of doing? _____ (6:6-7)

57. What three things does Micah stress that God required?

a) _____ (6:8)

b) _____ (6:8)

- c) _____ (6:8)
58. In Micah 6:9, Micah says that the Lord will bring the rod (the Assyrian army) against the city (Jerusalem) for what sins?
- a) _____ (6:10-11)
- b) _____ (6:12a)
- c) _____ (6:12b)
59. Why will the Law of Harvest (“You reap what you sow”) described in Micah 6:14-15 not work in Judah case?
- _____ (6:13)
60. What specific sin does Micah reference? (See Lev. 20:23; Jer. 10:3; 1 Kgs. 16:25, 31-32.)
- _____ (6:16)
61. What does Micah say is lacking from Jerusalem? (*See Jer. 5:1*) _____ (7:2)
62. What important institution will fail? _____ (7:6)
63. What two things does Micah say he will do?
- a) _____ (7:7)
- b) _____ (7:7)
64. What will God be to the remnant during captivity? _____ (7:8-9)
65. What will be rebuilt when they return from captivity? _____ (7:11)
66. How will Micah’s word be fulfilled ultimately? _____ (7:12)
67. What group of people does Micah say will be humbled? _____ (7:16-17)
68. What eight qualities of God does Micah name? (*look for the verbs*)
- a) _____ (7:18)
- b) _____ (7:18)
- c) _____ (7:18)
- d) _____ (7:18)

- e) _____ (7:19)
- f) _____ (7:19)
- g) _____ (7:19)
- h) _____ (7:20)

LESSONS FROM MICAH

In your own words:

1. Elaborate progressions of piety and public liberal gifts cannot atone for a lack of true righteousness.

What gift did Ananias & Sapphira bring to the apostles?

_____ (Acts 5:1-2)

Why was their gift rejected by Peter?

_____ (Acts 5:3-4)

What motivation did the Pharisees have in offering their public gifts?

_____ (Mt. 6:1)

What should and should not be rendered?

“So rend your _____ and not your _____” (Joel 2:13 NKJV).

What did the Macedonians give first to the Lord?

_____ (2 Cor. 8:5)

What kind of giver does the Lord love?

_____ (2 Cor. 9:7)

What was David’s attitude toward gifts made to the Lord?

_____ (2 Sam. 24:24)

2. The unscrupulous use of power offends God.

How did God deal with Ahab and Jezebel corruptive power? (See also 1 Kgs. 21:19, 23-24)

_____ (2 Kgs. 9:36)

Why was Nehemiah angry with his brethren?

_____ (Neh. 5:1-5, 7)

Would you consider Moses' action to be careless? Please explain. What was his punishment?

_____ (Num. 20:11-12)

Why did John warn Diotrephes?

_____ (3 Jn. 9)

What group of Christians is warned about this danger?

_____ (1 Tim. 5:17)

3. Genuine repentance will bring forgiveness and restoration.

How did repentance bring forgiveness and restoration to the following individuals?

a) Ahab - _____ (1 Kgs. 21:27-29)

b) Nineveh's citizens - _____ (Jon. 3:6-10)

c) Manasseh - _____ (2 Kgs. 21:14; 2 Chron. 33:13)

d) Nebuchadnezzar - _____ (Dan. 4:34-36)

What must ungodly Christians do to enjoy forgiveness and restoration? (2 things)

_____ (Acts 8:22)

What should faithful Christians do toward to encourage their genuine repentance?

a) _____ (2 Thess. 3:15)

b) _____ (Gal. 2:11, 14)

c) _____ (Acts 18:26)

d) _____ (1 Jn. 5:16a)

What should faithful Christians not do on behalf of impenitent Christians?

e) _____ (1 Jn. 5:16b)

4. God's love and mercy is great.

God's steadfast love encompasses how many generations?

_____ (Deut. 7:9)

What motivated David to choose his punishment after he counted his military?

_____ (2 Sam. 24:14)

What specific information about God did Jonah understand before he preached to Nineveh?

_____ (Jon. 4:2)

To whom has God's grace appeared?

_____ (Tit. 2:11)

Who does God want to be saved?

_____ (1 Tim. 2:4)

ZEPHANIAH

“The Lord has hidden”

(627-621 BC)



BACKGROUND STUDY

It had been 100 years since Israel had been carried away into captivity and more than 60 years since King Hezekiah led Judah in reforms. Many of the aged citizens of Judah may have remembered the preaching ministries of Isaiah and Micah, but their lessons have faded from memory; Judah was in need of revival again. Assyria was weakening; Babylon's power was steadily growing; Egypt remained a threat; and Judah was decaying from within. Their morality had sharply declined in the 57 years under Judah's most wicked kings, Manasseh and Amon; sin was on the rise, and God's patience was running out.

After several decades of silence, in 627 BC, God opened the mouths of two very influential prophets, Zephaniah and Jeremiah, and inspired them to preach to a great-grandson of Hezekiah, Josiah, who sat upon the king's throne. (Zephaniah, too, descended from King Hezekiah; he spoke to a distant cousin.) Although Josiah was a good king, his righteousness alone was insufficient to undo his father and grandfather's wickedness (2 Kgs. 23:26-27). Zephaniah warned Josiah of immediate destruction, which caused the king to make further changes to avoid calamity.

This passionate prophet had much work cut out for him. Social injustice and moral dishonesty was widely practiced (Zeph. 3:1, 7) as was extravagant living and oppression of the poor (Zeph. 1:8-9). He confronted their idolatry (Zeph. 1:4), their artificial worship (Zeph. 1:5), their outright rebellion (Zeph. 1:6) and their complacency (Zeph. 1:12). The people said in their heart, "The Lord will not do us good, nor will He do us evil" (Zeph. 1:12). They reasoned that since God had allowed Manasseh to sit on the throne for 55 years then He did not care. Manasseh was compared to the very wicked Amorite kings (2 Kgs 21:11), and he left Judah on a track that spelled certain doom, but Zephaniah charged the citizens to seek the Lord as He may hide the righteous in the day of His anger (Zeph. 2:3).

Josiah was a righteous leader, the best Judah had ever experienced (2 Kgs. 23:25). At the age of 16, in 632 BC, Josiah began to seek the Lord (2 Chron. 34:3), and four years later, he began to make early reforms (2 Chron. 34:3-7). He purged Judah of high places and of images devoted to Asherim, the Assyrian fertility goddess. He tore down alters dedicated to Baal worship and placed the pieces on the graves of its priests. He burned the bones of the false priests in Judah and Jerusalem. Since the regions of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon and Naphtali were weak politically, he did the same in those cities as well.

The discovery of the scroll of Deuteronomy in 622 BC increased Josiah's spiritual zeal. Hilkiah the high priest found the scroll (called "the Book of the Law") in the Lord's temple (2 Kgs. 22:8; 2 Chron. 34:14-15) while repairs were made (2 Kgs. 22:3-7; 2 Chron. 34:8-13). The scroll was read to the king who was terrified of the described curses (2 Kgs. 22:9-13; 2 Chron. 34:16-21). Josiah had Huldah the prophetess to verify the scroll's authenticity, and she delivered a scathing rebuke for Judah's past sins, but she also revealed God's promise to postpone Jerusalem's annihilation until after Josiah's death (2 Kgs. 22:14-20; 2 Chron. 34:22-28). The law was then read publically—a tradition that had been forsaken for about 800 years (Josh. 8:35).

Josiah made a covenant with God that same year leading him to finish the earlier reforms he had already begun (2 Kgs. 23:3-14, 24; 2 Chron. 34:31-33). Josiah cleansed the temple by removing all the priests and workers and by burning all the objects dedicated to Baal and Asherim worship. He removed from service all false priests loyal to idolatry and astrology. He tore down the tents of male cult prostitution. He desecrated the high places from across Judah

and removed their high priests to Jerusalem, although he did allow them to eat unleavened bread. He confiscated the horses involved in idolatrous service and burned the chariots. He tore down Ahaz and Manasseh's altars and even Solomon and Jeroboam's altars which led Israel and Judah into sin more than two centuries before. (Every righteous king, from Asa and Jehoshaphat to Hezekiah, was either unable or unwilling to make such a change.) Josiah desecrated the tombs of the priests in Bethel who made sacrifice to Baal but gave respect to the tomb of the man of God who condemned Jeroboam for his egregious sins (1 Kgs. 13:1). Josiah's transformations led him to eradicate idolatry in private homes. These changes affected the entire land of Israel; no king served God like Josiah.

One of Josiah's greatest reforms was to defile Topheth (meaning "contempt") in the Hinnom Valley. Also called the Valley of the Slaughter (Jer. 7:32; 9:16), Hinnom Valley was located just outside of Jerusalem, and it was the location where human sacrifice was practiced in Palestine. King Ahaz was the first king to follow the neighboring nations in offering his son to the pagan god Molech (2 Kgs. 16:3; 2 Chron. 28:3). King Manasseh followed the same despicable offense (2 Kgs. 21:6; 2 Chron. 33:6). The people of Judah were so abhorred by the events of Hinnom that Josiah caused the site to be a garbage dump so that "no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech" (2 Kgs. 23:10). The city's waste and the carcasses of animals and unburied criminals were disposed of in the Hinnom Valley. A smoldering fire continually burned and maggots continually ate the refuse found there. The putrid air passing through Hinnom would not have invited anyone to visit. Jesus would come to refer to Hinnom Valley to symbolize *Gehenna*, the place of eternal torment where "the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mk. 9:44).

Another great improvement of Josiah was restoring the Passover as God intended (2 Chron. 35:1-19). Using the newly found scroll, Josiah appointed new priests to the Lord's service, he caused the animals to be sacrificed, and the Passover was instituted fully. The Passover had been kept in previous generations (see Hezekiah's reforms in 2 Chronicles 30), but Josiah's changes caused that year's feast to be unlike any since the time of Samuel in the days of the judges with joyous celebration throughout the whole land (2 Kgs. 23:22; 2 Chron. 35:18).

A new and formidable enemy had appeared in the region during this time. The Scythians, a war-hungry people, who lived north of the Black and Caspian Seas and the Caucasus Mountains (in modern-day Ukraine and Russia) swept down into the lands of Assyria, Media and Mesopotamia in 632 BC. Zephaniah proclaimed that the day of the Lord was near (Zeph. 1:7, 14), and he and Jeremiah saw God's judgment in these people "from the north" (Jer. 4:5-9; 6:1ff). The apostle Paul associated them with Barbarians (Col. 3:11), and he agreed with a fifth-century historian, Herodotus, who said,

They were nomads who neither plowed nor sowed...moving about in wagons and carrying their dwellings with them...; they had the most filthy habits and never washed in water...; they drank the blood of the first enemy killed in battle, and made napkins of the scalps and drinking bowls of the skulls of the slain.... Their deities were many of them identified with those of the Greeks, but the most characteristic rite was the worship of the naked sword..., and they sacrificed every hundredth man taken in war to this deity. War was their chief business, and they were a terrible scourge to the nations of Western Asia. (ISBE)

They pushed into Western Asia (Palestine) in 625 BC, one year after Zephaniah and Jeremiah began preaching. The Scythian people remained in the region of Palestine for 28 years and some

settled into the city of Beth-shan which was later called Scythopolis. Another branch became the Parthians who were longtime rivals of the Romans.

Zephaniah was from Jerusalem. He was the only prophet who had royal blood (Zeph. 1:1), with the exception of perhaps Isaiah (see Is. 7:3). His name means, “The Lord has hidden,” and it is very likely that he had to be hidden as a child during King Manasseh’s atrocities in Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 21:16). He preached boldly proclaiming the Day of the Lord, and then he slid into obscurity though he likely continued to help with reforms in the land (see 2 Ks. 23:2).

OUTLINE

- I. God will judge Judah (1:1 – 2:3)
 - A. Totality of the Judgment (1:1-3)
 - B. Causes of the Judgment (1:4-13)
 - C. Description of the Judgment (1:14-18)
 - D. Call to Repentance (2:1-3)

- II. God will judge surrounding nations & Jerusalem (2:4 – 3:7)
 - A. Judgment against Philistia—west (2:4-7)
 - B. Judgment against Moab and Ammon—east (2:8-11)
 - C. Judgment against Ethiopia—south (2:12)
 - D. Judgment against Assyria—north (2:13-18)
 - E. Judgment against Jerusalem (3:1-7)

- III. God will restore all people (3:8-20)
 - A. Restoration will come to all nations (3:8-12)
 - B. Restoration will come to the land (3:13)
 - C. Restoration will come to Jerusalem (3:14-20)

CHRISTOLOGICAL VALUE

Like many prophets, Zephaniah brought hope to a discouraged people. He turned a message of broad judgment (Zeph. 1:1-3) to an expansive blessing for all men in Christ (Zeph. 3:9-13). Jerusalem, Judah's capital, would see destruction (Zeph. 3:1-7), but she would become the center for worship again (Zeph. 3:14-20) echoing Isaiah and Micah's prophecies (Is. 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-3).

Zephaniah employs the phrase "call upon the name of the Lord" (Zeph. 3:9-10; also Joel 2:32; Zech. 13:9) which places an important role in the Jewish mind. Calling upon a deity's name expressed the attitude toward that divine being. Pagans called upon the names of their foreign gods and idols (Hos. 2:19; Ps. 16:4), which represented their worship of those divinities. Calling upon the name of the Lord, however, was used to express the intent of the heart on the part of a true worshipper of God.

The New Testament writers continued this same Jewish reference to describe Christians in their worship and service to Christ in the church. The Pentecost crowd called upon God's name to change their Jewish worship for Christian worship (Acts 2:21) as did Paul (Acts 22:16) and many persecuted Christians (Acts 9:14). The Apostle Paul wrote that God's universal extension of salvation would apply to everyone who called upon God's name (Rom. 10:11-14). Various churches in the faith were composed of individual Christian who had called upon God's name (1 Cor. 1:2).

Jesus referred to Zephaniah's prophecy on two occasions. He first recalled the prophet's description of total destruction the Day of the Lord (Zeph. 1:2-3) and described how the angels will remove all things evil on Judgment Day (Mt. 13:41). Jesus later described the destruction of Jerusalem that would occur in AD 70 using hyperbolic language (exaggerated statements to evoke strong feelings). He said that certain celestial bodies would become disrupted from their normal function (Mt. 24:29). Zechariah used the same language to describe God's judgment of Judah (Zeph. 1:15). In both cases, the words were not to assume a literal application (that is to say that the stars would literally fall), but that God was intervening directly in the affairs of men.

ORACLES OF JUDGMENT

1. From which important king did Zephaniah descend? _____ (1:1)
2. What can be said of the God's destruction? _____ (1:2-3)
3. God will bring judgment upon Judah for what four sin?
 - a) _____ (1:4-6)
 - b) _____ (1:8)
 - c) _____ (1:9)
 - d) _____ (1:12)
4. In light of coming judgment, what does God expect the citizens to do?
 - a) _____ (1:7)
 - b) _____ (1:7)
 - c) _____ (1:7)
5. In what three things did Jerusalem place its trust?
 - a) _____ (1:14)
 - b) _____ (1:16)
 - c) _____ (1:18)
6. Write the five couplets that describe the Day of the Lord:
 - a) _____ (1:15)
 - b) _____ (1:15)
 - c) _____ (1:15)
 - d) _____ (1:15)
 - e) _____ (1:16)

7. What other descriptions can be made about the Day of the Lord?
 a) _____ (1:17)
 b) _____ (1:2-3; 3:8)
8. Who will be able to save them? _____ (1:18)
9. The destruction was _____ (1:7, 14) but still to _____ (2:2).
10. Did Jerusalem have a chance to repent? _____ (2:3)
11. What was God prepared to do for those who repented? _____ (2:3)
12. Name other nations that Zephaniah:
 a) _____ (2:4) b) _____ (2:8)
 c) _____ (2:12) d) _____ (2:13)
13. Why was God going to bring judgment upon Jerusalem?
 a) _____ (2:2)
 b) _____ (2:2)
 c) _____ (2:2)
 d) _____ (2:2)
14. Of what were the four groups of leaders guilty?
 a) _____ (3:3)
 b) _____ (3:3)
 c) _____ (3:4)
 d) _____ (3:4)
15. What should be the people's response? _____ (3:8)

RESTORATION PROMISES

16. Who will be restored? _____ (3:9)

17. What kind of words describe the remnant (people) that will return from captivity?

- a) _____ (3:12)
- b) _____ (3:12)
- c) _____ (3:13)
- d) _____ (3:13)
- e) _____ (3:13)
- f) _____ (3:13)
- g) _____ (3:13)

18. Why will Jerusalem (Zion) be able to rejoice?

- a) _____ (3:15)
- b) _____ (3:15)
- c) _____ (3:15)
- d) _____ (3:15)

19. What promises does God make? (*Look for the personal pronouns.*)

- a) _____ (3:18)
- b) _____ (3:19)
- c) _____ (3:19)
- d) _____ (3:19)
- e) _____ (3:20)
- f) _____ (3:20)
- g) _____ (3:20)
- h) _____ (3:20)

LESSONS FROM ZEPHANIAH

In your own words:

1. God rules the world.

According to Daniel, what does God do to kings and kingdoms?

a) _____ (Dan. 2:21)

b) _____ (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21)

Why is this principle true? _____

_____ (Deut. 10:17)

What is God called?

a) _____ (Mt. 5:35)

b) _____ (Ps. 47:2)

c) _____ (Ps. 47:7)

2. A nation built on pride, cruelty & selfishness cannot hope to have friends when they fall.

What did Edom do when Israel was besieged? _____

_____ (Obad. 1:14)

What positive trait will be lacking in the day of destruction? (Fill-in-the-blank using a NKJV)

a) Who will be _____ for you? (Is. 51:19)

b) Who will have _____ on you? (Jer. 15:5)

c) Who can _____ you? (Lam. 2:13)

d) Who will _____ her? (Nah. 3:7)

3. God hates brutality, violence and all wrong-doing.

What is sin? _____ (1 Jn. 3:4)

Name the seven abominations that the Lord hates?

a) _____ (Prov. 6:17)

b) _____ (Prov. 6:17)

c) _____ (Prov. 6:17)

d) _____ (Prov. 6:18)

e) _____ (Prov. 6:18)

f) _____ (Prov. 6:19)

g) _____ (Prov. 6:19)

What can one who is filled with violence (but also sin in general) expect from God?

a) _____ (2 Kgs. 24:4)

b) _____ (Is. 1:15)

c) _____ (Is. 1:15)

d) _____ (Is. 1:15)

4. Earnest warning is needed to bring us back to God.

What biblical character(s) heeded the warnings of impending danger and was spared?

a) _____ (Gen. 19:12-14)

b) _____ (Josh. 6:17)

c) _____ (Acts 8:20-23)

What three steps can one take to try to reconcile differences with others?

a) _____ (Mt. 18:15)

b) _____ (Mt. 18:16)

c) _____ (Mt. 18:17)

When we have reached a fallen saint, from what have we saved them?

a) _____ (Jam. 5:20)

b) _____ (Jude 1:23)

5. The humble seeker will be saved in the Day of Judgment.

In your own words, what deductions can be made from reading 2 Samuel 12:22, Joel 2:13-14, Amos 5:15, Jonah 3:9 and Zephaniah 2:3? (You may or may not use all these lines.)

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

e) _____

HABAKKUK

“Embraced by God”

(612-606 BC)



BACKGROUND STUDY

Prophets were always commissioned with the burden of receiving God's message and taking it to the people. Habakkuk, however, embraced, as his name suggests,² the feelings of the populace and laid it before God's hearing. The grievance was not new; it had been around for ages. The objection was two-fold, and Habakkuk raised them both: "Why do the righteous suffer?" and "Why do the righteous suffer at the hand of wicked people?"

Readers may find these issues addressed in only one of two places in Scripture. Job was the first man in the Bible to really struggle with this matter. He strove to defend himself to his three critical friends. In his arguments, however, Job prideful assumed God would come down to earth to vindicate him. God finally fired some 88 questions from a whirlwind (see Job 38-41) for which Job never received the first answer or clue as to why he had suffered. The second occasion that addressed this matter but with a twist is found in the seventy-third psalm penned by Asaph, one of David's chief musicians. Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked while the poor was filled with grief and sorrow; he asked, "Why do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?" He meditated on his question while in the sanctuary (Ps. 73:17) and concluded that God would be good to Israel and to those who were pure in heart (Ps. 73:1).

Habakkuk, who was likely a Levite that served in the temple, witnessed the world crumbling around him, especially as it related to Judah. He saw the terrible destructions inflicted by the Assyrians and naturally understood Jonah's desire to flee from God's order over 140 year prior. He observed the barbarianism of the Scythians who had descended from the mountains to wreak havoc on the civilized world. He observed the footprint of decades of idolatry lead by Judah's most heinous kings. He noticed their corruption and depravity and watched as wicked, corrupt Hebrews oppressed others who poor and righteous. People wanted to know where God was and what he was going to do. Habakkuk asked the only logical question: "Why is this treachery allowed to continue?"

Unbeknownst to Habakkuk, God was working on a solution (Hab. 1:5ff). He was raising up the Chaldean nation (the Neo-Babylonian Empire) to cleanse the land and to establish order. Most of Judah's citizens were carried into captivity during one of the three Babylonian deportations in 606 BC, 597 BC or 586 BC. Some of the poorest citizens were left in Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 25:12) over which was placed Gedaliah as governor (2 Kgs. 25:22). Judah neither anticipated nor wanted this resolution, and they would need great faith to endure it, but it was necessary to show God's justness.

When God instructed Habakkuk as to his actions, the prophet was plagued with greater intrigue. And he replied with his second question. He reasoned that since God was too pure to behold sin, then why would he sit idly by while the righteous were swallowed up by the wicked (Hab. 1:13). God's answer was not for the fainthearted. He answered "the just shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4). In other words, God said, "You will just have to have to trust me."

Habakkuk came through his complaint with greater faith (Hab. 3:1ff). He praised God and rejoiced in his wisdom. He boasted that his strength was found in God. And then he closed his book with the illustration of a surefooted doe whose stand firm in treacherous (mountainous) places (Hab. 3:19).

² The fact that Habakkuk's name means "to embrace" had caused the Rabbis to think he was born of the Shunamite woman whom Elisha told would embrace a son (1 Kgs. 4:16). The connection, however, is unlikely because the narrative took place around 868 BC—more than 250 years before Habakkuk's complaint.

OUTLINE

- I. Habakkuk examines God's character (1:1-17)
 - A. He interrogates God with his first complaint (1:1-11).
 - B. He inquires of God with his second complaint (1:12-17)

- II. Habakkuk embraces God's comments (2:1-20)
 - A. He accepts his responsibility (2:1)
 - B. He awaits God's response (2:2-20)
 - 1. Write the vision plain so that runners can read it; it will not delay (2:2-3).
 - 2. The Chaldeans³ are lifted by pride; the righteous are lifted ("justified") by faith (2:4-5).
 - 3. Five "woes" pronounced on the Chaldeans:
 - a. Stealing (2:6-8)
 - b. Lying (2:9-11)
 - c. Murder (2:12-14)
 - d. Drunkenness (2:15-17)
 - e. Idolatry (2:18-20).

- III. Habakkuk esteems God's control (3:1-19)
 - A. He admits his spiritual footing (3:1-2)
 - B. He acknowledges God's force (3:3-15).
 - C. He affirms his faith (3: 16:19).

CHRISTOLOGICAL VALUE

Habakkuk as a word is only found twice in the Bible, and both times are in the prophet's book (Hab. 1:1; 3:1). No prophet of either testament mentions him by name. Several apocryphal sources report of Habakkuk's origin and tell more of his work as a prophet. These works differ in their accounts and we are unconcerned with them since they are not in the Bible.

The Apostle Paul does quote Habakkuk's statement about the righteous being justified by faith (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11). Like many Old Testament quotations though, Paul varied the meaning slightly from the way Habakkuk used it. Habakkuk considered all the times God had delivered Israel from evil and recalled the faithfulness of God to the covenant he made with the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 32:1-43; Judg. 5). He knew that this time would be no different because God is faithful to justify the righteous.

Paul, however, used this quote to refer to the individual faith of a Christian. Christians must walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7) because they cannot stand on their own merits (Rom. 4:1ff). There is "the faith" that was once for all delivered (Jude 1:3), which Paul said we must obey (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). He also used it with Habakkuk's statement in Romans 1:17: "The righteousness of God is revealed from [the] faith to [one's personal] faith" (ESV).

COMPLAINTS & ANSWERS

³ The Chaldeans to which Scripture refers at this time period is the Neo-Babylonian Empire that ruled from the destruction of Nineveh in 612 BC until the Medes and the Persians destroyed the city of Babylon in 539 BC.

1. Using a NKJV, how does Habakkuk describe his message? _____ (1:1)

2. What complaints did Habakkuk raise to God?

a) _____ (1:2)

b) _____ (1:2)

c) _____ (1:3)

d) _____ (1:3)

e) _____ (1:4)

f) _____ (1:4)

3. What was Habakkuk's first complaint basically? _____
_____ (1:2-4)

4. What was God preparing doing to do? _____ (1:5-6)

5. What was good about God doing this work? Explain. (See Hab. 1:7-11.) _____

6. What god did the Babylonians worship? _____ (1:11)

7. What two attributes of God did Habakkuk notice?

a) _____ (1:12)

b) _____ (1:12)

8. What was Habakkuk's second complaint? _____
_____ (1:13)

9. Describe Habakkuk's attitude toward God's response? (What is he prepared to do?) _____
_____ (2:1)

GOD'S RESPONSE

10. What did God tell Habakkuk to do? _____
_____ (2:2)
11. Describe the difference between the Babylonians and the righteous: _____

_____ (2:4)
12. Name the five “woes” pronounced upon the Chaldeans:
- a) _____ (2:6-8)
 - b) _____ (2:9-11)
 - c) _____ (2:12-14)
 - d) _____ (2:15-17)
 - e) _____ (2:18-20)
13. What does Habakkuk want God to mix with wrath? _____ (3:2)
14. What biblical examples can you provide where God showed his power over water? (see 3:8)
- a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
 - d) _____
 - e) _____
15. What is God pictured to be doing throughout the land? _____ (3:12)
16. What is Habakkuk doing? _____
_____ (3:16)
17. What is remarkable about Habakkuk’s trust? _____
_____ (3:17-18)

LESSONS FROM HABAKKUK

In your own words:

1. In every crisis, God can be trusted.

Where does crisis sometimes lead?

_____ (Ps. 23:4)

Why should we not fear evil?

a) _____ (Ps. 23:4)

b) _____ (Ps. 23:4)

What bears witness with our spirit in adversity?

_____ (Rom. 8:15-16)

Fill-in-the-blank:

“The things which are _____ with men are
_____ with _____” (Lk. 18:27 NKJV).

2. Evil has within in itself, the germ of death.

What causes death?

a) _____ (Rom. 7:9)

b) _____ (Gen. 2:17; 5:5)

c) _____ (Hos. 13:1)

What does the heart produce? _____

_____ (Mk. 7:21-22)

How important is “speaking the same thing” to the following groups of people:

a) Tower of Babel builders: _____ (Gen. 11:6-7)

b) Corinthians: _____ (1 Cor. 1:10-13a)

What connection do you see? _____

3. We can see and understand God only when we rise above human doubt.

What did Asaph acknowledge of God? _____ (Ps. 73:1)

What things about God did Job acknowledge?

a) _____ (Job 42:2)

b) _____ (Job 42:3)

c) _____ (Job 42:4)

What prevented the one-talent man from doing more? _____ (Mt. 25:25)

Who are the first persons listed in Hell? _____ (Rev. 21:8)

A doubting man is like what? _____ (Jam. 1:6)

A doubting man shall receive what? _____ (Jam. 1:7)

Why is this true? _____ (Jam. 1:8)

People who are consumed with doubt are in need of what? _____ (Jude 1:22)

4. The real purpose of religion is not to remove all doubt; it is to know one thing: we shall live by God's faithfulness.

Paraphrase the first prophecy of the Christ:

_____ (Gen. 3:15)

If Jesus had not been raised, then...

a) _____ (1 Cor. 15:14)

b) _____ (1 Cor. 15:14)

c) _____ (1 Cor. 15:17)

d) _____ (1 Cor. 15:18)

e) _____ (1 Cor. 15:19)