

# Minor Prophets

**Kissimmee church of Christ**

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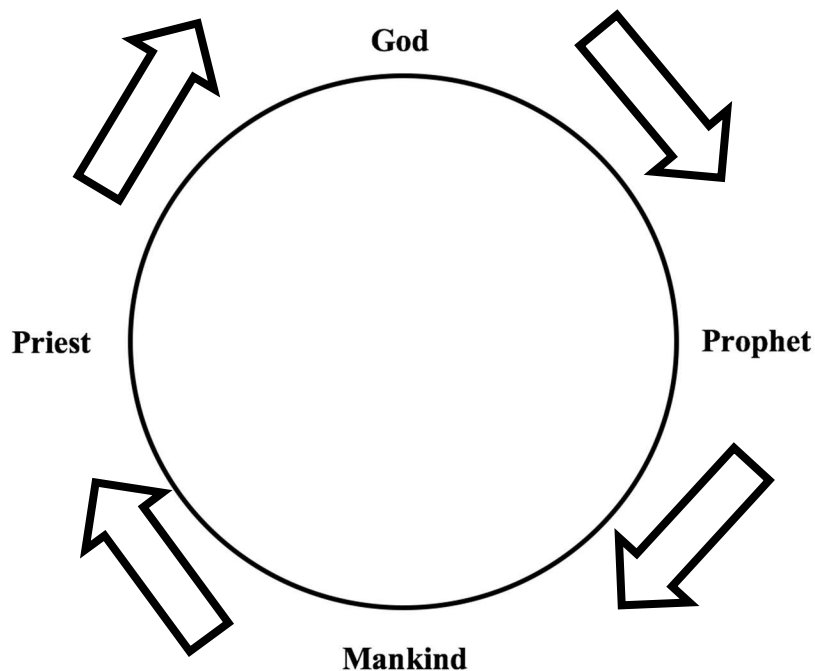
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## Introduction to the Minor Prophets

- I. The final twelve books of the Old Testament make up what is known as the “Minor Prophets.”
  - A. Most believe that Augustine was the first to call these twelve books the “Minor Prophets.”
  - B. Originally, in the Hebrew Bible, these twelve books were simply called “The Twelve.”
  - C. The books of the Minor Prophets are “Minor” only in size, not in importance.
    1. “All of the twelve books combined do not constitute the equivalent of the bulk of material contained in the book of Ezekiel.”<sup>1</sup>
    2. However, the message of The Twelve is as powerful as that of the Major Prophets, or any other inspired writer!
- II. Who is a prophet?
  - A. The word “Prophet” comes from either an Arabic word meaning “spokesman”, or a Hebrew word signifying a “bubbling up.”
  - B. “The OT Prophet acted as a mouthpiece for God, receiving a message from Him and proclaiming it in accordance with His commands. Since there is one God, a true prophet must necessarily be a prophet of this God.”<sup>2</sup>



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<sup>1</sup>Wayne Jackson, *The Prophets*. 365

<sup>2</sup>Zondervan, *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. 875

- C. The first person the Bible calls a prophet was Abraham (Gen. 20:7).
  - D. “OT prophecy received its normative form in the life and person of Moses, who constituted a standard of comparison for all future prophets... Every feature which characterized the true prophet of Yahweh... was first found in Moses.”<sup>3</sup>
    - 1. Moses was called by God, and so were the other prophets (Ex. 3:1-4, 10; cf. Isa. 6:8-10, Jer. 1:4-7, Ezk. 1:1-3, Hos. 1:2, Amos 7:14-15, Jonah 1:1)
    - 2. Moses dealt with the problems of his day, but also made predictions about the future, and so did the other prophets (Ex. 9:1; Deut. 18:15-18 cf. Isa 1:10, Isa 2:2-4)
  - E. Prophets were regularly rejected by those whom they preached to (Mt. 23:37, 1 Kings 18:4, Neh. 9:26, Jer. 38:4, Acts 7:52)
- III. The Context of the Prophets
- A. The lives of the Twelve span a period of about four centuries (845-430 BC).
  - B. The time of the Prophets begins in 2 Kings 14:23 and goes through the end of that book, and through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.
  - C. The prophets worked through both Assyrian and Babylonian captivity.
    - 1. The Northern Kingdom, called Israel, consisted of 10 tribes (Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun).
    - 2. The Southern Kingdom, called Judah, consisted of 2 tribes (Judah and Benjamin).
  - D. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was taken into Assyrian captivity.
    - 1. The first wave of captivity came at about 740 BC (1 Chron. 5:26)
    - 2. Then, around 722 BC, the Assyrians took more of Israel captive (2 Kings 17:5-6)
    - 3. Finally, the Assyrians marched south on Jerusalem, in Judah, but they were unable to take it (2 Chron. 32:22)
  - E. In 612 BC, Babylon overthrew Assyria and became the new world power.
  - F. Judah, the Southern Kingdom, was taken into Babylonian captivity around 609 BC.
    - 1. Once the southern kingdom was taken, Babylon began deporting the Jews in waves (of which there were three).
      - a. Babylonian captivity lasted 70 years (Jer. 29:1-14).
      - b. After being captives in Babylon for 70 years, Cyrus and the Persians overthrew Babylon and set the Jews free, ending their captivity (Ezra 1:1-3)
    - 2. Some chose not to leave Babylon (Esther focuses on these individuals), while others went back to the Promised Land to rebuild the broken kingdom.
  - G. Some contend that the Northern tribe (the tribe taken by Assyria) was “lost.” (Typically, the 10 tribes are referred to as the “Lost Tribes of Israel”)
    - 1. Premillennialists contend that these 10 tribes will be gathered together with the rest of the Jews sometime before, or during, the “thousand-year (earthly) reign” of Christ.
    - 2. However, this simply could not be the case.

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<sup>3</sup> DJ Wiseman, *IVP New Bible Dictionary*. 975

- a. When Babylon overtook Assyria, all of the slaves and captives of Assyria (which would include Israel) would naturally become the slaves and captives of Babylon!
  - b. Therefore, when Cyrus, king of Persia, freed the Jews in Babylonian captivity, it would have included the ten tribes of Israel.
- IV. Interpreting Prophecy
  - A. We must remember that every book in the Bible had an original audience.
    - 1. Not every passage of scripture applies to us (E.g. Gen. 6)
    - 2. However, we can learn principals and gain wisdom from every passage of scripture.
  - B. When it comes to prophecy, we must remember that not every prophecy is yet to be fulfilled.
    - 1. Most OT prophecies were fulfilled in (or by the time of) Christ.
    - 2. Premillennialists try to interpret OT prophecy as if all of it applies to those who are alive today.
    - 3. A good understanding of the NT helps us “connect the dots” between OT prophecy and their NT fulfillment, and vice versa.
- V. Conclusion
  - A. The Minor Prophets lived 2,500 years ago, but their message is still relevant today.
  - B. Christ can be seen in every book of the Bible, even the Minor Prophets.
    - 1. As we move through these twelve books, we will be careful to look for Christ.
    - 2. In Luke 24:44, Jesus says that the Prophets wrote about Him.
    - 3. Finding Jesus in the Prophets means we look for prophecies about Jesus, principals and ideas also taught by Jesus, similarities in message, etc.
  - C. Though the Minor Prophets can sometimes be difficult to understand, and at times difficult to read, I hope that we can see their relevance together in this study!

# Obadiah

## Introduction

- I. The Author
  - A. The name “Obadiah” means “servant of God.”
  - B. Other than his name, very little is known about Obadiah.
    1. The name “Obadiah” is mentioned 13 times in scripture (1 Kings 18:3-4; 1 Chron. 3:21; 7:3; 8:38; 9:16, 44; 12:9; 27:19; 34:12; Ezra 8:9; Neh. 10:5; 2 Chron. 17:7; 34:12).
    2. However, it is impossible to know with certainty if any of these are the author of our book.
  - C. We can confidently say that Obadiah was from the Southern Kingdom (Judah), because of his knowledge of, and focus on, Jerusalem.
- II. The Date
  - A. Similarly, it is hard to say with absolute certainty when Obadiah wrote his book.
    1. Some believe that he is among the first of the prophets, while others believe that he was among the last.
    2. There is, approximately, a 600-year period in which scholars believe Obadiah may have lived.
    3. The reason that this book is so hard to date is because there is very little information given by which a date may be ascertained.
      - a. Obadiah does not mention specific rulers or events that can be dated precisely.
      - b. In verse 11, Obadiah mentions Jerusalem being invaded and plundered, but that happened four times (1 Kings 14:25; 2 Chron. 21:16-17; 2 Chron. 25:17-23; Jer. 29:1ff), and Obadiah does not mention which occasion he is referencing.
  - B. However, Josephus, a Jewish historian, identifies this Obadiah as the Obadiah mentioned in 1 Kings 18:3-4.
    1. This would make Obadiah the oldest of the Minor Prophets.
    2. Since there is no evidence to suggest that this isn’t true, and since there is no real evidence that may be used to argue against this claim, we will accept Josephus’ assessment.
      - a. Some things to consider are:<sup>4</sup>
        - i) The references to Jerusalem’s capture in the first 11 verses could easily be applied to the sack of the city by the Philistines and Arabians (this argument would be used to counter claims that Obadiah wrote about Jerusalem falling to Babylon, which happened much later).
        - ii) In the Hebrew Bible, Obadiah is placed with the other pre-Assyrian-captivity prophets (Joel, Amos, Hosea, and Jonah).
        - iii) It appears that Joel, Amos, and Jeremiah quoted from Obadiah.
        - iv) Obadiah does not mention any of the world powers, such as Assyria or Babylon.

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<sup>4</sup> This section is adapted from Burton Coffman’s commentary, *The Minor Prophets: Hosea, Obadiah, and Micah*

- v) Obadiah does not mention a complete destruction of Jerusalem.
  - b. Since Obadiah is assumed to be the first of the Minor prophets, it is where we have begun our study.
- III. The Audience
- A. Obadiah prophesied to the Edomites (v. 1)
    - 1. The Edomites were the decedents of Esau, the brother of Jacob (Gen. 25:23-26)
      - a. The word “Edom” means “red”.
      - b. The relationship between Israel and Edom was unfriendly.
        - i) Edom did not allow Israel to pass through their territory (Num. 20:21).
        - ii) There were wars between the two nations (1 Sam. 14:47; 2 Chron. 21:8, 17; 2 Kings 14:7; Ps. 137:7).
        - iii) Edom joined forces with Babylon to help destroy Jerusalem, but God promised to destroy them because of it (Ezk. 35).
  - B. The Edomites mocked Jerusalem when she was attacked, and Obadiah writes about Edom’s coming punishment for doing so (V. 11-12).

### Outline of the Text

- I. Edom’s looming doom (v. 1-9).
- II. The reasons for Edom’s judgment (v. 10-16).
- III. The triumphant kingdom of Christ (v. 17-21).

### Obadiah’s Vision

- I. Obadiah received God’s message in a vision accompanied by words (“Thus says the Lord GOD”) (v.1-2)
  - A. Divine revelation came to the prophets in various ways (visions, dreams, direct verbal communication, etc.) (Heb. 1:1)
  - B. God stirred up other nations against Edom because of her wickedness.
    - 1. When God wants to punish a nation, He usually chooses to use another nation to do it.
    - 2. “is God **still** working internationally—raising up and overthrowing powers, consistent with his ultimate will for mankind? Paul argues that he **is**. The apostle contends that God “made of one [literally, out of one male] every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitations” (Acts 17:26). The providential purpose in this international orchestration is revealed in v. 27.”<sup>5</sup>
- II. Edom trusted in themselves, and did not fear God (v.3-4).
  - A. Edom was able to make itself wealthy (1 Tim. 6:17).
    - 1. “Edom controlled the great trade rout known as the Kings Highway which connected Damascus in the north with the seaport Ezio n-Geber on the Red Sea. Rich copper and Iron mines in the area also provided a source of wealth”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jackson, Wayne. "God's Providential Use of Nations." *ChristianCourier.com*. Access date: June 7, 2017. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1363-gods-providential-use-of-nations>

<sup>6</sup> James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2001), 51.

2. “Located on several major trade routes, Edom could amass the riches of other nations; and out of their mountains, they could dig copper and other minerals. Because of their isolation, they didn’t have to worry about making treaties with the larger nations or helping to finance expensive wars”<sup>7</sup>
  3. “Petra, the capital of Edom, was a great emporium of the Syrio-Arabian trade, where many valuables were stored, and with the loss of these riches the prosperity and power of Edom [would be] destroyed”<sup>8</sup>
- B. Edom was also well protected from foreign invaders.
1. The nation was built atop 20 miles of mountain range.
  2. “It’s pinnacle was a flat area called, “Selah” (today, Petra). The stronghold could be approached only through a narrow, rock-walled ravine, which could be defended even by a small military force”<sup>9</sup>
  3. However, Obadiah makes it clear that God could reach them regardless of their location (Ps. 139:7-14).
- III. Edom will be completely and utterly ruined (v.5-14) (Isa. 63:1-6)
- A. Robbers do not carry off whole households – they take only a few valuables.
1. “Edom was known for its mountain-side vineyards. The destruction of the country is likened to the double despoiling of thieves and gleaners. What the thieves or harvesters leave, the gleaners will take. All that will remain is the rotten and crushed fruit left on the ground”<sup>10</sup>
  2. Edom’s “hidden treasures” would be found.
    - a. The idea of “hidden treasure” reaffirms the fact that everything will be taken or destroyed.
    - b. Even the things that are “in the safe”, so to speak, will be taken.
- B. Edom would be betrayed by her own allies.
1. The allies of Edom included Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon.
  2. “Bread” is a symbol of friendship (Acts 2:46)
    - a. Some suggest that the very materials (copper and iron) that Edom exported to her allies would be the same materials used against her by these same nations, in the form of weaponry.
    - b. Edom would be in the sights of both friend and foe.

Note: If we are looking for Christ in the prophets, we cannot overlook an obvious similarity between Edom being betrayed by a friend, and Christ suffering the same fate (Ps. 41:9). However, the important difference is that Edom deserved her punishment while Christ did not.

- C. God will destroy the wisdom of men (1 Cor. 1:20, 25; 3:19).
- D. Edom was destroyed because she reveled in Jerusalem’s destruction.

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<sup>7</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be concerned: making a difference in your lifetime: OT commentary, Minor Prophets* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2010), 94.

<sup>8</sup> Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Julius Delitzsch. *Biblical commentary on the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950) 356.

<sup>9</sup> Wayne Jackson, *The Prophets* (Stockton, CA: Christian Courier Publications), 408.

<sup>10</sup> John H. Walton, Victor Harold Matthews, and Mark William Chavalas, *The IVP Bible background commentary Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 776.

1. Not only did Edom enjoy Jerusalem's destruction, it seems as though she also took part in it (v. 11)
  2. The language in v. 11 is past tense, while the language in v. 12-14 is future.
    - a. V. 11 must refer to a past destruction (Philistines and Arabians), and v. 12-14 could be instructions for a coming destruction (Babylon).
    - b. Regardless, one thing is clear: Edom would be punished for its actions against Jerusalem.
- E. History provides us with a plain view of Edom's destruction.
1. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Edom around the same time that he took Jerusalem (Jer. 25:9, 21).
  2. Edom continued to exist after Babylonian captivity, but it would fall victim to another world power in Alexander the Great during the fourth century B.C.
  3. Then, during the second century B.C., John Hyrcanus subdued Edom and forced her to submit to Mosaic Law.
  4. Finally, in A.D. 70, Rome removed Edom from the map.
    - a. "The few [Edomites] who remained were lost among the Arabs; so that the Edomites were cut off forever."<sup>11</sup>
    - b. "there are few lands, once a seat of a thriving nation, more utterly desolate than that of Edom."<sup>12</sup>
    - c. One could argue that Obadiah's prophecy against Edom was fulfilled in Babylon, or in Rome.
- IV. The coming universal judgment (v. 15-16)
- A. The coming judgment of Edom has already been made crystal clear.
  - B. Obadiah shifts his focus from Edom to the "near" judgment of all nations.
    1. All people are accountable to God (Jer. 32:27)
    2. All have failed God (Rom. 3:23)
    3. God accepts all who are willing to turn to Him (Acts 10:34-35)
  - C. Paul summed up Obadiah's point well when he penned 2 Corinthians 5:10.
- V. The Church Age (v. 17-21)
- A. V. 17 describes the condition of the church.
    1. Those in the church have escaped sin and condemnation to become holy (1 Pet. 2:9)
    2. The "house of Jacob" consists of the twelve tribes of Israel.
      - a. However, Obadiah is not talking about the fleshly tribes.
      - b. Rather, he is discussing the tribes to whom James penned his letter (Jas. 1:1)
    3. "Possess their possessions" could refer to the grace and mercy that is bestowed upon the church.
      - a. Israel could never fully receive these blessings because they did not have Christ.
      - b. However, in the church age, these blessings can be fully possessed because Christ allows us to have fellowship with God (1 Jn. 1:5-6; 2:2)
  - B. V. 18 has application to the relationship between the Edomites and Jerusalem, and to the church.

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<sup>11</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, 356

<sup>12</sup> Plumptre, E. H.. *Elicott's Commentary on the Bible*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1953).

1. “There is far more in this than a mere prediction that Israel (in the literal sense) will succeed and prosper and that Edom shall be punished and destroyed; although, to be sure, the basic application of the words proved to be true. ‘That indeed was part of the picture. But what is referred to is not the conquest of other nations by God’s people. It is the conquest of the *heathen* by the Lord.’”<sup>13</sup>
2. The obedient will be saved by God, and the disobedient will be punished.
- C. V. 19 describes the invasion of God’s people into gentile lands.
  1. The invasion described here is a spiritual invasion (Isa. 54:3).
  2. In the first century, and even today, the Gospel is being spread (Acts 8:1).
- D. V. 20 reveals the greatest truth ever told: Jesus can set mankind free from their sin (Lk. 4:18)
  1. Sin has taken mankind captive, and on our own, we could never escape.
  2. However, Jesus releases us from our captivity (Gal. 5:1; Jn. 8:32, 36).
- E. V. 21 describes Esau’s judgment, Israel’s (past) restoration, and a future kingdom.
  1. Edom would be judged, and Israel would be restored (Ezra 1:1ff)
  2. In the church age, this prophecy is fulfilled in Christ dying on the cross.
    - a. When Christ died, “Edom” lost (1 Cor. 15:55-58).
    - b. The kingdom of God was finally established on the earth, and men could be saved.
  3. No action of man could ever make “the kingdom... the Lord’s.”
    - a. Christ had to purchase the kingdom (Acts 20:28).
    - b. No future restoration of Israel could make God possess the kingdom.

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<sup>13</sup> James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1986), 260.

# Joel 1

## Introduction

- I. Not much is known about the author of the book of Joel.
  - A. The word of the Lord came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.
  - B. The name “Joel” means, “Jehovah is God.”
    1. There are 12 individuals with the name “Joel” mentioned in scripture.
    2. Joel was a very common Hebrew name.
  - C. He may have been a priest for the following reasons:<sup>14</sup>
    1. He was familiar with Temple practices and procedures.
    2. Knowledge of the prescribed ritual of public worship.
    3. Featuring the priest’s role in the suffering and the recovery from the plagues.
  - D. Peter affirms that he was indeed a prophet (Acts 2:16).
- II. The date of writing is debated.
  - A. Joel does not date his book relative to any of Judah’s kings.
  - B. Joel writes about a locust invasion, but this event is not mentioned elsewhere in biblical history.
  - C. Conservative scholars date the book sometime in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC.
    1. This date would put Joel before Assyrian captivity (which occurred at about 740 B.C.)
    2. Some reasoning for the early date includes:
      - a. Joel does not mention any world powers (Assyria, Babylon, etc.).
      - b. Amos (who’s book can be dated at 760 B.C.) alludes to Joel (Amos 9:13 cf. Joel 3:18).
      - c. It’s canonical position (it is the second of the Minor Prophets).
      - d. Its literary style is thought to be different than the style of the postexilic prophets.
      - e. The character of Joel’s prophecy seems to point to a time before Amos and Hosea.<sup>15</sup>
        - a) The enemies of God’s people are Tyre, Sidon, the coasts of Palestine, Egypt, and Edom (3:4, 19)
        - b) The national situation of the priests and elders (2:15-16) leading in the reform seem best to fit the early reign of Joash when Jehiada the old priest was in active control of the government (2 Kings. 11-12; 2 Chron. 23-24)
  - D. More liberal scholars have pushed the time of writing up to about the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (after the exile to Babylon).
- III. The book of Joel was written to the Southern Kingdom of Judah (1:14; 2:1, 15, 17, 23; 3:1, 6, 8, 16-21).
- IV. Outline of the text:
  - I. Locust plague and fasting (1:2-2:17).
  - II. The “last days” (2:18-3:21).

Note:

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<sup>14</sup> Brian Kenyon, *Minor Prophets*, (Florida School of Preaching, 2003) 8.

<sup>15</sup> Kenyon 8.

The phrases, “The Day of the Lord” is used at least four times in the book of Joel, and is found many times elsewhere in the Minor Prophets. This phrase usually refers to a coming judgment, and not the Messianic Age. The Phrase, “in that day” is found one time in Joel, but it is repeated many times in the Minor Prophets. This phrase usually refers to the Messianic Age. As we move through our study of the Minor prophets, it is important to keep this in mind.

### Joel’s Message

- I. The Locust plague (1:1-12)
  - A. The severity of this locust plague is unlike anything Judah had ever seen before (v.2).
  - B. It was so severe that the Jews were instructed to tell their children about it, so that they might not forget (v.3).
  - C. There is some debate about whether or not the “locusts” are actual locusts, or if they represent armies, or both.

“The relationship between chapters 1 and 2 in Joel is perhaps the most difficult interpretive issue in the book. As already noted, Joel carried out his ministry in the aftermath of a devastating locust plague. Interpreters are divided as to whether the locusts described in 1:3-6 and 2:2-11 refer to actual insects, to human armies, or to both. One view sees human armies in both chapters, another sees locusts in both chapters, and a third view sees the description of a past locust plague in chapter 1 and the warning of an imminent invasion by an enemy army (either human forces or an apocalyptic army) in chapter 2. This debate is created in part by the fact that human armies are metaphorically compared to locusts in other biblical texts (see Judges 6:5; 7:12; Jeremiah 46:23; 51:14). The focus on the destruction of crops and subsequent food shortages in Joel 1 strongly suggest that an actual locust invasion is in view in that chapter. The Lord had warned through Moses that he would send the covenant curses of famine, crop failure, and locust plague if the people failed to keep His commands (Deut. 28:38-42; see Lev. 26:20, 26; 1 Kings. 8:37; 2 Chron. 6:28; 7:13). Amos, in the book immediately following Joel, also speaks of locusts invading the land as punishment for Israel’s sins (Amos 4:9; 7:1-3). The locusts are portrayed as an army in Joel 1 to emphasize their power and strength (see Prov. 30:27) ... Chapter 1 refers to an event that has already taken place, while chapter 2 depicts something that is still future, and so this invasion would be subsequent to the events in chapter 1 rather than a description of the same event. The view taken here is that chapter 2 portrays the invasion of an actual army. Duane Garrett argues that the military language in chapter 2 “is too strong to be taken as accidental or metaphorical.” Joel 1 focuses on the destruction of crops and the loss of grain, wine, and oil, but Joel 2 mentions nothing about crop destruction and focuses instead on the capture of a city. The progression from curses in nature in curses in battle is also what is portrayed in Deut. 28:38-65. The reoccurring use of “like” or “as” in chapter 2:4-7 would seem to suggest that the army is being compared to something else, but the Hebrew preposition for “like” (*ke-*) can also be used as an expression to describe exactly or precisely what something is like. In chapter 1:15, the Day of the Lord comes “as (*ke-*) devastation from the Almighty, because divine destruction is what this ‘day’ is in every way.” This army invades Judah from the north (2:20), the direction from enemies invading the land normally come (see Jer. 1:14-15; 4:6; 6:1), while locust invasions normally come from the south. The depiction of locusts like an army in chapter 1 and of an army like locusts in chapter 2 masterfully demonstrates how these two judgments are connected to one another and how the Lord’s judgment intensifies when the people fail to respond with repentance.”<sup>16</sup>

- D. The destruction caused by the locusts served as a warning for the destruction that would come to Judah at the hand of the Babylonians.

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Alan Fuhr, JR. & Gary E. Yates, *The Message of the Twelve* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016) 92.

- II. A call for national repentance (1:13-20).
  - A. As a sign of repentance, Joel instructs his audience to lie in sackcloth and fast (v. 13-14).
    - 1. Sackcloth is made from goat or camel hair, and is coarse and uncomfortable.<sup>17</sup>
    - 2. The principal behind fasting is that the importance of the request made to God causes an individual to be so concerned with his or her spiritual condition that physical necessities fade into the background.<sup>18</sup>
      - a. Fasting was common in the OT (Ezra 9:5; Neh. 1:4; Est. 4:3; Dan. 6:18).
      - b. Fasting was common in the NT (Mt. 6:16-18; Mk. 2:18-20; Acts 10:30; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 7:5).
  - B. The coming day of the Lord (v. 15).
    - 1. Joel says, “Alas, For the Day of the Lord is at hand.”
      - a. “Alas” is an interjection proclaiming the danger of a coming event.<sup>19</sup>
      - b. There are three ways to interpret the phrase, “is at hand.”:
        - i) Joel is talking about the final day of judgment where all souls will be judged (cf. Jas. 5:8).
        - ii) The locust plague Joel previously described has not actually happened yet, but is being viewed as if it already has (cf. Isa. 53:2-7).
        - iii) Joel is making the connection between the locust plague and the coming Babylonian invasion.
    - 2. We must not forget that Judah’s misfortune has come “from the Almighty.”
  - C. The aftermath of the locust invasion (v. 16-20).

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<sup>17</sup> John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, & Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000) 762.

<sup>18</sup> John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, & Mark W. Chavalas 762.

<sup>19</sup> Jackson 388.

## Joel 2

- I. The warning of an approaching army (2:1-11).
    - A. Judah should begin preparing for the “day of the Lord.” (v.1).
      1. There is a clear distinction between what has already happened in chapter one, and what is about to happen in chapter 2.
      2. A warning trumpet should be blown (cf. Num. 10:1-10).
    - B. Joel describes the coming army (2-11).
      1. When this army comes, it will be a day of darkness ((v. 2) cf. Ex. 20:20).
      2. This army is unlike anything that has ever been seen before, or will ever be seen (v.2).
        - a. It is unclear what Joel means by this.
        - b. “Even for many successive generations” seems to suggest that Joel’s previous remarks could be finite.
      3. A fire consumes the land (v. 3).
        - a. “Normally, a fire is not something that precedes a locust plague.”<sup>20</sup>
        - b. It was very common for invading armies to set ablaze the cities they would attack (cf. 2 Kings 25:1-9; Jer. 38:9; Isa. 1:1-7).
- Note: 2 Kings 25:1-9 is probably the best supporting text for the idea that the “locust” army of Joel chapter two was actually Babylon. The writer mentions a famine caused by the invading army, and he mentions the city being set on fire by the Babylonians.
4. The invaders are swift and precise (v.4-10)
    - a. The “locust” look like horses ((v. 4) cf. Rev. 9:7).
    - b. Joel uses apocalyptic language to describe the severity of this invasion (v. 10)
      - i) “The earth shakes... the heavens tremble... the sun and moon grow dark and the stars diminish their brightness.” (Mt. 24:27-36; Isa. 13:10)
      - ii) “The symbolic language of verse 10 is common for the disciplinary nature of God’s providential use of nations to punish the disobedient. Clearly the application is to a divine punishment inflicted upon a rebellious people, and those who were wise would be motivated to repent.”<sup>21</sup>
  5. The only way to be spared is to turn to the Lord (v. 11)
    - a. Joel makes it clear that those invading are an instrument of God.
    - b. This army cannot be defeated, because it is “His army.”
- II. A call to repent (v. 12-17) (Jer. 25:4-9)
    - A. After detailing a coming invasion, Joel urges the people to repent in hopes that God might “turn and relent” (v. 14) (cf. Jer. 26:13).
      1. Again, this would suggest that the invasion described thus far in chapter two has not actually happened yet.
      2. “Rend your heart and not your garment” (v. 13).
        - a. It was customary for Jews to tear their clothes when in distress (Gen. 37:29, 34).
        - b. God wants genuine change, not empty words or a show (cf. Mt. 6:5-8).

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<sup>20</sup> *Minor prophets – One*, (Maxwell: World Video Bible School) 30.

<sup>21</sup> Jackson 389.

- B. God “relents from doing harm” (v. 13).
  - 1. It is always as a last resort that God uses violence as a means of punishment (cf. Jonah 4:2).
  - 2. The only time we find ourselves in the crosshairs of God is when we put ourselves there (cf. Isa. 59:2).
- C. If the people turn to God, he may spare them (v. 14-17) (cf. Isa. 55:7).
  - 1. We see once more the instruction to, “Blow the trumpet.” (v. 15).
    - a. This trumpet is not a signal to prepare for war, but a call to worship (cf. Num. 10:7).
    - b. There is no use in preparing to battle with God.
  - 2. The people urge God to protect His reputation ((v. 17) cf. Ex. 32:9-15).
- III. God’s pledge of prosperity (v. 18-27).
  - A. There are two ways that one could understand this passage of Scripture:
    - 1. Joel is saying “If you do all of these things (i.e. repent), God will restore the land and everything will be made right again.”
    - 2. Joel is looking into the future, to the time of Judah’s release from Babylonian captivity, and is promising them that they will be restored after their captivity (cf. Jer. 29:10-18; 2 Chron. 36:22, 23).
  - B. Restoration always comes with (spiritual) blessings (cf. Lk. 15:20-24; Eph. 1:3-14).
- IV. The Messianic Age ((v. 28-32) cf. Acts 2:16-21).
  - A. The Spirit of God will be poured out in those days (v. 28, 29).
    - 1. In the days of the early church, God’s spirit was poured out in the form of miraculous gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-11).
    - 2. The spirit is also given to Christians (Rom. 8:8-11).
      - a. There is much discussion about *how* the Holy Spirit indwells Christians.
      - b. Some believe that the Spirit is given at baptism (see Acts 2:28), while others contend that the spirit indwells the Christian once he/she knows the word of God.
  - B. Once more, we see apocalyptic language being used (v. 30, 31).
    - 1. Luke records the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, and does not mention these things literally happening.
    - 2. If Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled (and it was (see Acts 2:16)), and there is no record of the sun turning dark or the moon actually turning to blood, then we must conclude that when this language is used, it is not always to be taken literally.
  - C. Salvation is now available to all who will come to the Lord (v. 32) (Cf. Acts 10:1, 2, 34, 35, 47, 48).

## Joel 3

- I. The judgment of evil nations (3:1-13).
  - A. The time period in which the following events will occur is “in those days and at that time” (Joel 2:29).
    1. “Those days and that time” is the time of Peter and the apostles (cf. Acts 2:16)
    2. Joel gives his readers the time period in which these events were to take place, and Peter confirms that the Apostles were living “in those days.”
    3. Those who have sold themselves into sin will finally be free in Christ, “in those days” (v. 2).
  - B. In the Valley of Jehoshaphat, God will judge the nations (v. 2, 12).
    1. This valley probably gets its name from 2 Chronicles 20:1; 9-12; 20-26, which describes a battle between King Jehoshaphat and heathen nations.
    2. We must understand the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” (as used by Joel) to be a figurative place of judgment, and not a literal place of judgment.
  - C. Ancient enemies of political Israel become symbols for adversaries of Spiritual Israel ((v. 4) cf. Gal. 6:16; Mt. 11:21, 22).

Note: Some commentators see the first 8 verses of Joel 3 as referring to a symbolic spiritual judgment on all evil nations that would occur at Pentecost, and they see the rest of the chapter as discussing the final judgment at the end of time. To this Bible student, it seems very difficult to make that distinction because the text seems to be laid out as, for the most part, one continuous thought, referring to the same time and event. In verse 18, Joel mentions again the time period in which these things will happen, and it is “in that day”, the same day mentioned in verse 1.

- D. We see a clear distinction between those who are allies of God, and those who are enemies of God (cf. Isa. 2:4; Joel 3:10).
    - E. The same language used in Joel 3:13 is found elsewhere to describe the final judgment (see. Mt. 13:36-43; Rev. 14:14-20).
  - II. The Valley of Decision (3:14-17).
    - A. The Valley of Decision (v. 14) and the Valley of Jehoshaphat (v. 2, 12) are the same figurative location.
    - B. For the third time, we see “the sun and moon” being effected, and we see the “stars diminish their brightness” (v. 15).
    - C. Once more we see the contrast between the condition of those in God, and those outside of God (v. 16).
    - D. There will be no “aliens” (“strangers” KJV) in Jerusalem in that day (v. 17).
      1. “Jerusalem” must be understood as a reference to the church.
      2. There are a few things taught in this verse:
        - a. There is no one in the church who God does not know (in contrast, Jerusalem was a city in which anyone, Jew or Gentile, could theoretically enter).
        - b. No one can invade the church – one must be added by God (cf. Acts 2:41).
        - c. The church is exclusive (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13, 14).
  - III. The blessings available in the Christian age (3:18-21; cf. 1 Peter. 1:10-12).

# Jonah 1

## Introduction:

- I. Jonah lived and worked during the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC) (2 Kings 14:23-25).
  - A. The name “Jonah” means “dove.”
  - B. It is often said that Jonah was more loyal to his country than to his God.
- II. The historical context of the book of Jonah might help us better understand why Jonah was so reluctant to go to Nineveh.
  - A. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the nation that would later capture Israel.
  - B. The cruelty and brutality of the Assyrians is well documented:<sup>22</sup>
    1. “I captured many troops alive: I cut off some of their arms and hands; I cut off of others their noses, ears, and extremities. I gouged out the eyes of many troops. I made one pile of the living and one of heads. I hung their heads on trees around the city.”
    2. “With their blood I dyed the mountain red like wool, and the rest of them the ravines and torrents of the mountain swallowed. I carried off captives and possessions from them. I cut off the heads of their fighters and built therewith a tower before their city. I burnt their adolescent boys and girls.”
  - C. Jonah going to Nineveh would be like a Christian going to an ISIS or Al-Queda base today.
  - D. If Nineveh was so evil why did they repent at the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:4-9)?<sup>23</sup>
    1. In 826 BC, a major revolt broke out from within the nation of Assyria.
      - a. The rebellion was not subdued until 820 BC.
      - b. The years of this revolt marked the beginning of a period of significant decline for the Assyrian Empire,
    2. During this time of despair for the Assyrians, two ominous events occurred:
      - a. Famine (765 -759).
      - b. Solar eclipse (15 June 763 BC).
    3. Undoubtedly, this national condition contributed to the Ninevites’ acceptance of Jonah’s preaching.
- III. Jonah is a very unique prophet.
  - A. Jonah is the only prophet:
    1. Whose book is written as a narrative
    2. Specifically mentioned by Jesus (Mt. 12:39-41; 16:4).
    3. Who spoke primarily to a heathen nation.
    4. In whose career the miraculous played a significant role.
  - B. Because the book of Jonah is so different, many have tried to discredit it.
    1. If the book of Jonah is a fable, then Jesus is a liar because He taught that Jonah actually lived and worked as he claimed.
    2. If Jesus was a liar, we have no salvation.

## Outline of the Text:

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<sup>22</sup> Fuhr & Yates 163.

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from Kenyon 14.

- I. Jonah runs from God (Chapter 1).
- II. Jonah repents (Chapter 2).
- III. Jonah relays the message (Chapter 3).
- IV. Jonah regrets (Chapter 4).

### **The Book of Jonah**

- I. Jonah receives his orders (1:1-3).
  - A. Nineveh is a “great city” (v. 2).
    1. Remember, Nineveh is the capital city of Assyria, a powerful nation.
    2. Nineveh is great in power and size, not obedience to God.
  - B. Nineveh’s wickedness has “come up before” God (v. 2)
    1. God tolerates sin for a while (i.e. rarely does God punish sin with instant death) (cf. Hab. 1:13).
    2. However, we clearly see that God has a “tipping point” when it comes to how much sin He will allow/endure (cf. Sodom and Gomorrah, Israel, Judah, Edom, etc.)
  - C. Why was Nineveh accountable to God even though they were not Jews?<sup>24</sup>
    1. The city is described as “wicked.”
    2. Since sin is a transgression of divine law (Rom. 4:15; 1 Jn. 3:4), one must conclude that this ancient city was under the law of God (Rom. 2:14, 15).
    3. Because Nineveh was accountable to God, Jonah is charged to “cry against it.”
  - D. Jonah, understandably, is afraid to go to Nineveh (v. 3)
    1. As we have discussed, the people of Nineveh were harsh and wicked people.
    2. Jonah likely reasoned:<sup>25</sup>
      - a. “If I preach to these people, they might repent, and God will spare them.”
      - b. “If He spares them, they will be preserved to combat us.”
      - c. “I do not wish to see them preserved; hence, I will not go!”
- II. Jonah flees into a storm (1:4-10).
  - A. One cannot help but notice the parallel between this account and the account of Jesus calming the sea in Mk. 4:35-41.
  - B. It is impossible to outrun God.
  - C. The sailors cast lots to see who caused the storm to come upon them (v. 7).
    1. Casting lots is something we see throughout the scriptures (cf. Lev. 16:8; Josh 18:10; Prov. 16:33; Prov. 18:18, Ps. 22:18; Lk. 23:34, Acts 1:26)
      - a. However, the process is never explained (other than that it is cast into ones lap (Prov. 16:33).
      - b. But, we do know that casting lots is equivalent to flipping a coin, drawing straws, or rolling dice.
    2. The lot fell on Jonah, and he began to explain himself (v. 9).
      - a. All of a sudden, it seems that Jonah is a devout Jew.
      - b. Jonah claims to “fear the LORD, the God of heaven”, yet, he is currently in the process of disobeying God.
- III. Jonah is tossed into the sea (1:11-17).

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<sup>24</sup> Adapted from Jackson 415.

<sup>25</sup> Jackson 415.

- A. Jonah takes responsibility and asks to be tossed overboard (v. 12) but the sailors were initially unwilling (v. 13).
- B. The sailors saw God acting on Jonah (v. 14- 16).
  - 1. Because they were able to see what God did with Jonah, the sailors understood that the God of the Hebrews is powerful.
  - 2. Whether or not the sailors became proselyted Jews after this experience is unknown.
- C. Once Jonah is hurled into the sea, he is swallowed by a large fish, where he spent three days and three nights (v. 17).

## Jonah 2

- I. Jonah’s prayer from inside the fish (2:1-9).
  - A. Jonah prayed this prayer sometime during his three-day (and night) journey in the belly of the fish (1:17).
  - B. In Mt. 12:38-45, Jesus says that “the sign of the prophet Jonah” (v. 39) would be the only sign given to the people of His day.

Note: We know that Jesus performed other “signs” and miracles (Jn. 20:30), but “the sign of the prophet Jonah” seems to be more significant than the others.

- 1. Paul proclaims that Jesus’ burial and resurrection was “according to the scripture” (1 Cor. 15:4).
  - a. There is no OT scripture that explicitly says that Jesus would rise on the third day.
  - b. The only OT scripture that discusses coming back from the grave (or Sheol) (Jonah 2:2) on the third day is found in Jonah’s prayer.
- 2. This raises the question: was Jonah alive in the belly of the fish?
  - a. Nowhere in Jonah 2 does Jonah claim to be alive in the belly of the fish for three days.
  - b. Jonah cried to God “out of the belly of Sheol” (2:2), and God brought Jonah’s life back “from the pit” (cf. Ps. 139:7, 8; Job 17:13-16; 33:22-30).
  - c. Jonah’s soul “fainted.”
  - d. Jonah died and was resurrected after spending three days and three nights in the grave, and so did Christ (Mt. 12:40) – this is “the sign of the prophet Jonah.”
- 3. In addition to both Christ and Jonah being resurrected after three days, there is also another significant similarity: repentance of the Gentiles.
  - a. Jonah preached to the Ninevites and they unexpectedly repented.
  - b. Jesus caused many Gentiles to repent.
- 4. Simply, “the sign of Jonah” is:

Jesus	Jonah
1. Death and resurrection after three days in the tomb. 2. Repentance of the Gentiles in response to His preaching	1. Death and resurrection after three days in Sheol. 2. Repentance of the Ninevites in response to his preaching.

- II. Jonah is released from the belly of the fish (2:10).

## Jonah 3

- I. Jonah arrives at Nineveh and preaches to the Gentiles (3:1-4).
  - A. Assuming that Jonah began the second leg of his journey at Joppa, he traveled 550 miles to Nineveh (v. 1-3).
    1. “Caravans usually traveled twenty to twenty-five miles per day to make the trip in about a month.”<sup>26</sup>
    2. “So Jonah went immediately to Nineveh, as the LORD had said. (Now Nineveh was an enormous city – it required three days to walk through it!) (Jonah 3:3, NET).
      - a. It took Jonah approximately one month to reach Nineveh, and one additional day to arrive at the particular part of the city in which he was needed (cf. 3:4).
      - b. Traveling to Nineveh was no small task for Jonah.
  - B. Jonah delivered his short sermon to the people of Nineveh, as the Lord asked (v. 4).
    1. Jonah’s message was short, but it was the message that God asked him to preach (cf. 3:2).
    2. Long, elaborate speeches are not always necessary.
      1. Jesus’ sermon on the mount takes about 10 minutes to read (Mt. 5-7)
      2. Peters sermon on the day of Pentecost is only 26 verses long (Acts 2:14-39).
      3. Paul’s sermon to the Athenians was only 8 verses long (Acts 17:22-31)
- II. The people of Nineveh respond to the preaching of Jonah (3:5-10).
  - A. It is hard to imagine a city as cruel as Nineveh repenting as a result of such a short message (for more on this, see page 15 of the notes.)
    1. Being a foreigner, Jonah’s message would have had more credence.
      - a. Why would Jonah travel such a long distance to deliver this message if what he was saying wasn’t true?
      - b. The people of Nineveh claimed many deities, so accepting “Jonah’s God” would not have been difficult.
    2. The people of Nineveh took Jonah’s message seriously, but history shows that their repentance did not last.

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<sup>26</sup> Walton, Matthews, & Chavalas. 779.

## Jonah 4

- I. Jonah's anger (4:1-5).
  - A. Being obedient made Jonah angry (4:1-3).
    - 1. Jonah feels so miserable that he would rather die than live to see Nineveh spared (4:3)
    - 2. Jonah waited outside the city, perhaps to see if the city really would be spared (4:5)
- II. God teaches Jonah a lesson through nature (4:6-11).
  - A. Jonah was grateful for a plant which he had no part in growing or cultivating, and he was depressed (to the point of wanting to die (v. 8)) when it perished (4:6-8).
  - B. God is the creator of the people of Nineveh (4:9-11).
    - 1. God cares about all of His creation!
    - 2. God does not seek to destroy His creation unless absolutely necessary.

# Amos 1

## Introduction:

- I. Amos lived and worked during the reign of king Uzziah of Judah (790-739 BC), and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (793-753 BC) (1:1).<sup>27</sup>
  - A. Most believe that Amos penned his book around the year 760 BC.
  - B. Amos was from the village of Tekoa (Southern Kingdom) (1:1) and was called upon to prophesy to Bethel (Northern Kingdom) (7:13).
    1. Tekoa was 6 miles south of Bethlehem and 18 miles west of the Dead Sea.
    2. The ruggedness of this area helped prepare Amos for his God-given task.
  - C. The name “Amos” means, “burden bearer.”
  - D. Amos was a herdsman of sheep and a gatherer of sycamore fruit (7:14).
  - E. Amos prophesied against the nations surrounding Israel, and then finally to Israel itself.
- II. Background of Israel (Northern Kingdom).<sup>28</sup>
  - A. The “golden age” of Israel occurred during the reign of Jeroboam II.
    1. He was a strong king (cf. 2 Kings 14:28).
    2. He ruled over a large extent of territory as Jonah predicted (2 Kings 14:25).
    3. Through trade, agriculture, and conquest, Israel was prosperous.
  - B. Prosperity brought peril to Israel.
    1. Luxury of the wealthy blinded them to the needs and afflictions of the poor (3:12, 15; 4:1-3; 5:12; 6:1-7).
    2. Moral and political corruption was the way of life (2:6-8; 3:9, 10; 5:10-12; 8:4).
    3. Religious corruption nullified their worship (4:4, 5; 8:4-6; cf. Isa. 1:11-15).
  - C. Amos was the right man for the mission – “From the frugal life of an out-of-doors man, accustomed to the wilds of nature and to hard, honest toil, Amos would have little sympathy for the luxurious and profligate [wasteful] life he would find among his northern kinsmen.”
  - D. Amos warned Israel not to continue down the path she was taking because it only led to destruction.

Note: Religious formalism (sometimes used synonymously with the term “legalism”) puts practice over purpose. Formalism emphasizes the outward parts of religion (in our case, Christianity) and neglects the inward. Formalism makes religion a show, rather than a lifestyle. Jesus condemned the Jewish leadership of His day for their formalism (cf. Mt. 23).

## Outline of the text:

- I. Prophetic judgment of the surrounding nations (1-2).
- II. Specific judgment of Israel (3-6).
- III. Visions heralding Israel’s doom, concluding with a Messianic promise (7-9).

## The Book of Amos

- I. Source and purpose of the book (1:1, 2).
  - A. Amos is the vessel being used by God to speak to the nations.
  - B. The Lord “roars from Zion.”
    1. ”Lucifer, the male Asian lion at London Zoo, often lets out a roar at night to let other animals know it is his territory. Lions are very protective of their

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<sup>27</sup> This section is taken from Kenyon 21.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid 1.

home, and a male lion, whose main job is to defend his pride, uses his loud roar to warn off anything that might threaten his family.”<sup>29</sup>

2. Similar to a lion, God “roars” to remind the world of His territory, and to protect His people.

## II. Judgment against gentile nations (1:3-15).

A. “For three transgressions... and for four” is best translated: “Because (whomever) has committed three crimes – make that four! - ) (cf. the NET Bible).

1. “The *three...four* style introduces each of the judgment oracles of chaps. 1-2. Based on the use of a similar formula in wisdom literature (see Prov 30:18-19, 29-31), one expects to find in each case a list of four specific violations. However, only in the eighth oracle (against Israel) does one find the expected fourfold list. Through this adaptation and alteration of the normal pattern the Lord indicates that his focus is Israel (he is too bent on judging Israel to dwell very long on her neighbors) and he emphasizes Israel’s guilt with respect to the other nations. (Israel’s list fills up before the others’ lists do.)”<sup>30</sup>
2. Clearly some type of figurative language is being used when discussing the “transgression” or “crimes” of these cities – certainly more than 3 or 4 sins have been committed in each place.

B. Judgment announced against Damascus (1:3-5).

1. Damascus is the capitol city of Syria, but here it represents the nation as a whole.
2. Syria was guilty of invading Gilead, Israel’s northern territory.
  - a. God would send fire into the house of Hazael, Syria’s king (v. 4).
  - b. God would destroy the palaces of Hazael’s son, Ben-hadad (v. 4).
  - c. The gate bar would be broken (i.e. the city would be taken) and the inhabitants would be taken to Kir (their original homeland).
  - d. In 732 BC, the Assyrians invaded Syria and took its inhabitants back to Kir, just as Amos prophesied (2 Kings 16:9).

C. Judgment announced against Gaza (1:6-8).

1. Gaza represents all of the Philistines, as it is their chief city.
2. The Philistines were perpetual enemies of Israel (cf. Jer. 47:4; 2 Chron. 28:18; 1 Chron. 20:5).
  - a. The Philistines frequently captured Israeli cities and sold their inhabitants to the Edomites.
  - b. Their mistreatment of God’s people has caused them to come into judgment.
3. Beginning in 722 BC, the Philistines were deported to Assyria.

D. Judgment against Tyre (1:9, 10).

1. Tyre was guilty of the same crime as Gaza – selling God’s people into slavery.
2. Tyre did not remember the “covenant of brotherhood” that apparently was made with Israel.
  - a. It is unknown exactly what “covenant” is being referenced.

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<sup>29</sup> Helen Carroll for the Daily Mail, "Why DO lions roar?" Daily Mail Online, June 04, 2014, , <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2646767/Why-DO-lions-roar-The-questions-child-ask-answered-experts.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Note taken from a footnote of the NET Bible on Amos 1:3

- b. It's possible that this "covenant" was formed in 1 Kings 5 when Hiram, king of Tyre, helped Solomon build the temple.
  - 3. In 322 BC, Alexander the great destroyed Tyre, crucifying approximately 2,000 of its inhabitants and sending 30,000 into slavery.
- E. Judgment against Edom (1:11-12).
  - 1. The Edomites and the Israelites have a long history of war, violence, aggression, and disdain for one another.
    - a. "Their lack of pity showed itself by acts of cruelty at every possible opportunity."<sup>31</sup>
    - b. Edom had "uncontrolled, violent emotions which were always present."<sup>32</sup>
  - 2. Edom and Israel are brothers in that Esau is the father of Edom and Jacob is the father of Israel.
  - 3. For more on Edom and their fate, see our study notes on Obadiah.
- F. Judgment against Ammon (113-15).
  - 1. The Ammonites are the descendants of Lot, Abrahams nephew.
  - 2. In an effort to take Gilead (the same territory the Syrians were after), the Ammonites murdered the babies of pregnant Hebrew women.
    - a. This was done to ensure that the population of Gilead would decline, making them much easier to conquer.
    - b. Because of their wickedness, Rabbah (the capitol city of the Ammonites, which represents the whole nation) would be taken captive by the Assyrians (cf. Ezk. 25:1-7; Zeph. 2:8-11).

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<sup>31</sup> Kenyon 24.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid 5.

## Amos 2

- I. Judgment against Moab (2:1-3).
  - A. The Moabites were the descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:30-38).
  - B. At times, the Moabites were hostile to Israel (Judg. 3:12-14; 1 Sam. 14:47).
  - C. “In a war against Edom, the Moabites (in serious violation of ancient custom) opened the grave of Edom’s king, burning the bones of the ruler to lime powder. Apparently, desecration of the dead was considered an atrocious assault against the dignity of man.”<sup>33</sup>
    - 1. Because Moab committed war crimes against Edom, they would not be forgotten.
    - 2. It is interesting that a gentile nation was still responsible for its sins, even though they were committed against another gentile nation.
    - 3. Moab fell to Assyria
- II. Judgment against Judah (2:4, 5).
  - A. Judah will be destroyed for their apostasy (2 Kings 17:15).
    - 1. The “lies” Amos mentions refers to the religious error that the Jews subscribed to.
    - 2. At times, though not as severely as Israel to the north, Judah began worshiping idols.
  - B. God would send a fire to destroy Jerusalem, the chief city of Judah (2 Kings 25:8, 9).
- III. Judgment against Israel (2:6-16)
  - A. Israel had become wicked.
    - 1. Israel abused the poor (v. 6)
    - 2. Israel had become immoral (v. 7).
    - 3. Israel exploited the poor (v. 8) (cf. Ex. 22:25-27).
  - B. The situation Israel was in was tragic; these are the same people God chose, led out of Egypt, spoke to by prophets, and gave the land of Canaan to.
    - 1. The Israelites delighted in wickedness, and despised instruction (v. 12).
    - 2. Because of the hardness of their hearts and their wickedness, Jehovah will destroy Israel (v. 13-16).

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<sup>33</sup> Jackson 395.

## Amos 3

- I. Israel's Coming Judgment (3:1-8).
  - A. "Chapters 3 through 6 contain three "Sermons" that warn of impending punishment on the northern kingdom."<sup>34</sup>
  - B. Israel was unique; therefore, God would hold them especially accountable for their sins (v. 1, 2).
    - 1. God brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage (Ex. 12).
    - 2. God gave them the law of Moses (Ex. 20:1-17).
    - 3. God spoke to Israel through prophets.
    - 4. God gave them the promised land (Josh. 21:43-45).
    - 5. God defeated Israel's enemies (2 Chron. 20:22)
  - C. God and Israel were no longer in agreement, and it was time for them to part ways (v. 3)
    - 1. Israel had gone down a path that God would not go.
    - 2. Israel's sins separated them from God (Isa. 59:2).
  - D. Israel would be God's prey (v. 4-8).
    - 1. God has warned Israel (the lion has roared; the trumpet has blown) (v. 7)
    - 2. There is still time for Israel to repent and turn back to the Lord.
- II. The Guilty Identified (3:9-15).
  - A. The gentile nations are invited to witness the turmoil that is to come in Israel (v. 9, 10).
    - 1. The nation that was once so close to Jehovah will now be openly put to shame (Jer. 17:13).
    - 2. The severity of sin cannot be overstated.
  - B. God would destroy Israel and the altars she built to false gods (v.14).
    - 1. "Altar horns were a place of refuge. There would be no refuge!"<sup>35</sup>
    - 2. Even the wealthiest and seemingly most secure would be affected (v. 15).

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<sup>34</sup> Jackson 396.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid 1.

## Amos 4

- I. The Guilty Identified (cont'd) (4:1-3).
  - A. God now shifts His focus to the wealthy women of Bashan.
    1. Bashan was a region of northeastern Israel.
    2. “These are affluent women who encouraged their men to oppress and crush the needy so they could add to their prosperity.”<sup>36</sup>
    3. “[The] women of Samaria [Bashan]... had only one imperative for their “lords” [JKV] or “husbands” [NKJV], and that was, *Bring!* This means, “Get it; we don’t care how!”<sup>37</sup>
  - B. Being taken away “with fishhooks” could be a reference to either:
    1. The manner in which the people were led out of Israel.
      - a. “The Assyrians [those who took Israel] literally led captives by ropes and hooks, drawn through the nose or lips of captives.”<sup>38</sup>
      - b. This would seem to be the literal fulfillment of Amos’s prediction.
    2. How quickly Israel was snatched from their land and carried off into captivity (cf. Jer. 16:16; Hab. 1:13-15).
      - a. “These lovers of luxury would be among the first taken away captive, helplessly torn away from their luxurious, profligate life, as fishes are haplessly taken by the hooks of fishermen.”<sup>39</sup>
      - b. Israel was the prey (cf. 3:4, 5, 8), Assyria was the hook, and God was the fisherman.
- II. God condemns Israel’s worship (4:4, 5).
  - A. Bethel and Gilgal were locations notorious for idol worship (1 Kings 12:28, 29; Judg. 3:19; Hos. 4:15).
    1. Israel’s worship was nothing more than “transgression” (4:4).
    2. God encouraged them to offer sacrifices with leaven (4:5; Lev. 2:11; 7:12).
      - a. God does not urge them to do this because it is what He wants them to do.
      - b. Rather, He uses irony to urge them to do what they already know to be wrong; this is what they “love”.
    3. Their freewill offerings (Lev. 22:18) were made a public spectacle (cf. Mt. 6:1-4).
  - B. In practice, some aspects of their worship were correct; in purpose and intent, it was not (cf. Isa. 1:11-15).
- III. Jehovah’s previous interventions (4:6-13).
  - A. God sent Israel:
    1. Famine (4:6)
    2. Drought (4:7)
    3. Death (4:10)
    4. Destruction (4:11)
  - B. Even still, Israel would not repent; because of sin, Israel had become the enemy of God.

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<sup>36</sup> Kenyon 28.

<sup>37</sup> Coffman 126.

<sup>38</sup> Jackson 397.

<sup>39</sup> Hailey 103.

## Amos 5

- I. Seek Your God (5:1-9).
  - A. Amos laments (weeps) for Israel which reveals his deep care and concern for them (5:1).<sup>40</sup>
    1. Israel is called a “virgin” not because of her purity, but because she has never been fully conquered since being inhabited by the Hebrews.
    2. Israel is called a “virgin” to indicate a contrast between the predicted destruction of Israel (as Amos is foretelling) and the original intention that Israel, as the people of God, would never be conquered (Deut. 11:22-25; Josh 1:5).
  - B. Israel “will rise no more” (5:2).
    1. (This) Israel will never again be of any political significance.
    2. The nation of Israel that exists today is not the same Israel we read about in the Bible.
    3. Premillennialists contend that during the “end-times”, Israel will be fully restored to power, the (already fulfilled) land promises made to Abraham will be fulfilled, etc., but Amos rules this out as a possibility.
  - C. Israel’s troops will be decimated (5:3).
    1. Those who survive the fighting will be carried away captive.
    2. “Although a remnant will survive, the emphasis here is on the thorough judgment, ‘so sweeping that the only proper response is a dirge [lament].’”<sup>41</sup>
  - D. True repentance is all that can save Israel (5:4-9).
    1. God will not be found in the cities dedicated to idol worship (Bethel, Gilgal, Beersheeba).
    2. Righteousness was extinct in Israel (5:7).
    3. In addition to worshipping idols, Israel was fond of worshipping the stars.
      - a. God reminds Israel that He made the stars (the constellations Pleiades and Orion) (5:8).
      - b. “Moses sternly warned the Israelites against worshipping the sun, moon, stars, and all the host of heaven (Deut. 4:19, 17:3); it may be said that the prohibition of making and worshiping any image of that which is in heaven above (Ex. 20:4; Deut. 5:8) implies also the stars and the other celestial bodies...Altars for star-worship were built on the roofs of the houses, and horses and chariots were dedicated to the worship of the sun (2 Kings. 21:5; 23:4-5, 11-12).”
- II. Israel’s corrupt Government (5:10-15).
  - A. Israel’s government hated justice and correction (5:10).
    1. The judgment seat was located near “the gate” of the city.
    2. Rebuke should be appreciated, not abhorred (despised) (cf. Prov. 12:1; 15:10, 27:5).
  - B. The rich have stolen from the poor and built luxurious houses and planted vineyards with the ill-gained money (5:11-12).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> This section adapted from Kenyon 29.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid 1.

<sup>42</sup> This section taken from Kenyon 30.

1. “When God’s judgment for these injustices is executed, the wise person will keep silent (5:13).
  2. “Those who have silenced the innocent shall themselves be silenced by their own inevitable punishment.”
- C. God may be gracious if Israel repents (5:14, 15).
- III. Israel will be sorrowful in the day of the Lord (5:16-20).
- A. God would pass through Israel just as he passed through Egypt (cf. Ex. 12:12).
  - B. There seemed to be a clear misunderstanding of what “the day of the Lord” really would be (5: 18-20).
    1. The “day of the Lord” is a terrible day (cf. Oba. 15; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 28-32).
    2. It seems that Israel thought the day of the Lord would bring them blessings.
    3. Amos uses a parable to teach that when things seem bad (“fled from a lion”, “leaned his hand on a wall” (after working hard)), they would only get worse (“a bear met him”, a serpent bit him”). (5:19).
- IV. Israel’s corrupt worship (5:21-27).
- A. Amos has already dealt with this idea in Amos 4:4, 5 (see the notes on this chapter for more.)
  - B. In short, Israel’s worship was not consistent with their lives (cf. Isa. 1:11-15; Malachi 1:6-14).

## Amos 6

- I. Israel is Vulnerable (6:1-6).
  - A. Mount Samaria is a mountainous stronghold in northern Israel (6:1, 2).
    1. The people who live there think that they are immune to invasion (cf. Oba. 2-4).
    2. God instructs Israel to look at Calneh (NW Syria), Hamath (North of Israel's border in Syria), and Gath of the Phillistines (near coastal Caanan), and see what has become of them (6:2).
      - a. Each of these cities that boarder Israel have already fallen to the Assyrians.
      - b. Israel is no stronger than these cities, yet she thinks that she is immune to the inevitable: Assyrian invasion.
      - c. With God, Israel surely would have been protected.
    3. It took three years, but the Assyrians took Mount Samaria.
  - B. Since the Israelites are in denial about how vulnerable they really are, it has made them more susceptible to invasion (6:3).
  - C. The lavish, careless lives of the wealthy Israelites included:
    1. Lying on beds of Ivory (“[This] depicts not just comfort but drunken stupor.”)<sup>43</sup> (6:4).
    2. Feasting on lambs and calves (likely fattened with the grain stolen from the poor (cf. 5:11)) (6:4).
    3. Singing meaningless, nonsensical songs (likely during the feasts mentioned above) with the accompaniment of stringed instruments (6:5).
      - a. “As David invented stringed instruments in honor of his God (cf. 1 Chron. 23:5; 2 Chron. 29:27), so do these princes invent playing and singing for their god, the belly.”<sup>44</sup>
      - b. David “invented” musical instruments in worship, but evidently it was acceptable to God at the time.
      - c. Mechanical instruments were authorized for OT worship, but they are not authorized for NT worship.
    4. Guzzling down wine, not from cups, but from bowls (6:6).
    5. Anointing themselves with expensive oils (6:6)
- II. Coming destruction reiterated (6:7-14).
  - A. The corrupt and wealthy Israelites will be the first to be led out of Israel when the Assyrians move in (6:7, 8).
  - B. Destruction will be complete (6:9, 10):<sup>45</sup>
    1. Death will decimate the population (6:9).
    2. A family member will have to burn the remains of his relatives instead of burying them because the cemetery was usually placed outside the city, and in time of such calamity the cemetery could not be reached.
    3. “Are there any more with you?” pictures the relative calling to another searcher who may have penetrated the rubble (after the destruction of the city) in search of survivors, asking him if anyone is still alive.

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<sup>43</sup> Kenyon 32.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> This section taken from Kenyon 33.

4. “Not mention the name of the Lord” = prompted either by a feeling of complete despair, indicating that they had failed their opportunity and now there is no need to call on the Lord, or a feeling of fear, indicating that to mention the Lord’s name would be to invoke His further presence and, hence, to court further death.
- C. God will use another nation (Assyria) to administer His punishment (6:11-14).
1. Horses cannot run on the surface of a rock, as he can gain no traction (6:12)
  2. Oxen cannot plow on rock (6:12).
  3. Israel cannot abandon God and expect to thrive (or exist, even).
  4. These are all absurd impossibilities.

## Amos 7

- I. Vision of the Locusts (7:1-3).
  - A. “Thus the Lord God showed me” (7:1, NKJV) seems to indicate that what Amos is seeing is a vision, and not yet reality
  - B. The locusts will come at the worst possible time – the late (spring) crop.
    - 1. The locusts will come “after the king’s mowings” (7:1, NKJV) are collected.
      - a. This probably refers to a sort of tax imposed on farmers to feed the king’s livestock (cf. 1 Kings 18:5).
      - b. The Israelite farmers will be left with nothing.
  - C. Amos begs God to forgive Israel and relent, and He does (7:2, 3) (cf. Jas. 5:16).
- II. Vision of the Fire (7:4-6).
  - A. God shows Amos a vision of a consuming fire raging in Israel (7:4).
  - B. Again, Amos begs God to relent, and He does (7:5, 6).
- III. Vision of the Plum Line (7:7-9).
  - A. There are two possible ways to understand this vision:
    - 1. Amos sees a vision of God using a plum line to measure the people of Israel.
      - a. A plum line is a cord with a weight attached to the end, and it is used to measure a straight line.
      - b. God was not measuring the stature of the Israelites, but rather, He was comparing them to the rule, or standard, of His word.
      - c. God was, essentially, seeing how the Israelites measured up against His commands.
    - 2. God is saying that He will build a (figurative) wall of separation between Israel and Himself, using a plum line.
      - a. This makes the scene of God standing “on a wall made with a plum line” (7:7) more significant.
      - b. God “will not pass by them anymore” (7:8) because He is literally separated from them.
  - B. The “houses of Jeroboam” are places set up for idol worship (cf. 1 Kings 12:26-30)
- IV. Amaziah’s Opposition (7:10-13).
  - A. Amaziah was the prominent priest at the calf temple set up at Bethel.
    - 1. This “priest” sent word to Jeroboam II (the reigning king of Israel) that Amos was conspiring against him (7:10, 11)
    - 2. Evidently, Jeroboam II was not too concerned with Amaziah’s accusations because his response is not recorded.
  - B. Amaziah attempts to throw Amos out of town (7:12, 13).
- V. The Response of Amos (7:14-17).
  - A. Amos reminds Amaziah that his words are not his own (7:14, 15).
  - B. Because Amaziah mistreated Amos, and because he was unwilling to hear the words of Jehovah, he will be punished (7:16, 17).

## Amos 8

- I. The Basket of Ripe Fruit (8:1-10).
  - A. “Summer fruit” = fruit that is ripe for the picking (1:1-2).
    - 1. This demonstrates the vulnerability of Israel (a subject that Amos has previously dealt with (cf. 6:2ff)).
    - 2. “The end” (cf. Ezekiel 7:2) is often illustrated as a time of harvest (cf. Mt. 13:24-30; Rev. 14:15)
  - B. Israel’s songs of celebration and joy will be turned to wailing and lamentations (8:3).
  - C. Dead bodies will litter the lands of Israel (8:3).
  - D. Amos again deals with those who abuse the poor (8:4-6; cf. 4:1-5; 5:11ff).
    - 1. Religious services are a burden because they delay commerce (8:5a; cf. Mal. 1:13).
    - 2. Some participated in unfair trade (8:5b; cf. Lev. 19:35, 36; Deut. 25:13-16).
  - E. The Lord swears by an oath that He will not forget (or overlook) Israel’s sin (8:7-10; cf. Hos. 7:2; 8:13).
    - 1. The land will “tremble” (8:8, NKJV).
      - a. When the Lord appears, the earth trembles (cf. Judges 5:4; Jer. 10:10; Acts 4:11).
    - 2. Judgment will flood Israel (8:8b).
    - 3. The sky will be darkened at mid-day (8:9; cf. Isa. 13:10; Ezk. 32:7, 8).
    - 4. The effects of this judgment will cause all of Israel to lament (8:10).
- II. A Famine for Truth (8:11-14).
  - A. Up to this time, God (somewhat) regularly spoke to His people, usually via a prophet.
    - 1. From this point on, God would speak no more to His people, until the days of Jesus.
    - 2. Surely, this would be a big adjustment for Israel.
  - B. The next generation of Israelites would be at a greater disadvantage, because they would not remember a time when God spoke to His people (8:13)
  - C. Those who worship idols in Samaria and Dan will endure a severe punishment (8:14).
  - D. Most today aren’t enduring a scriptural famine, but are on a scriptural diet.

## Amos 9

- I. The Vision of the Lord at the Altar (9:1-10).
  - A. Just like in Amos's other visions, God is depicted as being in a position of power and judgment (9:1).
    - 1. God is standing "by the altar" (9:1; NKJV), or "upon the altar" (9:1, KJV).
    - 2. It is clear that the altar mentioned here is not an altar for the Lord, but an altar designated for idol worship (cf. 2:8, 3:14, etc.).
    - 3. These idolatrous altars will be destroyed from top to bottom ("strike toe doorposts" NKJV, "smite the lintel" KJV; cf. Judg. 16:23-31).
  - B. God's judgment is inescapable (9:2-4; cf. Ps. 139:7-10).
    - 1. Safety cannot be found in hell ("Sheol" (ASV)), or the grave.
    - 2. Safety cannot be found in heaven, or the sky.
    - 3. Safety cannot even be found in captivity.
  - C. God is capable of totally destroying Israel (9:5, 6).
  - D. Though God had formed a covenant with Israel, they are no more important to Him than the Ethiopians, Philistines, Syrians, or any other gentiles (9:7).
    - 1. This is not to say that Israel was not "God's special people."
    - 2. Rather, Israel's sins were just as condemning as the sins of any other people.
    - 3. In addition, there was really nothing special about Israel, other than what God has given them (i.e. the law, the prophets, etc.). God chose these people, and that is what made them special.
  - E. God will destroy sinful Israel, but not completely (9:8-10).
    - 1. "The 'sinful kingdom' will be destroyed as a political entity, although as persons (descendants from Jacob) a remnant will be spared."<sup>46</sup>
    - 2. Israel would be sifted among the nations (9:9; Dt. 28:64, 65; Hos. 9:17).
- II. The Reign of the Messiah (9:11-15).
  - A. The physical "house of Jacob" would never return, but the spiritual "house of Jacob" was established when the Lord established His church.
    - 1. James, the brother of Jesus, understood Amos's words (Acts 15:15-18).
    - 2. The faithful Jews and interested Gentiles would be united in the church of Christ.
  - B. Amos explains this restoration in a way that would have made sense to both the Jewish audience to which he was writing, and to the Gentiles who would live longer after Amos penned his book.

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<sup>46</sup> Kenyon 39.

# Hosea 1

## Introduction:

- I. Other than what is revealed in his book, little is known about the prophet Hosea.
  - A. The name “Hosea” means “Salvation.”
  - B. Hosea is the son of Beerī (1:1).
  - C. Hosea’s thorough understanding of the life and customs of the people of Israel indicate that he was from the Northern Kingdom.
    1. Hosea is the only prophet from the Northern Kingdom that prophesied to the Northern Kingdom.
    2. “He seems to have been a country boy, for his illustrations are largely rural.”<sup>47</sup>
- II. Hosea wrote his book around 750 BC, shortly after the prophet Amos wrote.
  - A. Hosea lived and worked during the reigns of Uzziah (790-739 BC), Jotham (750-731 BC), Ahaz (735-715 BC), and Hezekiah (729-686 BC), kings of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (793-753 BC) (1:1).
  - B. Hosea prophesied primarily to Israel, but at times, shifted his focus on Judah.
  - C. Hosea was a contemporary of Micah and Isaiah.
- III. Religious, moral, and political background of Israel during Hosea’s time.<sup>48</sup>
  - A. “Harlotry” (1:2) summarizes the religious condition of the nation.
    1. Israel had prostituted herself before the Baalim of the land (2:12-13).
    2. Idolatry and all that it entailed was a way for life for the people (4:11-13; 8:4; 10:1, 2).
  - B. The people were morally guilty of swearing, lying, killing, stealing, idolatry, adultery, etc. (4:2; 6:8-9; 13:2).
  - C. The time in which Hosea prophesied was one of political upheaval.
- IV. Major views concerning Hosea’s “wife of harlotry” (1:2).<sup>49</sup>
  - A. Literal = Gomer was a practicing harlot at the time that Hosea is told to marry her.
    1. It alleges that Gomer was one of the sacred prostitutes of the fertility cult.
    2. Problems with this view that render it inadequate:
      - a. It assumes that the only women from whom Hosea could choose were practicing harlots.
      - b. God would contradict His own word that forbade union with practicing harlots (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 19:29; 20:5; 21:14 cf. 1 Cor. 6:15-18).
      - c. Could God endorse an activity that He so obviously despises?
  - B. Allegorical (“extended parable”) = the marriage never actually took place, but rather it was a story (or parable) used to illustrate God’s love.
    1. It alleges that the characters represent only mere symbolic lessons.
      - a. Gomer means “completion;” therefore, she merely represents Israel’s completion in sin.
      - b. Gomer’s mother name, Dibliam (1:3, may be defined as “raisin cakes,” which were a type of sacrificial offering in pagan worship; therefore, she only represents the extent to which Israel declined in her relation to God.
    2. Problems with this view that render it inadequate:

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<sup>47</sup> Jackson 369.

<sup>48</sup> Taken from Kenyon 43.

<sup>49</sup> Taken from Kenyon 44.

- a. The narrative is straight forward and gives us no hermeneutical reason to reduce it to a mere “story.”
  - b. Would Inspiration lead us to believe something took place when it really did not?
    - (1) The names of Hosea’s wife and children and the price he paid for the “woman beloved of her friend” (3:1-3) indicates a factual account.
    - (2) Think also of the degradation of character that would have occurred if God called Gomer a harlot when she was not.
  - c. This view takes away from the purpose, power, and strength of Hosea’s lesson.
- C. Modified literal (“enacted prophecy”) = Gomer was not a practicing harlot at the time Hosea is told to marry her, but later in the marriage becomes one.
- 1. She was a “daughter of the age,” one brought up under the influences of idolatry, and in whose character would have been planted the seeds of immorality.
    - a. She was not a cult prostitute in any official sense when Hosea married her, but was an ordinary Israelite woman who later became an adulteress and prostitute.
    - b. We cannot forget the point God is making in Hosea’s marriage to Gomer:
      - (1) The relationship between Hosea and Gomer is meant to represent the relationship between Israel and God.
      - (2) Israel did not start out as a harlot (unfaithful to God), but rather became unfaithful as their relationship progressed.
  - 2. How can the command to marry “a wife of harlotry” (1:2) be reconciled with the nature of God?
    - a. God is omniscient and, therefore, knew Gomer would become a harlot, although she was not one at the time of the command.
      - (1) Foreknowledge does not necessitate predetermination (cf. Jn. 13:21-27)
      - (2) It is obvious that “harlotry” was rampant throughout the land (4:11, 13) and so it should come as no surprise that Gomer could become a harlot.
    - b. Hosea may not have written the account until after the events had taken place; therefore, he knew at the time of writing that she was a practicing harlot.
      - (1) Some have suggested that the significance of Hosea’s wife (and children) could only gain its real force in retrospect.
      - (2) It is not uncommon for a prophet to write about a future event as if it has already occurred (Isa. 5:13; 53:1ff; Amos 5:2).

### **Outline of the Text:**

- I. Israel’s corruption symbolically pictured (Chapters 1-3)
- II. Israel’s apostasy depicted and rebuked (Chapters 4-13)
- III. A call to repentance with blessings to come (Chapter 14)

### **The Book of Hosea:**

- I. Biographical remarks about the prophet Hosea (1:1).

- II. Hosea's wife and Children (1:2-11).
  - A. Hosea's "wife... and children of harlotry" (1:2) are representative of all of Israel.
  - B. Hosea's first son, Jezreel ("God scatters/sows"), symbolizes God's judgment (1:3-5).
    - 1. God will "Avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu (one of Israel's kings)" = a threat to the reigning house of which was soon to end.<sup>50</sup>
    - 2. The Northern Kingdom will cease to exist (1:4)
    - 3. Israel's military will be destroyed (1:5)
  - C. Hosea's first daughter, Lo-ruhamah ("no mercy") symbolizes the withdrawal of God's mercy (1:6, 7).
    - 1. God will show no mercy to Israel (cf. Deut. 13:17; Ps. 103:13).
    - 2. However, God will show mercy to Judah, the Southern Kingdom.
      - a. The mercy shown to the Southern Kingdom would soon be taken away though, because Judah, too, was turning from the Lord.
      - b. Mercy is only extended to the obedient.
  - D. Hosea's second son, Lo-Ammi ("not my people"), symbolizes God's removal from His own people (1:8, 9).
  - E. God then seems to remind Israel that, even though he will destroy Israel, a remnant shall remain, and the promise made to Abraham will be kept (1:10, 11).

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<sup>50</sup> Kenyon 46.

## Hosea 2

### I. Unfaithful Israel Compared to Unfaithful Gomer (2:1-13).<sup>51</sup>

Note: Even though Hosea is the writer of this book, God is the one speaking in this passage.

- A. Israel is given one last opportunity to return to the Lord (2:2, 3).
    - 1. The adulterous wife mentioned represents Israel as a nation, and the “children” of this wife represent the children of Israel (i.e. the Israelites themselves).
    - 2. The word “plead” (KJV) in 2:2 seems to suggest that there is still hope for Israel – a change can be made just in time.
    - 3. If Israel does not change, God will be forced to leave her as He found her – vulnerable, poor, and barren (2:3, cf. Ezk. 16:4-14).
  - B. Because of Israel’s unfaithfulness as a nation, all of her inhabitants will suffer (2:4, 5).
  - C. God will make it impossible for Israel to continue her pursuit of Baalim (2:6, 7).
    - 1. This is done to ensure that Israel will return to God.
    - 2. When Israel is unable to “overtake” the idols she is chasing, she will give up the chase and return to her first “husband”, Jehovah.
  - D. Since Israel does not appreciate the blessings God has given her, He will be forced to take them away (2:8-13).
- ### II. God promises Israel a better future (2:14-23).
- A. Israel once again will be delivered (2:14, 15).
  - B. The relationship between God and His people will change –they will become closer than ever (22:16, 17).
  - C. God uses symbolic language to describe a drastic change that would come when this new relationship, or covenant, is established (2:18-23).
    - 1. Even though the exact meaning of this passage is a bit difficult to ascertain, we can know for sure that it applies to the Christian age (cf. Rom. 9:25).
    - 2. Truly, God’s relationship with His people changed when He ushered in Christianity.

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<sup>51</sup> Adapted from Kenyon 49.

## Hosea 3

- I. Jehovah instructs Hosea to once again love his wife (3:1).
  - A. Gomer is to love her despite her condition.
    - 1. Gomer, like the children of Israel, is an adulteress (2:5).
    - 2. Gomer, like the children of Israel, looks to other gods (or other providers) (2:8, 13).
    - 3. Gomer, like the children of Israel, loves “raisin cakes.” (3:1).
      - a. Raisin cakes were important in the worship of Baal.
      - b. Baal was, among other things, considered the god of fertility, and raisin cakes were thought to possess some special fertility power.
  - B. Hosea’s loving Gomer is representative of God loving Israel.
- II. Hosea obeys God’s command (3:2, 3).
  - A. Hosea shows his love by action – “I bought her for myself” (3:2).
    - 1. Evidently, Gomer is in a situation where she needed to be bought back.
      - a. Gomer could be in an adulterous relationship with an individual (“lover” (3:1)) who has now claimed her.
      - b. Or, she might have sold herself into some sort of slavery (perhaps as a temple prostitute), and must now be bought back.
    - 2. The price (“15 shekels of silver and 1 ½ homers of barley” (3:2)) that Hosea paid is likely the common price of a servant (Ex. 21:32).
  - B. Hosea instructs Gomer to be faithful to him, and promises to do the same for her (3:3).
    - 1. Some see the latter part of Hosea’s instruction (“nor shall you have a man.”) as a prohibition against any type “conjugal fellowship”, even with Hosea.
    - 2. This would give verse 4 a more powerful meaning.
- III. God’s people will go through a disciplinary period (3:4, 5).
  - A. Israel will go without any king or prince (3:4).
    - 1. Just as gomer must go without a man, so will Israel go without any rulers.
      - a. This was God’s original intention for Israel (1 Sam. 8:4-7, 19, 20).
      - b. Israel’s leaders, for the most part, only led Israel away from God (2 Kings 17:21).
    - 2. “Sacrifice and sacred pillar” describes Israel’s religion – idolatry.
    - 3. “Ephod and teraphim” demonstrates Israel’s mixture of Judaism and Paganism (cf. Judg. 17:5)
      - a. An Ephod was an apron-like garment worn by the priests.
      - b. A teraphim is a small idol, commonly kept in one’s home.
  - B. After this disciplinary period, Israel will return to the Lord (3:5).
    - 1. “Return” could indicate either a return from captivity, a return to the Lord, or both.
    - 2. “David” is most certainly a reference to Jesus, as King David died around 962 BC, and Hosea wrote around 750 BC (cf. Jer. 30:9; Ezk. 34:23, 24).
    - 3. “The latter days” is clearly a reference to the Messianic age (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:1, 2)

## Hosea 4

- I. Overview of the charges against Israel (4:1-3).<sup>52</sup>
  - A. General reasons why the Lord is bringing charges against Israel (4:1).
    1. There is no truth – the people ignored hearing and practicing the truth.
    2. There is no mercy – the people lacked love and concern for the needy.
    3. There is no knowledge of God – the people refused to be directed by God’s covenant which revealed who He is, what He has done for His people, and what He requires of them.
  - B. Jehovah lists a few of the sins being committed by the Israelites (4:2).
    1. “Swearing” (using the Lords name in vain) broke the third command (Ex. 20:7).
    2. “Lying” broke the ninth command (Ex. 20:16).
    3. “Killing” broke the sixth command (Ex. 20:13).
    4. “Stealing” (originally implied kidnapping [cf. Ex. 21:16] and was expanded to include taking the possessions of others) broke the either command (Ex. 20:15).
    5. “Committing Adultery” (both physically and spiritually) broke the seventh command (Ex. 20:14).
    6. In breaking God’s commands, the nation has become a people of violence.
      - a. “They break all restraint” in this context signifies a violent breaking in upon others for the purpose of robbery and murder, possibly even for the purpose of seizing victims for the human sacrifices that fed the altars of Baal (cf. Ps. 106:36-39).
      - b. “Bloodshed upon bloodshed” indicates that violence was prominent.
  - C. God will bring judgment fitting for their terrible crimes (4:3).
- II. The covenant between God and Israel has been broken (4:4-19).
  - A. Israel’s priests have led the people away from God (4:4-10).
    1. There is no point in arguing with, “contending” with, or “rebuking” another individual because Israel is past the point of reasoning (4:4).
    2. Israel is destined to fall (4:5).
    3. The priests are rejected by God because they do not know, or practice, the law of Moses (4:6).
    4. As the population of Israel increases, so do her sins (4:7, 8).
      - a. God will turn Israel’s glory into shame.
      - b. By encouraging the people to sin, the priests feed themselves- the more the people sin, the more sacrifices are offered, and the more sacrifices, the more material benefit to the priests.
    5. The priests and the people will suffer the consequences of their iniquity (4:9, 10).
  - B. The idolatry of Israel is described (4:11-14).
    1. The hearts of the Israelites are the source of the problem (4:11).
    2. Israel places her trust in idols (4:12-14)
  - C. Judah must not follow the bad example of Israel (4:15-19).

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<sup>52</sup> Kenyon 54.

## Hosea 5

- I. Israel is corrupted (5:1-7).
  - A. The leadership is largely responsible for Israel's apostasy (cf. "priests... house of the king"; Amos 7:13) (5:1-3).
    1. "...deeply involved in slaughter" (5:2) may refer to crimes of child sacrifices (cf. Isa. 57:5; Ezk 16:20, 21; 23:39).
    2. God continues to rebuke Israel (5:2) so that she might turn back to Him (cf. Heb. 12:5-11).
  - B. The priests are especially responsible for Israel's corruption and ultimate fall (5:4-7).<sup>53</sup>
    1. "They, them" best fit the priests who were the religious leaders of the nation (5:4; 4:6).
    2. The hearts of the leaders are turned away from God (cf. Deut. 30:17).
    3. "The pride of Israel" (5:5) = Israel's self-reliance and failure to depend on God; this pride will soon spread to Judah (cf. 7:10).
      - a. It is not clear as to who "his face" refers to.
      - b. Some translations read: "Israel's pride testifies against them" (NLT), instead of "his face."
    4. The sacrifices made by the priests are useless, because the Lord is no longer with them (cf. 6:6)
    5. "A New Moon shall devour them" (5:7) could be either a reference to pagan ceremonialism, or it could symbolize the coming punishment at the hand of Assyria.<sup>54</sup>
- II. Israel's political policies and practices exclude God (5:8-15).
  - A. Israel is warned about her coming destruction (5:8, 9).
    1. The sequence of the cities suggests that Hosea see's Israel's destruction as if the Assyrians had already swept over the land to the boarder of Judah (5:8).
    2. Israel will be left desolate (5:9).
  - B. Both Israel and Ephraim (Israel) will be judged (5:10, 11).
    1. Judah ignores (or goes beyond) the "landmark" (NKJV), or the "bound" (KJV), that God has set (cf. Deut. 19:14; Prov. 22:28).
    2. Israel ignored God's law and walked after the commands of men (Mt. 15:9).
  - C. Israel is judged because she did not trust in the Lord (5:12-15).
    1. Israel was obviously sin-sick, but instead of turning to the Lord, she turned to the Assyrians.
      - a. Israel wanted an alliance with the current world power, Assyria, instead of keeping her covenant with God.
      - b. Ultimately, the Assyrians conquered Israel.
    2. God is withdrawing from Israel (5:15).
      - a. God did not speak directly to anyone again until the time of Christ.
      - b. Israel still had the written word of God, but direct communication (via the prophets) was halted.

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<sup>53</sup> Kenyon 57.

<sup>54</sup> Jackson 375.

## Hosea 6

- I. Israel makes an attempt to repent (6:1-6).
  - A. Once God turns away (5:15), Israel will realize their need for God and try to repent (6:1-3).
    1. Their “repentance” is not true repentance.<sup>55</sup>
      - a. Acknowledgment of sin is the key ingredient missing from their repentance – they have faced their woundedness but not their waywardness.
      - b. It is their affliction (cf. sorrow of the world) that motivates their “repentance”, not godly sorrow, or guilt for sin (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10).
      - c. They are hoping that their “return to the Lord” (6:1) will be enough to save them.
    2. The shallowness of their repentance is obvious (6:4-6).
      - a. Their faithfulness is like the clouds and the morning dew – it comes and goes (6:4).
      - b. The judgment that has already been pronounced has seemingly sealed their fate (6:5).
  - B. God is not looking for more sacrifices, but a change of heart (6:6).
- II. Israel has broken the covenant she made with God (6:7-11).
  - A. “Like men [Adam ASV]” may refer to deeds done in the city Adam (cf. Josh. 3:16), or to the first man who was expelled from Eden for violating God’s covenant (cf. Gen. 2:16, 17) (6:7).
  - B. Gilead, spoken of as a city, was a mountainous district east of the Jordan and served as a retreat for wicked men; therefore, Israel has become a retreat for wicked men (6:8).
  - C. The priests lead the people toward unfaithfulness (6:9).
  - D. Israel and Judah are wicked and will be judged (6:9, 10).

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<sup>55</sup> This section taken from Kenyon 59.

## Hosea 7

- I. Israel's wickedness stands in the way of God's mercy (7:1-7).
  - A. God would have (i.e. desires to) spared Israel, but He cannot overlook their constant sin (7:1, 2).
    - 1. Israel does not consider that God knows her deeds (7:2).
      - a. We see, more clearly than ever, that Israel does not know God at all (cf. 4:6; 8:11, 12; Isa. 5:13).
      - b. Because Israel does not know the power of God, she cannot have the proper respect for God.
    - 2. Their deeds have "surrounded them ["hemmed them in" KJV], meaning that their fall comes as a result of their own actions (7:2).
  - B. The Priests are like an oven heated by a baker (7:3-7).<sup>56</sup>
    - 1. The deceit of the priests makes the king and his court glad (7:3).
    - 2. Being unfaithful to God and the king (cf. "adulterous"), they plot the king's overthrow (7:4).
  - C. As a baker prepares the dough, waits for it to rise, then stirs the fire for baking, so the priests plot their conspiracy and wait for an opportune time to carry it out (7:5).<sup>57</sup>
    - 1. "In the day of our king" = a festival or a coronation of a king.
    - 2. Having intoxicated the king, he "stretched out his hand" or clasped his hand (in common cause and fellowship) with "scoffers" (i.e. those of the priestly conspiracy).
  - D. As the oven fires are fanned into excessive heat, so are the priests inflamed with the spirit of anarchy, greed, and lust (7:6, 7).<sup>58</sup>
    - 1. Their conspiracies are executed as planned.
    - 2. As a result, the judges are devoured and the kings fall (cf. 2 Kings 15:8-17:41).
  - E. They failed to consult God and took matters into their own hands (7:7)
- II. Israel's fellowship with pagan nations (7:8-16).
  - A. "Ephraim is a cake unturned" (7:8).
    - 1. Ephraim has adopted the idolatrous ways of the pagan, and has united himself with them.
    - 2. Israel lost her unique identity as God's people.
  - B. Ephraim is inedible (i.e. ruined), and therefore no longer good for anything (7:8).
    - 1. "Cake unturned" = one side is burnt, and the other side is uncooked.
    - 2. Since the bakers (i.e. the priests) neglected Israel, she has been ruined.
  - C. Ephraim is ignorant of his own demise (7:9, 10).
    - 1. His economic and political strength is being diminished by the same nations he seeks allegiance.
    - 2. "Gray hairs" may refer to Israel's diminishing strength.
    - 3. Despite the decline in power, Israel is still proud – too proud to turn to the Lord.
  - D. Ephraim is like a silly, or senseless, dove (7:11, 12).

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<sup>56</sup> Kenyon 60.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

1. He calls out to Egypt for help (cf. Ezk. 29:16).
  2. He goes to the Assyrians for help.
  3. He should have turned to the Lord.
  4. For disobedience, God will bring Israel down like a hunter who snares a bird (cf. Amos 3:4-8).
    - a. God's judgment is necessary, and ultimately helpful.
    - b. "According to what their congregation has heard" = this destruction has already been announced to Israel, either by the prophets or the law (cf. Lev. 26:14-39; Deut. 28:15-68; Amos 7-8).
- E. "Woe" is pronounced upon Ephraim (7:13-16).
1. Ephraim has deliberately fled ("Wandered" ASV) from God (7:13).
  2. They have transgressed against God (7:13).
  3. They have "spoken lies" against God (7:13).
    - a. This emphasizes Israel's deceitfulness.
    - b. May also refer to Israel's idolatry, the "ultimate lie" (cf. Amos 2:4).
  4. "They assemble together for grain and new wine", the chief symbols of Baal's "blessings" and their offerings to him (7:14; cf. Hos. 2:8, 9).
  5. Israel devises evil against the Lord (7:15; cf. Ps. 21:11).
  6. They can never fully turn back to God, they are like a faulty bow, unable to hit the target.

## Hosea 8

- I. Israel is vulnerable (8:1-3).
  - A. The alarm must sound – battle is eminent (8:1).
    - 1. “He” shall come like an eagle probably does not refer to God, but the king of Assyria (cf. Hab. 1:8; Lam. 4:19; Deut. 28:47, 48).
    - 2. Regardless of her claim, Israel does not know God.
      - a. Israel has “rejected the good”, meaning that she has forfeited all of the blessings that come with obedience (cf. Deut. 28:1-8).
      - b. Since God is no longer with Israel, she is completely vulnerable.
  - B. Without God, Israel cannot stand against the nations.
- II. Israel has set up irreverent kings and false gods (8:4-6).
  - A. The leadership in Israel exists without God’s approval (8:4).
  - B. Israel’s idols have separated them from the one true God (8:4-6).
    - 1. “They made idols for themselves” from the material blessings that God gave them (“silver and gold” [Hos. 2:8]).
    - 2. They worship the work of their own hands (Ex. 20:3-6; Isa. 42:17).
- III. Israel’s attempt to form an alliance with Assyria will only worsen her condition (8:7-10).
  - A. Israel will reap what she has sown (8:7).<sup>59</sup>
    - 1. “Wind” describes futility (cf. Ecc. 1:14, 17) and “whirlwind” appears to be a reference to destruction.
    - 2. Note the progression: bad sowing leads to even worse reaping, grain that manages to grow will produce little fruit, and the little fruit that is produced will be devoured by strangers.
  - B. Israel is described as a bad sower with a tiny crop, which will be devoured by the Assyrians (8:8).
  - C. Without God, Israel is depicted as being lonely, and thus must “hire lovers” (8:9, 10).
  - D. Since Israel has forgotten God, she will return to “Egypt” (i.e. captivity”) (8:11, 12; cf. Deut. 28:58, 68).
    - 1. Their multiplying of altars leads to their multiplying of sin.
    - 2. God, who should be familiar to Israel, has become strange to them while Assyria, who should have been strange to Israel, has become familiar.
  - E. Israel’s sacrifices are without meaning, and serve only as a meal for the priests (8:13).
  - F. Though Israel and Judah are wealthy and appear to be well fortified, without God, they are vulnerable (8:14).

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<sup>59</sup> Kenyon 63.

## Hosea 9

- I. Israel's rejoicing will be turned into mourning (9:1-9).
  - A. The "wages" of spiritual prostitution will fail (9:1, 2).
    - 1. Israel must not rejoice as "other people" (Assyria and Egypt) who celebrate the bountiful harvest as gifts from Baal and approval of their religious practices.
    - 2. Israel, of all people, should know better, but she does not.
    - 3. That in which she trusts will no longer sustain her.
  - B. Their sustenance will be removed through exile (9:3, 4).
    - 1. Outside the "Lord's land" everything is unclean, and a diet of unclean food is a fate similar to death (cf. Amos 7:17; Ezk. 4:9-17).
    - 2. In Assyrian captivity, they will not be able to offer the proper sacrifices (wine or animal).
    - 3. "Bread of mourners" = bread eaten at funeral meals which was regarded as unclean because the dead defiled the house and all things in it.
    - 4. Because their bread cannot be sanctified by the "first fruit" offering (Deut. 26:1-4), it cannot be eaten in fellowship with God.
  - C. Honoring the Lord on His special day(s) will be impossible (9:5, 6).
  - D. The days of judgment have already begun, despite what the false prophets say (9:7-9).
    - 1. Some false prophet has deceived the people into believing that they will not be harmed (Mic. 2:11; 1 Kings 18:19).
    - 2. Because Israel was deceived, God will "punish their sins."
- II. Israel has not fulfilled her purpose (9:10-17).
  - A. Despite receiving God's favor, Israel separated herself from Him (9:10).
    - 1. Israel deliberately consecrated herself to Baal instead of to God (Num. 25:1-5; Deut. 4:3, 4; Ps. 106:28).
    - 2. They "became an abomination like the thing they loved."
  - B. The glory (i.e. children or heritage) of Ephraim will become extinct (9:11, 12).
  - C. It would be better if Ephraim had no children than for him to have children who would grow up to be unfaithful (9:13, 14).
  - D. The heart of Israel's wickedness is in Gilgal – the birth of its earthly monarchy (9:15).
    - 1. Gilgal is where Saul was made king (1 Sam. 11:12-15), and it is where God rejected him as king (1 Sam. 15:12-26).
    - 2. Through Israel's earthly king's idolatry was started and perpetuated (cf. 1 Kings 12:28-30), so that even in Gilgal a center of idolatrous center of worship existed (Amos 4:4; 5:5).
  - E. Because they did not honor God, Ephraim will be dried up and barren as a tree with starving roots (9:16, 17).
    - 1. Having treasured what is worthless, Israel will lose what is priceless – her relationship with God.
    - 2. Israel will wander among the nations because she has wandered away from God.

## Hosea 10

- I. Israel is like a fruitful vine, but she has made herself barren (10:1-10).
  - A. Instead of multiplying fruit to the Lord, Israel multiplies altars and images (10:1-4).
    - 1. God blessed Israel richly, but she used those blessings to serve idols (10:1)
    - 2. Israel's heart is divided (10:2; cf. Matt. 6:24).
    - 3. When judgment comes, Israel will cry, "we have no king", meaning that even the most powerful among the nation will be helpless (10:3).
    - 4. Israel has made a covenant with either another god or another nation (10:4).
  - B. Devastation will come upon the people of Samaria when their idols are deported (10:5-8).
    - 1. The "Calf of Beth Aven" is their main idol (10:5).
    - 2. This prized possession will be given to the king of Assyria, king Jareb (10:6a).
    - 3. Israel will be ashamed because her "god" is unable to preserve her (10:6b).
    - 4. The people will be so devastated that they will beg the mountains and hills to protect them (10:7, 9; Isa. 2:19; Lk. 23:30; Rev. 6:16).
  - C. Israel has a long history of sin (10:9, 10).
    - 1. "The days of Gibeah" is a reference to the time that some from the tribe of Benjamin raped and murdered a Levite's concubine (10:9a; Judg. 19:1-3, 10-17, 20-30; 20:8-14, 35).
    - 2. Israel is as wicked as those Benjamites of Gibeah.
    - 3. The only difference between the Benjamites of Gibeah and Israel in Hosea's day is that the Benjamites were not completely destroyed, but Israel will be (10:9b).
    - 4. Chastisement will come in God's time (10:10a)
    - 5. The two "transgressions" of Israel are likely:
      - a. Rejecting God as their king.
      - b. Making covenants with other nations.
- II. Ephraim is like a heifer who loved to work voluntarily, but now must be harnessed and made to work (10:11-15).
  - A. Although God blessed Israel in the past, this will no longer be the case (10:11).
    - 1. God was graceful and caring toward Israel (cf. "harnessed her fair neck" - there would be no chafing caused by a rough yolk).
    - 2. However, God will no longer be gentle with Israel; instead, Israel will be forced into hard labor.
  - B. Ephraim is encouraged to seek the Lord (10:12, 13).
    - 1. If they sow righteousness, they will reap mercy, but first they must condition (break up) their hearts (10:12a).
    - 2. If the soil is properly cultivated, and the right seeds are sown, God will "rain righteousness" on Israel, and they will reap bountifully (10:12b).
    - 3. Up to this point, though, Israel has only sown and reaped unrighteousness, which is the natural result of trusting in self rather than God (10:13; Prov. 3:5; Isa 55:8, 9).
  - C. Because Ephraim trusted in his "mighty men" instead of God, he will be destroyed (10:14, 15).

## Hosea 11

- I. God likens Israel to a son (11:1-11)<sup>60</sup>
- A. The relationship between a son and a father should be a close and personal one, but Israel has become a rebellious, wayward child (cf. Deut. 21:18-21).
  - B. Like a good father, God provided everything for His child, Israel, but His provisions were unappreciated (11:1-4).
    - 1. God reminds Israel of the exodus, which best exemplifies God's love and favor for Israel (cf. Ex. 4:22-23; Mt. 2:15).
    - 2. The phrase, "as they called them" (11:2) may refer either to the true prophets throughout Israel's history that called them back to the Lord (2 Kings 17:13), or to the incidents throughout their history where the "pagan call" proved stronger to them than God's call (cf. Num. 25:1-3).
    - 3. God taught, guided, healed, tenderly disciplined, and fed Ephraim, but in return they knew Him not (11:3, 4).
  - C. Because God's child, Israel, refused to appreciate His provisions through obedience, he must be punished (11:5-7).
    - 1. Since Israel rejected God as their king, they will now serve the king of Assyria.
    - 2. The phrase, "the most high" (11:7) may refer to Jehovah, in which case the "they" would refer to the true prophets, or it may refer to Baal, their supposed high god.
  - D. Because God is merciful, Israel will not be completely destroyed, even though complete destruction is warranted (11:8-11).
    - 1. "Admah" and "Zeboim" are cities that were completely destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29:23).
    - 2. Punishing His child, Israel, is something that God finds very difficult (11:8).
    - 3. God will spare a remnant so that His ultimate plan, to bring a Savior into the world, can still be accomplished.
    - 4. "'Place them in their houses' (11:11) = although this may include God's bringing the remnant back physically to their land of inheritance (Ezra 6:17, 18), this ray of hope finds its true realization in the Messianic kingdom (cf. 1:11; 2:23; 3:5)."
- II. Both Israel and Judah are counted as unfaithful (11:12).
- A. This verse is one that causes much confusion:
    - 1. Every major translation has the latter half of this verse reading something like: "Judah is counted faithful."
    - 2. However, if we notice the immediate context (especially 12:2), it is clear that God is unhappy with Judah.
  - B. "Although there is much discussion as to the way in which 11:12 should be translated, most scholars agree that it is a condemnation of Judah."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Adapted from Kenyon 69.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid 70.

## Hosea 12

- I. Judah is indicted for the same sins as Jacob, exemplified by the life of the patriarch (12:1-6).<sup>62</sup>
  - A. The Lord will recompense his people for their sins (12:2; cf. 4:9).
    - 1. “Jacob” is the father of both Israel and Judah and is here used to refer to the two nations.
    - 2. God’s punishment always fits the crime (“according to his [Jacobs] ways”).
  - B. Although there is varied opinion as to whether Jacob is being used as a positive or negative example (12:3, 4), for this study he will be viewed as a negative example for the following reasons:
    - 1. Hosea uses historical places and events for negative illustrations throughout this section of the book (cf. 9:10-11:11; 12:11).
    - 2. The flow from verse 2 to 3 indicates that Jacob remains the subject and that the theme continues to be judgment and the basis for it.
    - 3. Jacobs “heel grabbing” (cf. Gen. 25:23-26) and “struggle with God” (cf. Gen. 32:24-32) seem to be signs of his impulsive presumptuousness.
    - 4. Note the pun on the Patriarch’s two names: Jacob (the “supplanter,” Gen. 27:36) had his name changed because he “struggled” with God and prevailed (Gen. 32:28).
  - C. The relationship between Jacob’s example and the present situation of the Northern Kingdom.
    - 1. God meeting with Jacob at Bethel did not guarantee his family’s obedience (cf. Gen. 35:1-4) just as the nation’s obedience is not guaranteed because God blessed their ancestor.
    - 2. Whatever bond was made between God and Jacob at Bethel was shattered by the nation’s belief that mere ritual was sufficient to fulfill God’s covenant.
- II. Ephraim’s boasting is vain because he is no different than a Canaanite (12:7-9).
  - A. Ephraim participates in oppression (cf. deceitful scales; Prov. 11:1) (ironically, Israel will be oppressed (Jer.50:33; ESV, NIV, NASB)).
  - B. He believes that he is “self-made” and is guilty of no wrong-doing (12:8). (Lev. 3:13, 14 – unaware of sin)
  - C. However, God is not deceived (12:9).
- III. God’s people have continually rejected the prophets (12:10-14; Acts 7:51-53).
  - A. Even though the prophets warned the people through spoken word, visions, and symbols, the people remain full of iniquity (12:10, 11).
  - B. The patriarchs care for his wife illustrates God’s rescue and preservation of His people by His prophets (12:12, 13).
    - 1. Jacobs’s bride was taken from Syria (Gen. 28:5; 29:15-30) and God’s “bride” was taken from Egypt.
    - 2. Jacob tended Laban’s sheep and God guarded His people.
    - 3. Jacob did whatever was necessary to bring the wife of his choice out of Syria just as God did to bring his “wife” out of Egypt.
    - 4. Moses the prophet brought them out of Egypt and numerous prophets have contributed to their preservation.

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<sup>62</sup> This section taken from Kenyon 71.

C. Ephraim's blood will be upon his own head because he "provoked" God to anger (12:14).

## Hosea 13

- I. The depth and punishment of Ephraim's fall is explained (13:1-3).<sup>63</sup>
  - A. Ephraim died in Baal (13:1).
    1. When Ephraim spoke, "there was trembling" (NASB) (i.e. he was powerful; cf. Gen. 48:18-20).
    2. However, the moment he "offended through Baal", he ceased to be productive and began movement toward the judgment described in Hosea's children's names (Jezreel – God sows, Lo-Ruhamah – no mercy, Lo-Ammi – not my people; 1:4-6).
  - B. Ephraim's accelerated sin is described (13:2).
    1. They make images and idols out of God's gracious gifts (cf. 2:8; Ps. 24:1) as a result of their ignorance.
    2. There is a strong possibility that, "the men that sacrifice" refers to their engaging in human sacrifice (cf. 5:2; 9:13; "They offer human sacrifices." [NIV])
    3. They speak to these man-made images as if they are alive (cf. Ps. 115:4-8).
    4. By "kissing" these idols, they express homage and devotion to their idols rather than to God (Ps. 2:12; 1 Kings 19:18).
  - C. Because of their accelerated sin, they will pass into nothingness (13:3)
- II. The Lord's judgment will be ferocious (13:4-8).
  - A. God cared for Israel, but they forgot Him (13:4-6).
  - B. God's judgment is compared to the ferocity of vicious animals (13:7-8).
  - C. God will "tear open" (NKJV) the covering of their haughty heart (13:8b).
- III. God is the only King; therefore, their monarchy must be removed (13:9-11).
  - A. By insisting on an earthly king, they rejected God as king, and, therefore, destroyed themselves (13:9, 10; 1 Sam. 8:4-7).
  - B. Important note: for God to restore the former political kingdom at the end of time would be to restore what was in rebellion against His will from the beginning.
- IV. Ephraim is as a stubborn and unwise son (13:12-14).
  - A. He cherishes his sin and stores it away like a precious heirloom (13:12; cf. Ps. 66:18).
  - B. He is likened to a son who stubbornly refuses to be born, not from lack of strength but from lack of wisdom (13:13).
  - C. They will be overpowered by the grave and death, but God will redeem them (13:14).
    1. Death is only ultimately overcome at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:50-58).
    2. However, viewing this passage in its context, we see that God is talking about sparing Israel (i.e. not totally destroying them).
- V. Ephraim's rebellion has fatal consequences (13:15, 16).
  - A. The fruitful one will become fruitless (13:15).
    1. The destructive "wind of the Lord" will be Assyria (cf. "sword" 13:16).
    2. All that Ephraim values will be dried up and plundered.
  - B. Because Samaria has sown rebellion, she will reap terror and rebellion (13:16).

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<sup>63</sup> Taken from Kenyon 73.

## Hosea 14

- I. A call for Israel to return (14:1-3).
  - A. Israel fell because of iniquity (14:1).
    - 1. “Iniquity” comprehensively represents Israel’s evil ways (cf. 4:8; 5:5; 9:7; 13:12).
    - 2. The consequence of their iniquity is sure judgment, but there is hope in the future.
  - B. The terms of Israel’s return are given (14:2, 3).
    - 1. They must truly repent by recognizing their sin and asking for pardon.
      - a. The “words” they are to speak must not be empty or meaningless (cf. 6:1-4), but instead must be sincere.
      - b. “Take away all iniquity” is a request that can only be granted after judgment is complete (cf. 1:6).
    - 2. They must completely trust and depend on God rather than idols (14:3).
- II. God will lovingly respond to their return by restoring His people (14:4-8).
  - A. Israel will receive blessings because God’s anger is turned from him (14:4).
    - 1. God will heal their backsliding.
      - a. Israel’s apostasy has been likened to a wound (5:12-14).
      - b. God wanted to heal Israel, but they have resisted (7:1, 11:3).
    - 2. God will love them freely.
      - a. “Freely” denotes the idea of eager willingness, joy, and without grudge (cf. Ps. 51:12, KJV).
      - b. Once iniquity is removed, reconciliation is achieved, and God’s loving favor is once again bestowed.
  - B. God will restore Israel to His favor (14:5-7).
    - 1. These verses, which show a reversal of God’s judgment, are very similar in poetic form and language to the “love poetry” found in the Song of Solomon.
    - 2. God will be to Israel as the refreshing dew which sustains life (cf. Song. 5:2).
    - 3. Israel will grow elegant as a beautiful lily (cf. Song. 2:1, 2, 16; 5:13).
    - 4. Israel will grow in strength and fragrance as the vegetation in Lebanon.
      - a. Lebanon is known for its excellent timber, fragrant fruits, and springs of water (cf. Song. 3:9; 4:11, 15).
      - b. The fertility of Lebanon stands in contrast to the terrain in Hosea’s land, especially after the Assyrians execute God’s judgment.
    - 5. Israel will be as beautiful as an olive tree.
      - a. The olive tree was highly prized by the people of Palestine.
      - b. Thus, Israel will once again be highly prized by God (cf. Jer. 11:16; Ps. 58:2)
    - 6. Israel has learned his lesson: “What have I to do anymore with idols?” (14:8).
- III. The proper response to the ways of the Lord (i.e. Hosea’s message) will always be the difference between walking and falling (14:9).
  - A. The wise person, because he/she fears God (cf. Prov. 1:7), will understand and know His word.
  - B. Transgressors, because they reject the only way that is right (i.e. the Lord’s way), will always fall (cf. Ps. 1; 1 Pet. 2:7, 8).

## Micah

- I. Little is known about the prophet whose name means, “Who is like Jehovah?”<sup>64</sup>
  - A. Micah was from the town of Moresheth-gath (1:1, 14).
    1. This town was about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem and located at the edge of good farming country.
    2. Moresheth-gath was sufficiently detached from Jerusalem so as to render Micah an “outsider.”
  - B. Micah was a prophet of the people.
    1. He was known as “the prophet of the poor and downtrodden.”
    2. Unlike his contemporaries Hosea and Isaiah, Micah took little interest in the political affairs of the day, but instead was more concerned about the spiritual and moral problems of the people.
    3. His concern focused upon the people (mostly small farmers) in the Moresheth-gath area, the oppressions that they endured, and the impact that the Assyrian invasion would have on them.
  - C. Micah was a very influential prophet in Judah.
    1. He fearlessly condemned the sins of the people and pointed them back to God.
    2. Some of Jeremiah’s peers defended him by referring to Micah’s prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. 26:16-18 cf. Mic. 3:12).
    3. King Hezekiah’s reforms were due, at least in part, to the prophecies of Micah (cf. Jer. 26:19).
  - D. Although Micah does not provide his parental lineage or an account of his prophetic call, he was a man full of “the word of the Lord” (1:1) and empowered by the spirit to prophesy (3:8).
- II. The time at which Micah prophesied is between 740-700 BC.
  - A. Micah’s ministry took place during the reigns of Jotham (750-731 BC), Ahaz (735-715 BC), and Hezekiah (729-686 BC), kings of Judah.
  - B. Micah’s prophecy began before the destruction of Samaria (722 BC) (1:6) and continued through a portion of Hezekiah’s reign.
    1. “Samaria” does not until after 1:6, thus suggesting that chapters 2-7 were written after the fall of Samaria during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah.
    2. Micah uses the word “Israel” to refer to both kingdoms.
- III. Political, social, and religious background of Judah during Micah’s time (cf. 2 Kings 15-20; 2 Chron. 27-32).
  - A. Due to the military might of Assyria, a new era was dawning in which the political situation was rapidly changing and threatening Judah.
    1. Assyria, led by Tiglath-pileser III (744-727 BC), while seeking to extend their rule often accepted “payment” from nations, and those nations that refused or quit paying were conquered and their people deported.
    2. Pekah (752-732), king of the Northern Kingdom, allied himself with Rezin, king of Syria (Damascus), and together they pressured Jotham, king of Judah, to join them in resisting the Assyrians.
      - a. Isaiah told Ahaz, Jotham’s successor, to remain neutral and not fear the coalition (Isa. 7:1-9).

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<sup>64</sup> Introductory material taken from Kenyon 79.

- b. Upon Judah's refusal to cooperate, Pekah marched against Jerusalem in order to overthrow Ahaz and replace him with a puppet king (Isa. 7:6), but he failed (2 Kings 16:5).
  - 3. Ahaz eventually sought to preserve his throne by submitting himself (and a large sum of money) to Tiglath-pileser III (2 Kings 16:7-9).
    - a. Tiglath-pileser III invaded the Northern Kingdom as far south as Galilee (2 Kings 15:29).
    - b. He also took Damascus (2 Kings 16:16:9).
  - 4. However, Tiglath-pileser III's successors were not as kind to Judah, and they did not honor the agreement made between the two kings.
  - 5. Assyria now moved at will against the surrounding areas of Judah, and even besieged the city of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:1-12); however, he did not take it (2 Chron. 32:2-23).
  - 6. The people to whom Micah prophesied lived under the constant threat of invasion and foreign rule.
- B. The social environment in Micah's day showed a society that was mostly governed by the greed of those in authoritative positions.
- C. Although Hezekiah initiated religious reforms (2 Kings 18:1-8), religion, in the eyes of most, only consisted of ceremonial observances from an empty heart.

## Micah 1

- I. Introduction to Micah's prophecy (1:1).
  - A. The source of the message: "the word of the Lord."
  - B. The list of Judean kings not only establishes the time frame in which Micah lived and worked (740-700 BC), but also indicates that Micah was primarily focused on Judah, the Southern Kingdom.
  - C. Although the Jews were divided into two nations, God still considers them to be one people (cf. "considering Samaria [the capital of Israel] and Jerusalem [the capital of Israel]).
- II. Samaria will be demolished (1:2-7)
  - A. The people are called upon to witness the judgment of the Lord upon His people (1:2).
    1. All creation is to bear witness (cf. Isa. 1:2; Deut. 32:1) because the judgment about to be announced will affect everyone.
    2. "Against you" refers to the entirety of God's people.
    3. Judgment comes from heaven (God's Holy temple cf. Ps. 11:4).
  - B. When the Lord comes forth, creation "melts" before His presence (1:3, 4).
    1. The Lord is close by and is able to come down at will (1:3 cf. Acts 17:27)
    2. The terribleness of judgment is described in figurative terms depicting a volcano and earthquake (1:4; cf. Ps. 18:6-9).
  - C. God's people have broken the covenant made with their God (1:5).
    1. "Jacob" and the "house of Israel" synonymously represent all of God's people.
    2. The apostasy of each kingdom is found in its capital city.
      - a. The Northern Kingdom's apostasy is in Samaria (cf. Hos. 8:5).
      - b. The Southern Kingdom's apostasy is in the adulterous shrines of Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 7:29-31).
  - D. The Lord sentences Samaria to be destroyed with its idols (1:6, 7).
    1. Samaria will be unrecognizable after its destruction.
      - a. "a heap or ruins" = a pile of stones cleared from a field.
      - b. "places for planting a vineyard" = Samaria will be reduced to nothing but an open field.
      - c. "uncover her foundations" = destruction to the very foundation (cf. Ps. 137:7)
    2. The objects used to commit spiritual adultery will be destroyed (1:7).
- III. Mourning over the destruction of God's people (1:8-16).
  - A. Judgment has come to Judah (1:8-9).
    1. The destruction causes Micah to "wail and howl."
    2. Micah warns those in Judah of the coming captivity by wearing the clothes of captives and wailing like familiar animals.
      - a. "Naked" does not refer to complete nudity, but to being stripped of ordinary clothes (cf. Jn. 21:7 KJV).
      - b. He will wail and mourn like an animal in distress.
    3. The invasion has reached the gates of Jerusalem.

- B. The fall of Judean strongholds is commemorated in a “lament song” which uses a play on words for emphasis (1:10-15).
1. General observations concerning these towns:
    - a. The arrangement of the cities in the text is not meant to accord with the order of the Assyrian march.
    - b. The known cities (Gath, Beth-ezel, Jerusalem, Lachish, Achzib, Mareshah, and Adullam) form a circle with a fourteen-mile radius around Micah’s hometown of Moresheth-gath.
    - c. Micah’s account complements the Assyrian record of invasion.
  2. Note some of the puns employed with the names of the towns:
    - a. In Gath (Tell-town) tell it not.
    - b. In Aphrah (Dust-town) roll yourself in dust.
    - c. The inhabitants of Zaanah (March-town) marched not forth.
    - d. Bind the chariots to the swift horses, inhabitants of Lachish (Horse-town).
    - e. Moresheth-gath (The possession of Gath) is given farewell presents.
    - f. The houses of Achzib (False-spring) are a lie (achzab) to Israel’s kings.
    - g. Mareshah (Heir-town) shall have an heir brought to it (Assyria’s king).
- C. The people of Judah must mourn because captivity is inevitable (1:16).
1. Cutting one’s hair (making oneself bald) was a sign of mourning (Amos 8:10; Isa. 15:2).
  2. Although Israel and Judah were not taken at the same time by the same captors, the captivity of both nations are a part of the same judgment given by God upon His apostate people.

## Micah 2

- I. Reasons why judgment is inevitable (2:1-11).
  - A. The powerful abuse the poor (2:1-5).
    - 1. Abusing the poor has become a way of life (2:1, 2).
      - a. “Woe” is pronounced upon those who lie awake at night devising iniquity and, without hesitation, execute their evil plan at first light.
      - b. “The power of their hand” = their power is as a god to them; they know of no higher power than their own, and so whatever they desire they have the power to do.
      - c. What they covet they possess, even if it is the divinely appointed land that was to remain in each family (cf. Lev. 25:23; Num. 36:2, 7).
    - 2. They will reap what they have sown: humiliation and loss of inheritance (2:3-5).
  - B. Those in power refuse to hear and obey the true prophets (2:6-11).
    - 1. The true prophets are commanded not to prophesy (2:6; cf. Amos 7:10-13; Isa. 30:9, 10).
    - 2. The “house of Jacob” misunderstands the nature of God and His covenant (2:7).
    - 3. Those in power abuse the lowly (2:8, 9).
    - 4. Their refusal to obey the true prophets will result in their removal (2:10; cf. Lev. 18:24-28).
    - 5. The only prophets they desire to hear are those who lie and promise peace and prosperity (2:11; cf. 2 Tim. 4:3, 4).
- II. The Lord will deliver a remnant (2:12, 13).
  - A. The remnant will be gathered as a shepherd gathers his flock (2:12).
    - 1. The remnant will consist of people from both the northern and southern kingdoms.
    - 2. The remnant will be large.
      - a. Bozrah (KJV), a chief city in Edom, was known for its rich flocks of sheep.
      - b. Their multiplication in the fold and their great noise is like that of a densely packed and numerous flock.
  - B. The remnant will be lead through the gate by the Lord (2:13).
    - 1. The “one who breaks open” will break open the gate and lead them out of their bondage (cf. 2 Sam. 5:20).
    - 2. The Lord will be their leader (cf. Ex. 13:21).
  - C. Although this prophecy involves the return of the remnant after captivity, its ultimate fulfillment is found in the Messianic kingdom.

## Micah 3

- I. The rulers have become like cannibals (3:1-4).
  - A. Of all people, the rulers should have practiced “justice” (3:1).
    - 1. “Heads of Jacob and... Israel” may include both kingdoms, but especially apply to those in Judah (cf. 3:12).
    - 2. Rulers were responsible for holding individuals accountable to the Law.
  - B. Those in charge are described as cannibalistic (3:2-3)
    - 1. It is doubtful that Micah is speaking in literal terms, and it is difficult to see the exact meaning of this illustration.
    - 2. However, there are a few things that this illustration makes clear:
      - a. Morally, they are confused (Isa. 5:20, 23).
      - b. Morally, they are bankrupt.
      - c. Instead of those in power defending the defenseless, they prey on them and live a life of luxury at their expense (Amos 4:1; Isa. 1:15, 21-23).
  - C. Because the rulers have not heard the cries of the poor, God will not hear their cries when His judgment is unleashed (3:4; Prov. 1:24-31; Heb. 10:31).
- II. False prophets prophesy for a reward (3:5-8).
  - A. The prophets say what the people want to hear (3:5; cf. Jer. 8:11, 12; Ezk. 13:10-16).
    - 1. “Chew” (NKJV) is probably best translated “bite” (KJV).
    - 2. These prophets kill their victims to feed themselves.
    - 3. They make war on those who refuse to “feed” them.
  - B. The sun will set upon these prophets in shame and confusion (3:6, 7).
    - 1. God will make it impossible for them to continue their lies (cf. Amos 8:9; Jer. 15:9).
    - 2. “Divination” is never used to describe legitimate prophetic activity, but always refers to evil acts of divination (cf. 1 Sam. 28:8; Ezk. 13:9, 23; 21:29).
  - C. In contrast to these false prophets who receive their power from their own lusts, Micah is filled by the Spirit with power, justice, and might (3:8; cf. Jer. 6:11; Ezk. 2:2)
- III. Because of gross corruption, Jerusalem will be leveled (3:9-12).
  - A. Jerusalem is a society founded on violence and wickedness (3:9-10).
  - B. The priests are priests-for-pay (3:11).
    - 1. The actions of these disgraced leaders illustrate the danger of the love of money (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9, 10).
    - 2. These guilty leaders are deceived into thinking that the Lord’s presence guarantees their protection (cf. Jer. 7:4).
  - C. Jerusalem, along with the temple, will be destroyed (3:12).

## Micah 4

- I. Even though she will soon be destroyed, Jerusalem will be exalted in the last days (4:1-8).<sup>65</sup>
  - A. Note the contrast between Jerusalem in the last days, and Jerusalem now:
    1. Jerusalem will be exalted (i.e. raised up) (4:1), although it must now be plowed like a field (3:12).
    2. Jerusalem will be the place from which the Lord's teaching will come (4:2), although it is currently the place in which lies are taught for a price (3:11).
    3. Jerusalem will attract those who seek true knowledge and justice (4:2, 3), although it currently attracts those who pervert truth and justice (3:9, 11).
    4. Jerusalem will provide real and permanent security (4:4), even though it is currently the focus of false security (3:11).
  - B. Zion will be exalted above all other powers as the birthplace of a new spiritual kingdom (4:1-5; cf. Isa. 2:2-4).
    1. Jerusalem's exaltation will occur at the establishment of the Messianic age (4:1).
      - a. "The latter days" point to the end of the Jewish age and the beginning of the new era over which the Messiah reigns (cf. Dan. 2:28; Acts 2:17).
      - b. The "mountain" of the Lord will be permanently established (Dan. 2:44; 7:13, 14).
    2. The exalted mountain will be the place from which the instruction of the Lord will come (4:2).
    3. The exalted mountain will be the new kingdom of permanent peace and security (4:3-5).
      - a. Unlike Israel, those who are citizens of the new kingdom will have no need to go to physical war (cf. Jn. 18:36).
      - b. Sitting under one's vine and fig tree illustrates the peace, security, and safety that will be present in the coming kingdom (1 Kings 4:24, 25).
  - C. A strong nation will emerge from those who will be afflicted and outcast (4:6, 7).
    1. Both the affliction and the exaltation of the people are completely in God's control (Jer. 18:7-10).
    2. It will be a "strong" nation because no outside force will ever be able to destroy it (cf. Mt. 16:18).
  - D. The Davidic kingdom will be restored (spiritually) in the Messiah's reign (4:8).
    1. The "former dominion" will come to the exalted mountain of the Lord (Mt. 5:17-20).
    2. Micah is not speaking of the restoration of the literal kingdom on David, but of its messianic fulfillment.
      - a. In fact, no one of the lineage of David could rule in Jerusalem again (Jer. 22:24-30; "Jeconiah" and "Coniah" are the same person).
      - b. Therefore, since Christ is of the lineage of David, he could never rule over literal Jerusalem.
- II. Before Zion can be exalted and all of the aforementioned blessings can be realized, Jerusalem must go into captivity (4:9-13).
  - A. Babylonian captivity is the just punishment for their sin (4:9-10).

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<sup>65</sup> Kenyon 87.

1. The nation will mourn greatly when the final fall and captivity occur (4:9).
  2. Although the captivity will be extremely painful and difficult, it will result in glorious blessings (4:9-10).
    - a. “A woman in labor” goes through tremendous pain and suffering, but also receives a tremendous reward when the pain is finished (Jn. 16:21).
    - b. Her pain comes from the fact that she, who once dwelt in the walled city of Jerusalem, will now dwell in the unprotected fields of Babylon.
    - c. Note the prophetic nature of Micah’s work: at the time of writing, Assyria is the world power, yet Micah says that Babylon will be the captor (cf. Isa. 39:1-6).
- B. God’s people will be humiliated by the nations, but, in the end, His faithful will rise triumphant (4:11-13).

## Micah 5

- I. Israel and her judge will be humiliated (5:1).
  - A. Assyria is the “he” that has laid siege.
  - B. “The judge of Israel” would be the person who holds the highest office in Israel, the king.
  - C. Striking the judge on the cheek is synonymous with total humiliation and defeat (cf. Ps. 3:7; Isa. 50:6).
- II. In contrast, there will be a future Ruler who will eternally bless God’s people (5:2-15).
  - A. The future Ruler will come forth from obscurity (5:2).
    1. “Though you are little” emphasizes the relative insignificance and obscurity of the city.
    2. This ruler is no earthly ruler, He is eternal.
      - a. “Whose goings forth are of old” does emphasize His supernatural nature, but the real focus is on the fact that this Ruler’s bloodline will be traced back to David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:8-16; Ps. 89:35-37)
      - b. “From everlasting” relates Him to God (Ps. 90:2).
      - c. This prophecy is clearly fulfilled in the Birth of Jesus the Christ.
  - B. This ruler will feed His flock (5:3, 4).
    1. God will “give up” Israel to the enemy’s power until the time that the remnant is brought forth.
    2. Through the messiah the faithful remnant of Jacob’s lineage will return to the family of the true Israel.
    3. Like a good shepherd, He will feed His sheep (cf. Ezk. 34:11-16).
  - C. This ruler will bring peace (5:5, 6).
    1. The ruler will conquer all hostile forces.
      - a. “The Assyrian,” although the dominant power of the time, symbolizes the enemies or deadliest foes of the Messiah and His people.
      - b. “Seven shepherds, and eight principal men” = although seven is the perfect number (in apocalyptic literature) and eight can refer to a number beyond that which is the minimum necessity (thus emphasizing the overwhelmingly significant force the Ruler will muster against all enemies), the emphasis seems to be that the Ruler will conquer through His people.
    2. The ruler will deliver His people from all hostile forces, not through physical warfare, but through spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
  - D. This Ruler will lift the remnant of Jacob above all enemies (5:7-9).
    1. To some, this remnant will be the ultimate blessing (5:7).
    2. To others, it will be the ultimate curse (5:8, 9).
  - E. This ruler will protect His kingdom by cleansing His land and executing vengeance upon the heathen (5:10-15).
    1. Idolatry will not be tolerated, and all evidence of idolatry will be removed (cf. purging the land - Lev. 20:1-6) (strength Deut. 17:14-17).
    2. Judgment will be executed (i.e. there will be a distinction between those who reject this Ruler and those who do not).

## Micah 6

- I. God summons the people to court that they may bring their charges against Him (6:1-8).<sup>66</sup>
  - A. God summons the nation to come before him in his court of law (6:1-2).
    1. To clarify, we are not talking about a literal courtroom.
    2. This trial includes the plaintiff (God), the plaintiff's messenger (Micah), the witnesses (mountains, hills, foundations of the earth), and the defendant (Israel).
      - a. The people are called upon to plead their case against God as to why they have not kept His covenant.
      - b. "Mountains" are paralleled with "foundations of the earth" because they were considered the oldest parts of the earth, and as such could best serve as witnesses.
      - c. The Lord, as chief prosecutor, will bring an accusation against Israel.
  - B. God is justified in bringing Israel to "court" because He has done nothing but bless the nation (6:3-5).
    1. Israel is called upon to give evidence that might justify their actions toward God (6:3).
      - a. The burden of proof is on them to show how God has wronged them or been evil to them (i.e. to prove He has done something to warrant their disobedience).
      - b. In what way has God burdened them (cf. Mic.1:13)?
    2. In spite of their complaint against God, the evidence clearly vindicates the Lord's righteousness (6:4, 5).
      - a. God brought His people out of Egypt and released them from their bondage (Ex. 14; 20:2; Amos 2:10).
      - b. God provided His people with adequate leaders.
      - c. God turned the would-be curses of Balaam into blessings (Num. 22-24).
  - C. The only way to correct their waywardness is to do good by God's standard (6:6-8).
    1. Micah personifies the nation as an individual who recognizes his guilt and seeks to find a solution to his condition.
    2. The series of questions reflects the wickedness of the nation and its ignorance of God's will (6:6-7).
      - a. These questions erroneously suggest that God, like man, can be bought.
      - b. The willingness to raise the price of the offering does not reflect generosity but seeks to establish cheapest price (notice the progression – burnt offering to first born child).
      - c. These questions indicate a willingness to do anything except for what the Lord requires.
    3. The Lord's requirements cannot be met by mere outward sacrifices (6:8; cf. 1 Sam. 15:22, 23; Ps. 51:16, 17; Isa. 1:11-15).
      - a. God has shown them what He required through the law and the prophets (cf. Ex. 20:12-17; 2 Kings 17:13).

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<sup>66</sup> Adapted from Kenyon 93.

- b. “Good” summarizes the moral requirement of the law (cf. Isa. 1:17; 5:20; Amos 5:14, 15).
  - c. “Do justly” is to act toward God and mankind according to His standard, a quality in which the nation’s leaders fell short.
  - d. “Love mercy” is to exercise love by showing compassion to one’s neighbor (cf. Lev. 19:18).
  - e. “Walk humbly with your God” is to bring one’s life into conformity with His will through obedience (cf. Gen. 6:9; 2 Kings 23:3).
- II. The Lord, true to His covenant, will bring disease and ruin upon the people because of disobedience (6:9-16).
- A. The Lord rightly accuses the city’s inhabitants of being corrupt (6:9-12).
    - 1. The people have defrauded their neighbors with false measures and weights (6:10-11).
      - a. “Treasures of wickedness” is wealth gained wickedly through deceit.
      - b. Short measures and false balances cannot be tolerated by God (cf. Lev. 19:35, 36; Deut. 25:13-16; Ezk. 45:10).
    - 2. In addition to false weights and measures, the rich have defrauded their neighbors through violence and false speech (6:12).
  - B. The Lord sentences His people to affliction and desolation because of their sin (6:13-15).
    - 1. Jerusalem will be made sick (Isa. 1:5, 6; Jer. 30:12).
    - 2. The people will be in want, humiliated, and helpless to improve their condition.
    - 3. The people will not benefit from the produce of their land.
  - C. The people have been fully converted to idolatry (6:16).

## Micah 7

- I. Micah puts his trust in the Lord, for the people lack righteousness (7:1-7).
  - A. Micah laments over the moral state of the people (7:1a).
    1. “Woe is me!” = “What misery is mine” (cf. Job 10:15; Isa. 6:5).
    2. Micah represents Jerusalem/Zion bewailing the absence of righteousness for which judgment has come.
  - B. Micah lists two reasons for his lamentation (7:1b-4).
    1. The Lord, who desires the first ripe fruit from His vineyard, is greatly disappointed (7:1b).
      - a. The Lord, pictured as a vinedresser, finds no fruit of righteousness in spite of His patient care and cultivation.
      - b. “Summer fruit” points to the time of the first harvest (June).
      - c. God’s vintage is Israel (cf. Ps. 80:8-16) and the expected fruit that was not produced is righteousness (cf. Isa. 5:1-7).
    2. Righteous leaders among God’s people have ceased to exist (7:2-4a).
      - a. Rather than treating others justly, they are as hunters who constantly plot how to trap their prey and who execute their deadly plans upon their own countrymen (7:2)
      - b. They vigorously and faithfully do evil (7:3a).
      - c. The wicked leaders work together in carrying out their evil schemes (7:3b).
  - C. Even in the closest of relationships, there will be distrust and paranoia (7:4b-7).
    1. Judgment announced (7:4b).
      - a. “The day of your watchman” = the fulfillment of the prophets who warned the people of coming judgment (cf. Ezk. 3:17; 33:7).
      - b. God’s visitation is the day that His longsuffering expires and His judgment is handed down (cf. Isa. 10:3 [KJV]; Hos. 9:7).
      - c. The day of His judgment will bring great confusion upon His people (cf. “Perplexity”) (cf. Isa. 22:5).
    2. Judgment illustrated (7:5, 6).
      - a. The social anarchy that results from their unrighteousness renders trust in anyone impossible.
      - b. As a fitting sentence against those who preyed upon their brothers (7:2), those most closely related by blood and marriage will disdainfully rise up as enemies against one another in order to save themselves.
      - c. Jesus uses these verses to illustrate the disturbance of society caused by His ministry (Mt. 10:34-39).
  - D. Only the Lord can be trusted to save (7:7).
- II. The Lord will deliver His penitent remnant from the enemy (7:8-17).
  - A. The penitent remnant of God confesses its faith to the enemy that God will deliver His own (7:8-10).
    1. Having just declared that salvation is found only in the Lord (7:7), Micah now speaks of the salvation which the Lord will provide for His remnant.
    2. Although His people will fall into darkness, God will not forsake them, but He will be their light (7:8).
      - a. The enemy, therefore, has no reason to boast – God’s people will eventually arise (7:8a).

- b. “Darkness” (7:8b) evokes the imagery of a dungeon-prison with no light, an apt figure for a besieged city.
    - 3. God’s people have fallen because of their sin, but the penitent people know that after their chastisement is complete, God will bring them into His light (7:9).
      - a. Jerusalem will not fall by chance or for failure on God’s part (cf. 1 Sam. 6:8, 9), but because of the Lord’s anger against her sins.
      - b. “Plead my case and execute justice for me” = the people will remain in captivity until the Lord leads them out.
    - 4. The Lord will vindicate His remnant before the presence of its enemy (7:10).
  - B. The remnant of God will return to His protection while the rest of the land will be destroyed (7:11-13).
    - 1. Salvation will be found within His “walls”. (7:11)
      - a. “Walls” does not refer to fortified ramparts, but to God’s general protection of His people (Zec. 2:4, 5).
      - b. “The decree shall go far and wide” is a reference to the inclusion of the Gentiles into the fold of God.
    - 2. People from all nations will come and find security inside the walls (7:12).
  - C. God will protect and empower His remnant to the humiliation of the nations (7:14-17).
- III. There is no other god like Jehovah (7:18-20).

## Zephaniah

- I. Little is known about the personal background of Zephaniah, whose name means “hidden by Jehovah,” except what is revealed in this book.
  - A. Zephaniah is the only prophet to trace his lineage back four generations (1:1).
  - B. Zephaniah is apparently an ancestor of king Hezekiah, the 14<sup>th</sup> king of Judah.
    1. Zephaniah and Hezekiah are separated by a span of about 100 years, sufficient time for four generations.
    2. Hezekiah was one of Judah’s best kings (cf. 2 Kings 18:1-8).
    3. King Hezekiah would bring not only prestige but also justice and true religion to Zephaniah’s lineage.
  - C. Zephaniah’s detailed knowledge of Jerusalem indicates that he was either from the city or, at least, a longtime resident (cf. 1:4, 10, 12; 3:1, 4).
- II. The date of Zephaniah’s prophecy is between 630-621 BC.
  - A. The word of the Lord came to the prophet during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah (640-609 BC).
  - B. Since Zephaniah’s prophecy denounces pagan influences (cf. 1:4-9), it seems probable that it took place before Josiah’s drastic reforms in 621 BC (cf. 2 Kings 22:3-23:5).
  - C. Zephaniah’s ministry overlapped with the ministry of Jeremiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk.
- III. Political and religious background during Zephaniah’s time.
  - A. The political situation in Judah during the reign of Josiah began with an inherited legacy of moral and religious corruption from former kings, but later developed into sweeping restoration.
    1. Hezekiah made some restoration during his reign (cf. 2 Kings 18:1-6).
    2. However, his restoration was short lived because his son Manasseh (695-642 BC) reestablished idolatrous practices (cf. 2 Kings 21:1-18).
      - a. Manasseh is considered by many to be the most wicked king in Judah’s history.
      - b. However, Manasseh humbled himself before God and tried to correct the wickedness of his early years (2 Chron. 33:9-20).
    3. Manasseh’s son Ammon (642-640 BC) ruled wickedly, walking in his father’s steps (2 Kings 21:18-26; 2 Chron. 33:20-25).
    4. Josiah, due to the assassination of his father Ammon, began to reign at the age of eight (2 Kings 22:1; 2 Chron. 34:1).
      - a. In Josiah’s eighteenth year, a copy of the law was discovered in the temple and read to him (2 Kings 22:3-10).
      - b. Upon hearing the words of the law, Josiah was terrified, inquired further information from the Lord, gathered the people together, renewed the covenant with God, and began his sweeping restoration (2 Kings 22:11-23:25).
    5. Josiah died in a futile attempt to prevent Pharaoh Necho from aiding Assyria in its losing struggle against the rising tide of Babylonian power (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chron. 35:20-24).
    6. Josiah’s death at Megiddo is one of the great ironies of history.
      - a. Josiah threw his forces in the path of the Egyptian forces which were sent to aid the Assyrians in defeating Babylon.

- b. The kingdom that gave its king in order to aid Babylon would later be destroyed by Babylon.
- B. The world political situation in the time of Zephaniah was characterized by the decline of the once mighty Assyrian empire.
  - 1. Having terrorized much of the known world, including the captivity of the Northern Kingdom in 772 BC, Assyria seemed invincible.
  - 2. Upon the death of the last great Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal (633 BC), Assyria began to fall apart.
    - a. In 625 BC, Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, declared the independence of Chaldea from Assyria, thus establishing an independent kingdom of Babylon.
    - b. By 612 BC, the Assyrian capital of Nineveh had fallen to Babylon.
    - c. By 605, the entire Assyrian kingdom had fallen to Babylon.
- C. Religiously and morally, the people to whom Zephaniah prophesied were characterized by filth, pollution, and oppression.

## Zephaniah 1

- I. God pronounces judgment on Jerusalem and all of Judah (1:1-6).
  - A. God's judgment involves all of creation (1:2, 3).
    1. This judgment will be the equivalent of undoing creation (Gen. 1:20; 24-28; cf. Jer. 12:4; Hos. 4:3; Joel 1:18).
    2. Mankind, with his wicked ways, will be done away.
      - a. "Stumbling blocks" should be understood as objects of idolatry including both the images and rituals associated with them.
      - b. Because of their sin, the people will be "cut off" from the land.
        - (1) "Cut off" is synonymous with annihilation (cf. 1 Kings 9:6-9; 11:15, 16 [KJV]; Ezk. 14:13), or, in a more technical sense, the carrying out of the death penalty (cf. Ex. 31:14; Lev. 20:3-6)
        - (2) Jehovah has already warned the people of the consequences of disobedience.
  - B. Specifically, God's judgment is aimed at the disobedient (1:4-6).
    1. For God, total destruction is as easy as "stretching out his hand" (1:4a).
      - a. God "stretches out His hand" for many reasons:
        - (1) To destroy (1:4).
        - (2) To rescue (Ps. 144:7).
        - (3) To show power (Ex. 3:20).
        - (4) To heal (Acts 4:29, 30).
      - b. God has total dominion and power over His creation.
    2. God will target those who worship the pagan god Baal (1:4b).
      - a. The "remnant of Baal" are those who still worship this false god (cf. Judg. 6:25).
      - b. The "idolatrous priests" ("Chemarims" [KJV]) were appointed by some kings of Judah to serve Baal and burn incense to the hosts of heaven (i.e. stars, planets, etc.) (2 Kings 23:5).
    3. God will destroy those who worship the stars (1:5a).
      - a. "The host of heaven" were gods that were worshipped by the idolatrous gentiles (cf. Deut. 4:19; 2 Kings 17:16; Jer. 8:2).
      - b. Some apostate Hebrews built altars "on the housetops," at which they burnt incense and worshipped the hosts of heaven.
        - (1) It is thought that they built these altars on their rooftops because they wanted to be closer to these gods in the sky.
        - (2) King Josiah destroyed the altar that was on the roof of the palace (2 Kings 23:12).
    4. God will destroy those who are not loyal to him (1:5b).
      - a. One cannot worship God properly if they are also loyal to idols (cf. Mt. 6:24).
      - b. If one is willing to "swear by" another god, it is implied that he believes that that god has authority and power.
        - (1) "Milcom" was considered to be a king among gods.
        - (2) Jehovah cannot/will not tolerate begin mixed in with the other gods (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:7).
    5. God will destroy those who are indifferent toward Him (1:6).

- a. Those who have “turned back” have turned away from the Lord (cf. Ps. 53:3; 78:57).
  - b. Indifference is a clear sign of ignorance.
    - (1) If one truly knew and believed that salvation was found only in the Lord, it would be difficult to be indifferent toward Him.
    - (2) Indifference has caused many to go astray.
- II. The day of the Lord is a day of sacrifice (1:7-13).
- A. The day of the Lord is announced as a sacrificial meal in which the guests (the people of Jerusalem) serve as the sacrifice (1:7).
    - 1. “Be silent” is an interjection of both awe and respect (cf. Amos 6:10; Hab. 2:20; Zec. 2:13).
    - 2. The Lord has made ready a sacrificial feast.
      - a. A sacrificial feast is often associated with judgment (cf. Jer. 46:10; Ezk. 39:17-20).
      - b. To be clear, the judgment of the people is very real, but “feasting” on their flesh is symbolic.
  - B. God will take vengeance on all who have sinned, regardless of social status or political position (1:8, 9).
    - 1. Those with political power are not exempt (1:8a).
    - 2. Those who wear “foreign apparel” are likely those who, by the wearing of special garments used for pagan worship (cf. 2 Kings 10:22), show their approval of paganism.
    - 3. Those who “leap over the threshold” are likely those who practice violent burglary (cf. “fill their masters houses with violence”).
  - C. The day of the Lord will be a day of overwhelming lamentation for the people of Jerusalem (1:10, 11).
    - 1. Wailing will be heard throughout the city (1:10).
      - a. The “fish gate” is thought to have been a main gate located in the northern wall of Jerusalem.
      - b. The “second quarter” refers to the second part or district of the city located between the temple and the northern wall.
    - 2. The inhabitants of Maktesh are instructed to wail (1:11).
      - a. Maktesh was located south of the “second quarter,” and seems to have been a market place.
      - b. Since the inhabitants of the city will perish, there will be no wealthy customers with which to do commerce.
  - D. The day of the Lord will be a day of searching and convicting (1:12, 13).
    - 1. None can hide or escape the Lord’s searching (1:12).
    - 2. The possessions of those whom the Lord finds will become spoil for the invaders (1:13).
- III. The day of the Lord described (1:14-18).
- A. The day of the Lord is near (1:14).
    - 1. The day is “great” because of its importance and effect upon all of creation (Joel 2:11, 31).
    - 2. God finds no delight in destroying His creation (cf. Ezk. 18:23).
  - B. The day of the Lord is a day of terror and wrath (1:15-18).
    - 1. Zephaniah describes the terribleness of that day by synonymous word pairs:
      - a. “Trouble and distress” emphasizes emotional anguish (cf. Ps. 25:17).

- b. “Devastation and desolation” emphasizes physical wreckage (cf. Isa. 51:9)
- c. “Darkness and gloominess” and “clouds and thick darkness” emphasize terror (cf. Isa. 8:22; Jer. 13:16).
- d. “Trumpet and alarm” emphasizes the fearfulness of meeting God (cf. Ex. 19:16-20; Amos 2:2).

## Zephaniah 2

- I. Having just heard the message contained in chapter one, the nation should be compelled to repent (2:1-3).
  - A. Although God’s judgment is inevitable, it would still be wise to repent (2:1-2).
    1. God addresses Judah by saying “O nation,” a designation typically used to refer to the gentiles (cf. Amos 6:14; 9:9; Obad. 1).
      - a. In fact, the Hebrew word used here is sometimes translated “heathen” in other places (Obad. 1, KJV).
      - b. God’s usage of this phrase reveals His feeling about Judah.
      - c. The phrase “O undesirable nation”, can be translated a number of ways: O nation unabashed; O nation undisciplined; O nation unloveable; O nation that does not desire to be converted to the law; O nation that never paled (at the fear of God); O nation not desired; O nation hated; O nation that has no longing (after God).<sup>67</sup>
    2. Repentance must occur before the official “degree” of judgment is issued, for once the words are spoke by God, judgment is final.
      - a. It is important to note that God’s “anger” is not equivalent to human rage; “God’s wrath is a measured response to a deliberate rebellion.”<sup>68</sup>
      - b. The day will pass as “chaff” – it will come and go quickly.
        - (1) “Chaff” is a word that is often linked to judgment (cf. Hos. 13:3; Mt. 3:12).
        - (2) “The ‘chaff’ indicates that the wicked nation will be scattered before the fierce anger of Jehovah.”<sup>69</sup>
  - B. Instructions for repentance (2:3).
    1. Although God’s judgment is sure, there would be some who would survive (cf. “hidden.”); the survivors and their descendants would be a part of a “remnant” that would later be restored.
    2. God calls the “meek of the earth” to seek the Lord, seek righteousness, and seek humility (cf. Ps. 37:11; Mt. 5:5).
      - a. It is clear then that there were at least some, like Zephaniah, who were still willing to bend their will to a higher power (cf. 1 Kings 19:18).
      - b. Righteousness and humility has been, and always will be, required of God’s people (cf. Mic. 6:8).
    3. Because God’s plan has already been set in motion, God does not promise certain escape to those who repent.
      - a. Instead, “it may be” that that those who repent will be spared (cf. Ex. 32:30).
      - b. “The wickedness is so great and the judgment so terrible that even these who seek righteousness and meekness may suffer vicariously for the sins of society.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Coffman146.

<sup>68</sup> Jackson 458.

<sup>69</sup> Hailey 234

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

- II. God broadens the scope of His judgment to the surrounding nations (2:4-15).<sup>71</sup>
- A. God's judgment of Philistia, to the west (2:4-7).
1. Philistia's four chief cities will be judged. (2:4a)<sup>72</sup>
    - a. Gaza will be forsaken (cf. Jer. 4:29).
    - b. Askelon will become desolate (cf. Lev. 26:33).
    - c. Ashdod will have its inhabitants suddenly driven out (cf. Ps. 80:8).
    - d. Ekron will be uprooted, leaving no root from which to rise again (Ecc. 3:2).
  2. The expression, "drive out... at noon day" can be understood one of two ways (2:4b):
    - a. The attack was at noon, the hottest part of the day when least expected.
    - b. The siege was very short, and the city was taken by noon.
      - (1) This is the most favorable of the two options.
      - (2) Historically, this phrase (or a variation of it) has been used to denote the idea of a speedy siege.
      - (3) One ancient inscription reads, "Memphi, the royal city, in a half a day, I besieged, I captured, I destroyed it, I burned it with fire."
      - (4) Another reads, "I fought against it from the break of day till noon, and I took it."
  3. "Woe" is pronounced upon the inhabitants of Philistia because the word of the Lord is against them (2:5).<sup>73</sup>
    - a. "Woe" expresses great sorrow or distress.
    - b. The "Cherethites" mentioned here are the same as the Philistines (1 Sam. 30:14; Ezk. 25:16); this designation is probably used to stress their geographical link with Crete/Caphor (cf. Jer. 47:4).
  4. The once mighty coastal cities of Philistia will become empty fields in which animals will dwell (2:6, 7).
    - a. Once the Jews are released from their captivity, "the remnant of the house of Judah" will inhabit the desolate land.
      - (1) Though Zephaniah is often viewed as a harsh book (primarily because he does not mention God's mercy), here Zephaniah offers a glimpse of hope; God's people will not be completely erased (cf. Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12).
      - (2) There is no greater "proof" of the Bible's inspiration than fulfilled prophecy, and history allows us to see the fulfillment of Zephaniah's prophecy.
      - (3) "Only one of infinite foresight, such as that possessed by Jehovah, could have declared the return of a remnant from captivity and their possession of the land [before they even entered captivity] as here foretold."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> As we will see, God extends his judgment from west, to east, and then from south to north. Surely, the idea here is that God's judgment is all encompassing, covering the "four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12).

<sup>72</sup> Adapted from Kenyon 109.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Hailey 236.

- b. “The feeble fulfillment of this verse in the return of a few Israelites from Babylonian captivity is only a mere token of all this passage means... The full fulfillment of this overthrow of Philistia is of a spiritual nature, and must be looked for in the Messianic era, when the kingdoms of the world became the kingdom of Christ.”<sup>75</sup>
    - (1) Christ released us from our captivity when He delivered us from sin (cf. Lk. 4:18).
    - (2) The “remnant,” in this age being Christians, inhabit a foreign land (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1, 2; 2:9, 10).
- B. Moab and Ammon, to the east, will also be judged (2:8-11).
1. God’s people have had issues with the people of Moab and Ammon throughout their history (cf. Num. 22-24).<sup>76</sup>
    - a. When Israel came to the boarder of Moab, Balak, king of Moab, sent to Mesopotamia for Balaam, a diviner, to come and curse the nation.
    - b. Then, in the time of the judges, both Moab and Ammon sought the destruction of Israel.
  2. It appears that the primary charge being brought against these two nations is their effort to invade the territory of Judah (cf. “made arrogant threats against their boarder.”) (2:8).
    - a. Their pride was their downfall (cf. Obad. 3, 4; Isa. 16:6; Jer. 48:26).
    - b. It also appears that they offended Gods people with their speech (cf. “insults... reproach”).
  3. Because of their arrogance, these two nations will be destroyed, like Sodom and Gomorrah (2:9-11a).
    - a. As of 1950, Moab and Ammon could be described this way: “The old towns and villages are all deserted and in ruins. In fact, there is not at this moment a single inhabited town in Moab, except Kerak, which stands on the extreme southern border.”<sup>77</sup>
    - b. As was the case with Sodom and Gomorrah, Gods destruction will be thorough.
  4. Zephaniah gives his readers some valuable insight into the Messianic age (2:11b).
    - a. God will “reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth.”
      - (1) Once the Jews came out of their captivity, they never went back to idolatry, at least not to the same degree as before.
      - (2) However, these gods were still in existence (i.e. not fully “put to nothing.”) and worshipped by many even until the first century and beyond (cf. Acts 17:22, 23).
      - (3) But, “The [Roman] Emperor Theodosius in 389 AD outlawed the pagan temples and proscribed the worship of pagan deities... Yes, there are still idols that are worshipped by men; but, as for that great

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<sup>75</sup> Coffman 150.

<sup>76</sup> Moab and Ammon came about because of the wicked plan of Lots two daughters (Gen. 19:30-38).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid 152.

Pantheon of the gods of Greece and Rome, no vestige of them whatever may be found in the whole world.”<sup>78</sup>

- b. “People shall worship him, each one from his place” would have been a foreign concept in the days of Zephaniah, yet we see Jesus reaffirming this truth in John 4:20-24.
- C. Ethiopia, to the south, will also be slain (2:12).
1. This declaration made against Ethiopia is also a declaration made against Egypt, because Egypt was governed by an Ethiopian king.
  2. Ezekiel also prophesied of the fall of both Egypt and Ethiopia (Ezk. 30:4, 5), and that their fall would come by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (Ezk. 30:24, 25).
    - a. “Ye... shall be slain by my sword’ points to Jehovah as the one by whom the destruction would be accomplished. This sword of Jehovah was to have been put in the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the executioner of the judgment.”<sup>79</sup>
    - b. God sometimes used wicked people to accomplish His righteous will (cf. Isa. 7:20; Hab. 1:5-11).
      - (1) God uses the actions, good or bad, to carry out his will (cf. Rom. 8:28)
      - (2) “All things” include the good and the bad (cf. 2 Cor. 11:22-33; 1:8-11)
      - (3) Jesus, Judas, and the ones who crucified Him (Acts 2:22-24).
- D. Assyria, to the north, will also face judgment (2:13-15).
1. Again, we see clearly that inspiration is responsible for the writings of Zephaniah.
    - a. At the time of writing, Assyria was the world power, and had no real foreign or domestic threats.
    - b. Why would Zephaniah make such a prediction unless he was granted foreknowledge of the eventual demise of Assyria?
  2. It is ironic that God will make Assyria “as dry as the wilderness” (2:13) because Nineveh, Assyria’s capital, was famously situated along the Tigris river.
    - a. Nevertheless, the sands of the desert swept over that “great city”, so much so, that within two centuries of its destruction, Ninevah had been forgotten about.
      - (1) “Zenophon, passing the site in BC 401, was able to learn only that a great city had once occupied the spot and had been destroyed.”<sup>80</sup>
      - (2) “[Ninevah] was so completely destroyed that its very location was lost to the memory of man until the nineteenth century when it was discovered by archeologists.”<sup>81</sup>
    - b. The city was lost to the sands of the desert, and to the sands of time.
  3. Assyria, and its capital, will be a desolate place, primarily because of its arrogance (2:14, 15) (“there is none beside me” cf. Isa. 10:12;
  4. 47:8; Rev. 18:7).

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid 157.

<sup>79</sup> Hailey 238.

<sup>80</sup> Coffman 154.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

## Zephaniah 3

- I. Having dealt with the sins of the surrounding nations, God shifts His focus back to Jerusalem (3:1-7).
  - A. “Not explicitly mentioning Jerusalem as the ‘oppressing city’ allows the audience to agree with this prophecy, thinking that the prophet is still referring to Nineveh (2:13-15), so that when the audience learns that it is to them that Zephaniah speaks, the “woe” will be much more stinging.” (3:1a).
  - B. The city is rebellious and polluted (3.1b).
    1. They rebel against God by behaving in a way that is contrary to His law.
    2. Being “polluted” often has to do with blood (cf. Isa. 59:3; Lam. 4:14; Ezk. 16:6).
  - C. Jerusalem has no regard for the instruction of the Lord (3:2).
  - D. The city’s civil and religious officials are savage (3:3, 4)
    1. Rather than protecting the people, the princes and priests devour the city’s vulnerable (cf. Isa. 56:9-12).
    2. The leaders are so ferocious that they “leave not a bone till morning.”
      - a. “The wolf, after killing the prey, will retain enough of it for him to gnaw on the remains during the next day until nightfall, the time for another kill. The false judges, however, made a clean end of their victims as soon as possible, leaving nothing “till the morrow.”<sup>82</sup>
      - b. Rather than respecting and upholding the Law of God, the prophets and priests have perverted it.
  - E. God is just, and therefore cannot allow sin to go unpunished (3:5).
  - F. Rather than observing and learning from God’s judgment of the other nations, His people have ignored His lesson (3:6, 7).
    1. Zephaniah wrote less than 100 years after the Northern Kingdom was carried away by Assyria.
    2. When God gave His people the land of Canaan, He told them that it was not because of their righteousness that He was giving them the land, but because of the unrighteousness of the inhabitants whom he was casting out (Deut. (9:4, 5).
- II. Having pointed out the sins of Jerusalem, Jehovah shifts his focus to the faithful who are called to wait upon the Lord in light of the coming judgment (3:8).
  - A. ““Wait upon the Lord’ is to put full trust in God, allowing Him to providentially work out the future, no matter how overwhelming the obstacles seem.”<sup>83</sup> (cf. Isa. 40:31; 49:23; 64:4).
  - B. The nation as a whole is not called to wait upon the Lord.
    1. It seems best to consider those who are told to “wait upon the Lord” as the “meek of the earth” who were told to “seek the Lord” (2:3).<sup>84</sup>
    2. Only those who fear the Lord are ever asked to, or said to, wait on the Lord (cf. Ps. 33:18-20; Isa. 8:17; 30:18).

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<sup>82</sup> Coffman 161.

<sup>83</sup> Kenyon 112.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

- C. There are some who see the final judgment depicted here in verse 8, while others see only another reference to the judgment coming to Jerusalem.
    - 1. The question at hand is: does “all the earth shall be devoured” refer literally to the entire planet, or only to what we might call the Jewish world?
    - 2. While a case could be made for either, it seems that the more favorable understanding is that Zephaniah is referencing the judgment that Jerusalem is about to experience, and not the entire earth.
      - a. In verse 9, Zephaniah continues by saying, “For then”, which could be understood as, “at that time.”
        - 1) If verse 8 describes the final judgment, we would suppose that verse 9 (cf. “for then”) would discuss things that are to happen after the final judgment.
        - 2) However, we see clearly that verse 9 and following discusses the Messianic age.
      - b. In 3:9-20, Zephaniah discusses the blessings of the Messianic age; it seems strange to place the final judgment before the coming of the Messiah.
- III. The day of the Lord brings a day of salvation for God’s faithful remnant (3:9-20).<sup>85</sup>
- A. Judgment upon the nations and Judah serves as a means of purifying (3:9).
    - 1. “For then” places these blessings after the judgment mentioned previously.
    - 2. God will restore a pure language to the people (3:9a)
      - a. Some see this as a reversal of Babel (11:1-9).
      - b. Speaking through pure language indicates a pure heart (cf. Isa. 6:5-7; Mt. 12:34, 35).
    - 3. As a result of their purification, the people call upon the Lord and serve Him (3:9b).
  - B. The remnant will be made up of those even from afar (3:10).
    - 1. “Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia” refers to nations that are beyond even the most remote of places.
    - 2. These from the remote regions will become God’s worshippers and bring Him offerings.
  - C. Through the removal of impurities, the remnant will be preserved (3:11-13).
    - 1. In that day, they will have no need to be ashamed (3:11).
      - a. “The only way that the shame from transgressions can be removed is through the forgiveness of sins”<sup>86</sup>, which is only possible in Christ.
      - b. “God will take away their main source of shame – arrogance.”<sup>87</sup>
    - 2. They will trust in the Lord rather than themselves (3:12 cf. Ps. 2:12; 22:8).
    - 3. The remnant will enjoy the peaceful security of the Lord’s protection (3:13).
  - D. The remnant has reason for great rejoicing (3:14-17).
  - E. God will gather His people at that time (3:18-20).

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<sup>85</sup> Kenyon 113.

<sup>86</sup> Coffman 167.

<sup>87</sup> Kenyon 113.

## Nahum

- I. Little is known about Nahum, whose name means “relief” or “comfort”, except what is revealed in this book.<sup>88</sup>
  - A. Other Biblical personalities have the same or similar name (cf. 1 Chron. 4:19; Neh. 7:7; Lk. 3:25), but this Nahum is not to be identified with any of these.
  - B. Nahum was from a place known as Elkosh (1:1).
    1. Although the exact location of Elkosh is unknown, three major suggestions have been made:
      - a. One of two Galilean cities: Capernaum (which means “the city of Nahum”) or Helkesei, a small town in northern Galilee.
      - b. El-Qôsh (el-Kosh), a town about 30 miles north of Nineveh (modern day Mosul, Iraq).
      - c. Eleutheropolis, a town in Judah about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem.
    2. An evaluation of these suggestions’ points to the Judean town of Eleutheropolis as the most plausible suggestion, although there can be no certainty.
      - a. The Galilean locations are not likely because the Northern Kingdom, of which Galilee was a part, went into captivity about one hundred years earlier (722 BC), thus requiring Nahum to have migrated from Galilee to Judah.
      - b. The Assyrian location (El-Qôsh) is not likely because, in addition to not being suggested until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there is no evidence from within the book itself to suggest Nahum was from Assyria.
      - c. Nahum wrote with a Judean audience in mind (cf. 1:15).
  - C. Nahum was a man well acquainted with international affairs and possessing a clear concept of God’s sovereignty over the nations.
- II. The date of Nahum’s prophecy seems to be between 625-612 BC.
  - A. Evidence within the book itself suggests a general date ranging from 663-612 BC.
    1. The earliest historical reference is to the fall of No Amon (“populous No” `KJV) (3:8), which was carried out by Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, in 663 BC.
    2. The fall of Nineveh occurred in 612 BC.
  - B. A more specific date between 625-612 is suggested for the following reasons:
    1. After the death of King Ashurbanipal (ca. 633-625 BC), Assyria was still powerful, as Nahum indicates, yet tremendous pressures from the Medes and Babylonians were beginning to mount.
    2. Assyrian domination during the reign of Judah’s kings ended during the reign of Josiah, around the time of Ashurbanipal’s death.
    3. Nahum’s announcement of the fall of Nineveh brings “relief” or “comfort” to Judah (cf. 1:12,13, 15)
    4. Therefore, Nahum’s prophecy would likely have been written anywhere within the date around Ashurbanipal’s death and the fall of Nineveh.
  - C. Nahum’s prophetic ministry overlapped with the ministries of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk.
- III. Background of Assyria and Nineveh.

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<sup>88</sup> Introductory material taken from Kenyon 116-118.

- A. Background of the Assyrian empire.
  - 1. From 883-823 BC, Assyria experienced remarkable growth and prosperity.
  - 2. Due to a major revolt in 826 BC initiated by the eldest son of King Shalmaneser, the nation slumped into a period of decline.
  - 3. It was not until the reign of Tigleth-pileser III (745-727 BC) that Assyria was once again established as a major power in the ancient Near East.
    - a. Tigleth-pileser began a program of world conquest.
    - b. Tigleth-pileser formulated a policy against opposing nations which included total conquest, deportation of enemies, and Assyrian ruled provinces.
- B. Summary of Assyrian kings during her period of westward conquest.
  - 1. Tigleth-Pileser III (745-727 BC).
  - 2. Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC) began the siege of Samaria but died before the city fell.
  - 3. Sargon II (722-705) completed the siege of Samaria and was later murdered.
  - 4. Sennacherib (705-681 BC) boasted of shutting up Hezekiah “as a bird in a cage” and was later murdered by two of his sons.
  - 5. Esarhaddon (681-668 BC) was a younger son of Sennacherib who drove out his two older brothers in order to succeed his father’s throne.
  - 6. Ashurbanipal (668-625 BC) led a campaign in Egypt which resulted in the fall of No Amon (“populous No”; KJV) in 663 BC.
  - 7. Assur-etil-ilani (625-620 BC) is relatively unknown.
  - 8. Sin-shar-ishkeen (620-612 BC) gathered his wives, children, and wealth into the palace and set it on fire while Nineveh was being besieged.
- C. Brief history of Nineveh.
  - 1. Many scholars link it with “Nimrod” (Gen. 10:8-12), thus making it one of the oldest cities of civilization.
  - 2. It was located on the Tigris River about 220 miles north of present-day Bagdad. It did not become the permanent capital of Assyria until the reign of Sennacherib (705-681 BC).
- D. Although Nineveh was spared over a hundred years ago because its people repented at the preaching of Jonah (Jon. 3:4-10), the city (and nation) is once again ripe for judgment!

## Nahum 1

- I. Nahum's message and audience (1:1).
  - A. "The burden against Nineveh" is the subject of the book.
    1. The "burden" Nahum places on the shoulders of Nineveh is one of intense and certain judgment.
    2. The word "burden" is typically used when God deals with the judgment of gentile nations (cf. Isa. 13:1; 15:1).
  - B. Nahum's prophecy is the only one that is self-described as a "book."
    1. The word translated "book" likely refers to a scroll rather than a bound book (cf. Jer. 36:2; Ezk. 3:1-3).
    2. Because it is described as a book, some suggest that this prophecy "originally circulated as an underground pamphlet during Assyrian persecution."<sup>89</sup>
- II. The Lord is magnified (1:2-8).
  - A. The Severity of the Lord is magnified (1:2).
    1. God is "Jealous."
      - a. "Jehovah's jealousy stems from his own honor and that of His people. His jealousy may be compared to that of a husband for his wife; He will brook no rival; He will not be supplanted by another in the affection of His people."<sup>90</sup>
      - b. The fact that the Lord is "Jealous" for Nineveh makes it clear that He desired faithfulness from all people, not just the Israelites (cf. 1 Kings 8:41-43).
    2. God takes vengeance on, and is furious with, those who sin against Him.
      - a. God does not take vengeance in order to get even, but to vindicate His own righteousness.<sup>91</sup>
      - b. Since Jehovah is a just God, he must avenge injustice (cf. Rom. 12:19).
      - c. "God's judgment upon sin is not an uncontrollable outburst of anger, but is part of Him immutable character."<sup>92</sup>
  - B. The might of the Lord is magnified (1:3-6).
    1. God is slow to anger, but ultimately just (1:3).
      - a. Although God was once merciful to Nineveh because of her repentance (Jonah 3:5-10), God is just, and he cannot allow sin to go unpunished.
      - b. Undoubtedly, Nahum is making a connection to the words of Jonah.
        - 1) "The God described by Jonah as slow to anger, "One who relents (niham) from sending disaster (Jonah 4:2), is in Nahum described as "slow to anger but great in power," a God who will never leave the guilty unpunished (Nah. 1:3)."
        - 2) "Thus, Nahum begins his oracle against Nineveh by highlighting Yahweh's commitment to retribution: no longer will Nineveh know the mercies of a longsuffering God."
    2. God is great and awesome, having power over all of His creation (1:3-6; cf. Ps. 99:1-5).

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<sup>89</sup> Kenyon 118.

<sup>90</sup> Hailey 253.

<sup>91</sup> Kenyon 118.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

3. God is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble (1:7, 8).
  - a. While God is powerful to judge and destroy, He is also powerful to save those who are His; Nahum is careful to paint the whole picture of God, speaking of both his wrath and forgiveness.
  - b. “With an overflowing flood” God will destroy Nineveh.
    - 1) While it is possible that Nahum has the wrath of God overflowing in mind (cf. Isa 54:8; [“In my overflowing anger”] ESV), there seems to be more to this expression than is immediately obvious.
    - 2) Although there are no “official” records of the fall of Nineveh, tradition attributes its fall to severe flooding that caused a large section of the city’s wall to be carried away, allowing Babylonian forces to easily take Assyria’s capital.
    - 3) Therefore, it was “with an overflowing flood” that Nineveh fell, just as Nahum predicted.

III. Nineveh’s overthrow is Judah’s deliverance (1:9-15).<sup>93</sup>

A. Assyria will be brought down (1:9-14).

1. Assyria will no longer be a source of Judah’s affliction (1:9, 10).
  - a. The question, “What do you imagine against the Lord?” is difficult to understand because it is unclear as to whether the prophet is speaking to the people of Nineveh or Judah (1:9a).
    - 1) It is safe to take this question as being asked to both Nineveh/Judah.
    - 2) The Assyrian question implies. “What do you think you can devise against the Lord?”
    - 3) To Judah, the question implies, “Do you not think that the Lord is able to deal with the Assyrians?”
  - b. In each case the Lord makes it clear that Assyria will end (1:9b).
  - c. Assyria will be consumed by the Lord’s wrath as dry stubble consumed by fire (1:10).
2. Assyria’s “wicked counselor” is responsible for God’s judgment on the nation (1:11).
  - a. “From you comes forth one” may refer to Sennacherib who invaded Judah in about 701 BC (cf. 2 Kings 18:13-19:36), or it may simply be a personification of the Assyrian attitude toward God and His people.
  - b. Whoever is being spoken of, it is said that he “plots evil against the Lord.”
3. Judah is assured of relief, as God has determined Assyria’s fate (1:12-14).

B. Assyria’s end is good news to Judah (1:15).

1. God’s judgment upon Nineveh is so sure that Nahum can look beyond the present time and see the messengers bringing good news of peace (1:15a).
2. With Assyria removed, Judah can now keep her feasts and vows (1:15b).
  - a. It was very difficult to keep the feasts during enemy oppression, especially for those who lived outside of Jerusalem.\
  - b. Assyria will never again bother Judah!

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<sup>93</sup> This section taken from Kenyon 121.

## Nahum 2

- I. Nineveh's conquer is near (2:1-7).
  - A. Nineveh is mockingly instructed to prepare for battle with "He who scatters" ("He that dashes in pieces" KJV) (2:1).
    1. "He who scatters" is certainly a reference to Jehovah, who will use the Babylonians and Medes to carry out his will (cf. Jer. 51:20, 21).
    2. Nahum has in mind the practice of Nineveh when he uses the word "scatters"; the Assyrians were well known for conquering a land and scattering its inhabitants across the empire as slaves (cf. 1 Kings 14:15).
    3. Even though a physical battle will be fought (a battle for which they should prepare), God has already sealed their fate (cf. 1:15).
  - B. Assyria's fall described (2:2-7).
    1. Israel, who has already been taken captive (cf. "emptied") by Assyria, will be restored (cf. Ezra 1:1-3ff) (2:2).
    2. The battle between Assyria and her besiegers is described as a swift and fatal one (2:3-5).
      - a. It is difficult to understand which army, if not both, is being described since words like "his," "he," and "they," are all that are used to describe those in battle.
      - b. Most assign the descriptions found in verse 3 to the Babylonians because they were known to wear red in battle (cf. Ezk. 23:14) (2:3)
      - c. Troops rush to their positions, chariots race through streets, and fighting ensues (2:4, 5).
    3. Once the battle is over, those who have been defeated are led out of the city as captives (2:6, 7).
- II. The aftermath of Assyria's fall is described (2:8-13).
  - A. The city that was once the center of the world is now desolate (2:8-10).
    1. "Nineveh of old was like a pool of water" is somewhat difficult to interpret (2:8).
      - a. Some suggest that this is a reference to Assyria's "spilling over" into other nations (i.e. conquest).
      - b. Others see this as a reference to apparent flooding that is mentioned throughout the text (1:8; 2:6; *et al*).
      - c. The best explanation is that Nineveh was like a pool of water in that it was a heavily populated gathering place.
    2. All of the spoils of war that have been piled up by Nineveh are now plundered by the invaders (2:9).
    3. Seeing that the mighty city is now overrun, the inhabitants are shaken (2:10).
  - B. The "lion" that was Assyria has perished (2:11, 12).
    1. Archeological digs in the nineteenth century uncovered numerous statues and engravings of lions in the city of Nineveh.
    2. Like a lion in his lair, the Ninevites devoured other nations to provide for their pride.
  - C. Nahum snaps back to present day, reassuring both the people of Nineveh and Judah that the events just described are to soon take place (2:13).

## Nahum 3

- I. Nineveh's own sins are the cause and manner of her judgment (3:1-7).
  - A. Nineveh is a "bloody city" because it is a city built on violence and bloodshed (1:1-3; cf. Hab. 2:12).
    1. Nineveh became such a powerful city because of lies, robbery, and murder (3:1).
    2. Nineveh, the usual aggressor, is now the one under attack (2-3).
      - a. Nahum paints a vivid picture of invading chariots (3:2).
      - b. After the chariots charge, there are numberless corpses littered throughout the city (3:3).
  - B. Nineveh will fall "because of the multitude of harlotries" she has committed (3:4-7).
    1. The "seductive harlot" ("wellfavoured" [KJV]) is involved in a number of sins: (3:4)
      - a. Nineveh is likely described as a "mistress of sorceries" because of the promiscuous ways in which they worshipped their gods.
      - b. Nineveh is likely described as a seller of nations and families because she robbed nations and families of their freedom and routinely sold conquered citizens into slavery or forced them to pay tribute (cf. 2 Kings 17:3, 23).
    2. Nineveh will receive the same punishment that she inflicted on others (3:5, 6).
      - a. Nineveh will be shamed in front of the entire world (3:5; cf. Gen. 9:18-24; Isa. 47:3).
      - b. "Abominable filth" (anything unclean or repulsive) will be cast on the city, ultimately shaming them further in the eyes of the other nations.
    3. Merciless Nineveh will receive no mercy (3:7).
- II. Nineveh, that great city, is not by any means invincible (3:8-17).
  - A. Though Nahum has just prophetically described the fall of the city, he draws the attention of his audience back to (their) present day, where Nineveh still stands unharmed and well-fortified.
  - B. Nineveh is no better than No Amon ("populous No" [KJV]) (3:8-11),
    1. The once great Egyptian city also seemed invincible (3:8, 9).
      - a. Like Nineveh, it was protected with natural defenses (rivers, canals, etc.) (3:8).
      - b. Like Nineveh, it was allied with other powerful nations (3:9).
      - c. Ultimately though, No Amon fell to the Assyrians, despite being "untouchable" (3:10).
      - d. To the citizens of Jerusalem in Nahum's day, the thought that Nineveh could be captured would be hard to believe; however, God makes it clear that it is possible and destined to happen (3:11).
  - C. Nineveh is helpless (3:12, 13).
  - D. Nineveh's preparation is in vain (3:14-17).
    1. Once again, the city is sarcastically called upon to prepare for battle (3:14).
    2. The destruction to come upon Nineveh in spite of her preparation is compared to the destruction left by locusts (3:15-17; cf. Joel 1:4).
  - E. Assyria's fate is inevitable and irreversible (3:18, 19).

## Habakkuk

- I. Less is known about Habakkuk, whose name means “embrace,” than almost any other prophet.<sup>94</sup>
  - A. Some speculations have arisen concerning Habakkuk’s personal background.
    1. Rabbinic tradition makes him to be the son of the Shunamite woman who was resurrected by Elisha (2 Kings 4:1-37), but this is chronologically impossible.
    2. Some make Habakkuk the watchman set by Isaiah to look out for the fall of Babylon (Isa. 21:6; cf. Hab. 2:1), but this theory also lacks merit due to chronological impossibility.
    3. According to the Apocryphal book “Bel and Dragon” (chapters 33-39), Habakkuk was taken by an angel of the Lord to Babylon where he supplied Daniel with a bowl of pottage while in the lion’s den, but this legend is void of any historical value.
  - B. Although nothing is said of Habakkuk’s lineage, tribe, or hometown, the contents in the book suggest that he is from Jerusalem.
  - C. Habakkuk is a very unique individual:
    1. The usual role of a prophet is to speak to the people on behalf of God, but in the case of Habakkuk, the prophet speaks to God on behalf of the people.
    2. Habakkuk approached God with questions about His actions.
- II. In literary form, the book of Habakkuk is a “complaint and answer” poem.
  - A. Habakkuk deals with the question “why?” (cf. 1:2-4, 12-16).
    1. Habakkuk, like many people, was perplexed about the justice of God.
      - a. “How can an omnipotent (i.e. all-powerful) and just God allow social injustice?”
      - b. “Why does God not put a stop to the wickedness?”
      - c. “How can God allow the wicked to trample over the righteous?”
    2. Job discusses the question, “Why do the righteous suffer?” (cf. Ps. 37: 49: 73; Jer. 12:1); Habakkuk asks the same type of question on a national level.
  - B. Habakkuk is a book of consolation to a people upon whom the threatening shadow of long exile is rapidly approaching.
- III. A general date is given to Habakkuk’s prophecy of 625-606 BC, but a more specific date suggested is 612-606 BC.
  - A. The Neo-Babylonian Empire began its ascent to power under the leadership of Nabopolassar (612-606).
    1. The Babylonian power gained great strength in 612 BC with the destruction of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital.
    2. The empire reached its peak in 605 BC with the defeat of Egypt and her allies at Carchemish by Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC) (cf. Jer. 46:2).
    3. Habakkuk prophesied before the Babylonian invasions of Jerusalem (cf. 3:16).
  - B. The more specific date can be supported because of the following:
    1. Babylon was likely not a threat to Judah until after the fall of Nineveh (612 BC).
    2. The wrongs suffered under the Judean King Jehoiakim (608-597) are thought to be those of which Habakkuk complains (1:2-4; cf. Jer. 22:13-19).
    3. Babylon’s first invasion of Jerusalem occurred in 606/5 BC.

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<sup>94</sup> Introductory material taken from Kenyon 131-133.

- C. Habakkuk's prophetic ministry overlapped with the ministries of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Nahum.
- IV. Historical background during the time of Habakkuk.
- A. Judah witnessed the downfall and exile of her northern sister Israel slightly more than a century earlier, yet Judah failed to learn from that event that repeated violation of the covenant would not go unpunished forever (cf. Ezk. 23:1-4, 36-49).
    - 1. Josiah, the last good Judean king, began his reign at the age of eight due to the assassination of his father; he initiated sweeping reform after a copy of the Law was found; and he was later killed in a futile attempt to prevent Pharaoh Necho from aiding Assyria in its losing struggle against Babylon (2 Kings 23:28-30).
    - 2. After Josiah's death, his son Jehoahaz reigned as king and after only three months was deposed by Pharaoh Necho (2 Kings 23:31-33)
    - 3. Pharaoh Necho made Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim (whose name was changed to Jehoiakim) a "puppet" king of Judah (cf. 2 Kings 23:34-37).
    - 4. Through the reigns of these kings, wickedness prevailed in Judah.
  - B. Special note about the Babylonians/Chaldeans:
    - 1. The Chaldeans are a tribe from southern Babylon who freed themselves from Assyrian lordship in 625 BC and who, under the leadership of Nabopolassar, became rulers of the Neo-Babylonian empire.
    - 2. Joining with the Medes and Scythians, they destroyed Nineveh in 612 BC.
    - 3. At Carchemis, the remnant of Assyria and Pharaoh Necho were defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, assuring Babylon's dominion over Judah.
    - 4. These events furnished Habakkuk with the realization that Judah could expect the worst from Babylon.
    - 5. The duration of Babylonian dominance is basically parallel with the exile.

## Habakkuk 1

- I. Habakkuk's first question: Why Does Wickedness Go Unpunished? (1:1-4).<sup>95</sup>
  - A. Habakkuk's brief introduction (1:1).
    1. The prophesy is a "burden" (cf. Nah. 1:1).
      - a. It is a "burden" because it announces harsh judgment upon God's people and the Babylonians.
      - b. The burden was something that Habakkuk "saw," indicating that His dialogue with God was a real one.
    2. Habakkuk is called "the prophet" (cf. Hag. 1:1).
      - a. Some have taken this to mean that Habakkuk was a professional prophet, who earned his living as a prophet at the Temple (the opposite of Amos cf. Amos 7:14).
      - b. Professional or not, Habakkuk spoke the word of God.
  - B. The question of unpunished wickedness (1:2-4).
    1. This section is a psalm of complaint with overtones of a lament, where a need is described, and help is sought from God (cf. Ps. 3; 13).
    2. "How long shall I cry" indicates that this is not the first time Habakkuk has cried out to the Lord with his complaint (1:2).
      - a. "Hear" implies more than just audibly hearing Habakkuk, it implies a response in action.
      - b. The "violence" that Habakkuk witnessed did not appear to bother God, and this caused the prophet to question His justice, righteousness, and holiness.
    3. Because God has not interfered with this wickedness, His law is "powerless" in the eyes of Habakkuk (1:3, 4).
- II. Jehovah's response to Habakkuk's first question (1:5-11).
  - A. The way that God will deal with this issue will be unbelievable to Habakkuk (1:5).
    1. The expected response to a lament is an oracle of salvation, but here the response is an oracle of judgment, the likes of which to the prophet is incomprehensible.
    2. God's people are to "look among the nations" where an unprecedented event is about to take place by the mighty hand of God.
  - B. God will use the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to fulfill His purpose (1:6-11).
    1. The Chaldeans are ideal for God's use because of their bitter disposition (1:6, 7).
      - a. "Bitter" because of their fierce and cruel behavior toward their conquered, and "hasty" because of their rash decisions and rapid movements (1:6a).
      - b. Their procedure is to scatter the inhabitants of conquered territories so that they can "possess the dwelling places" that do not belong to them (1:6b).
      - c. Terror and dread are the effect of the Babylonians on those with whom they come in contact (1:7).

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<sup>95</sup> Kenyon 113.

2. The Chaldeans are ideal for God's use because of their military effectiveness (1:8, 9).
    - a. Their horses are compared to leopards, evening wolves, and eagles (1:8).
      - 1) "Leopards" are fast, indicating the speed with which they close in on their prey.
      - 2) "Evening wolves" are those which, having fasted all day, go out at night seeking prey which they devour.
      - 3) "The eagle" is not only swift but is also very deliberate in killing its prey.
    - b. The goal of their conquest is violence, destruction, and conquest (1:9)
  3. The Chaldeans are ideal for God's use because of their arrogant attitude (1:10, 11).
    - a. They respect no leader or fortifications (1:10).
    - b. Despite this, they will pass away like the wind due to their sins (1:11).
      - 1) "Then his mind changes" is best understood as a tornado that strikes a city then goes on its way, never to be seen again (cf. "Then shall he sweep by as a wind" ASV).
      - 2) The Chaldeans sinned by ascribing their success to man-made gods, a common offense among powerful nations.
- III. Habakkuk's second question: How Can God Allow an Exceedingly Wicked Nation to Punish His People? (1:12-2:1).
- A. Habakkuk begins by recognizing the character of God (1:12, 13a).
    1. The question, "Are you not from everlasting?" is rhetorical, expecting the obvious answer.
    2. The Lord is "from everlasting" (1:12a; cf. Deut. 33:27; Mic. 5:2).
    3. The Lord is holy (1:12b; Ps. 22:3).
    4. The Lord is a mighty God (1:12c; Ps. 147:5).
    5. The Lord is pure (1:13a; Ps. 12:6; 19:8).
  - B. To Habakkuk, God's way of dealing with Judah's wickedness seems inconsistent with His Character (1:13b-17).
    1. Habakkuk is astonished that God would allow the exceedingly wicked to "devour" His people (1:13b).
    2. Habakkuk is astonished that God would not only allow, but actively make preparation for the Babylonians to rule over Judah (1:14, 15a).
      - a. In Habakkuk's mind, God has made all of humanity as fish and creeping things, having no ruler or protector among themselves (Prov. 6:6, 7; 30:27)
      - b. Babylon's treatment of Judah is as the one who feeds on fish.
        - 1) This fishing analogy depicts Babylon violently and completely catching all of Judah (cf. Jer. 16:16).
        - 2) They are caught with a "hook" (cf. Amos 4:2), a net (cf. Ezk. 32:3), and a "dragnet."
    3. Habakkuk is astonished that God would use the Babylonians because they are arrogant idolaters (1:15b, 16).

4. Habakkuk wants to know how long God will allow Babylon to prosper at Judah's expense (1:17).
- C. Habakkuk awaits God's answer (2:1).
1. The prophet "stands watch" in order to keep alert for God's response.
    - a. "Stand... watch" and "set... upon the tower" should be taken figuratively as a representation of Habakkuk's patience and alertness as he awaits God's response.
    - b. Though Habakkuk questioned God, he did not lose sight of the fact that God possessed all knowledge and could answer his questions (Rom. 11:33-36).
  2. Habakkuk also took time to consider how he would respond to God (cf. "and what I will answer.") (Prov. 18:13).

## Habakkuk 2

- I. Jehovah Responds to Habakkuk's second question (2:2-20).<sup>96</sup>
- A. Habakkuk receives the answer in the form of a vision (2:2-5).
1. Habakkuk is instructed to write down the vision so that it may be preserved and transmitted (2:2-3).
    - a. He is to write it on tablets (2:2a)
      - 1) "Tablets" were plates or plaques like those used in public places where people could read them and be informed (cf. Ex. 24:12; 2 Cor. 3:3)
      - 2) The prophet is to write on this medium probably because of its durability (the vision will not be fulfilled immediately).
    - b. "That he may run who reads it" (2:2b) could refer to a number of things:
      - 1) Perhaps Habakkuk is instructed to write "plainly" (i.e. keep the message short) so that the tablets would be mobile enough for a herald to carry.
      - 2) Or, it could be that the message is frightening enough to make the hearer flee
    - c. The vision will be fulfilled in God's own time (2:3; cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-9).
  2. Habakkuk is assured, through a comparison, that Babylon will not continue long (2:4, 5).
    - a. Babylon ("his soul") will die because of arrogance (2:4a).
      - 1) "Not upright" = habitual deviation from what is right (cf. Ps. 32:11; Isa. 26:7).
      - 2) Arrogance not only leads to further sin, but it also leads to death, the implied end of Babylon (Pr. 16:18).
    - b. However, the just will live by faith (2:4b).
      - 1) "Faith" implies trust and obedience in God no matter the consequences (cf. Dan. 3:14-18).
      - 2) "Shall live" = preservation of life, both now and especially in eternity, in contrast to the fate awaiting Babylon.
      - 3) This theme is emphasized in the NT (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).
    - c. The arrogance of Babylon resulted in a never-satisfied hunger (2:5).
      - 1) Although literal drunkenness is evident, the point seems to be that Babylon is drunk with power and conquest which, like strong drink, will betray him and lead to ruin (cf. Prov. 20:1; Isa. 29:9).
      - 2) "Does not stay at home" is representative of Babylon's constant desire to expand through conquest.
      - 3) Babylon devours nations and people like Sheol, the place of the dead (cf. Isa. 5:14)
      - 4) Babylon cannot be satisfied (Prov. 27:20).
- B. Babylon is mocked in a series of "woes" that detail the sins of Babylon and the different responses to them (2:6-20).
1. "Woe" unto Babylon, the pillager (2:6-8).
    - a. Babylon's former victims ("all these") will mock him using proverbs and riddles (2:6a).

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<sup>96</sup> Kenyon 138

- b. Babylon is guilty of accumulating that to which he has no right (2:6b).
- c. Babylon is guilty of extortion by unjustly taking pledges (2:6c).
  - 1) Pledges = items used for collateral which were often confiscated prematurely and/or without considering the needs of the borrower (cf. Deut. 24:10-13), often leading to enslavement of the poor (cf. Neh. 5:1-5).
- d. Babylon's victims will rise victorious over him (2:7, 8).
- 2. "Woe" unto Babylon, the schemer (2:9-11).
  - a. Babylon is condemned for individual and national exploitation (2:9).
  - b. Babylon has sinned by "cutting off" many people (2:10).
  - c. Even the stones and timber cry out for vindication of righteousness (2:11; cf. Gen. 4:10; Mic. 6:1, 2).
- 3. "Woe" unto Babylon, the violent (2:12-14).
- 4. "Woe" unto Babylon, the corrupter (2:15-17).
  - a. Babylon is condemned for leading others into corruption ("gives drink to his neighbor" cf. Jn. 2:2-10) (2:15).
  - b. Babylon will be filled with shame, a fitting punishment for one who sought to degrade his neighbors (2:16, 17).
    - 1) Babylon, who once made the nations drunk with the wine of God's wrath (cf. Jer. 51:7), must now drink from that same cup (cf. Ps. 75:8).
    - 2) Babylon will be exposed as weak and as not belonging to God.
- 5. "Woe" unto Babylon, the idolater (2:18-20).
  - a. Babylon is condemned for seeking divine guidance through lifeless idols (2:18, 19).
  - b. While idols are unable to provide any guidance, God, on the other hand, is the true source of guidance, and He is alive and well (2:20).
    - 1) Lifeless idols approached in clamor are silent, while the living God, approached in silence and reverence, speaks.
    - 2) The Lord should be approached in silence and reverence, a fitting response to His holiness and majesty (Ps. 46:10; Isa. 41:1; Zec. 3:1).

## Habakkuk 3

- I. Habakkuk's prayer-psalm of trust in God (3:1-19).
  - A. Habakkuk prays for mercy during God's judgment (3:1, 2)
    1. Habakkuk is in awe of God's sovereignty.
    2. Habakkuk trusts that God, who has acted mightily in the past, will do so in the future (cf. "revive").
      - a. "In the midst of the years" would be the time between the announcement of God's judgment and its execution.
      - b. "Remember mercy" is a plea to God to remember His people as He did in the past – through mercy and loving kindness.
        - 1) "Remember" is often used in connection with God's covenant grace toward those who acknowledge Him (cf. Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Neh. 1:8, 9; Lk. 1:54, 72).
        - 2) If it were not for God's loving mercy, Israel would have been removed long ago (cf. Ex. 32:7-14)
  - B. God's power demonstrated in the past assures judgment and salvation (3:3-15).
    1. Habakkuk looks back on God's judgment from the exodus to mount Sinai (3:3-7).
      - a. God came in glorious fashion (3:3)
        - 1) "God... the Holy One" is a form of His name associated elsewhere with God's power in the exodus events (cf. Lev. 11:44, 45).
        - 2) All of creation was filled with the praise of His glory.
      - b. The radiance of God's glory was bright (3:4).
        - 1) "Rays" ("horns" KJV) are symbols of strength (cf. Lam. 2:3, 17)
        - 2) This strength is possessed by the Lord!
      - c. God was accompanied by "pestilence" and "fever" (3:5).
        - 1) God used "pestilence" in the exodus (cf. Ex. 9:3, 15; Ps. 78:48, 50).
        - 2) "Fever" ("hot coals" KJV) emphasizes the burning heat of pestilence.
      - d. When God took His stand, the earth and the nations trembled (3:6, 7).
    2. Habakkuk looks back to God as the Divine Warrior who fought for His people (3:8-15)
      - a. God's wrath was great, resulting in the salvation of His people (3:8)
        - 1) The Lord demonstrated His power over the rivers and the sea not only in creation (cf. Job. 38:8), but also in such events as the parting of the Red Sea and the Jordan river (cf. Ex. 14:15-28; Josh. 3:13-17).
        - 2) "Horses" and "Chariots" are here depicted as part of God's army.
      - b. Weapons of war were dedicated to God's use (3:9; Ps. 7:12))
      - c. God's effect upon nature was unapparelled (3:10, 11 cf. Josh. 10:12, 13).
      - d. Foreign nations also felt the mighty power of God (3:12)
        - 1) As the nations experienced God's power during the Exodus and Conquest (Deut. 4:38; 7:1; Ps. 9:5) so they will once more (cf. Ps. 9:15-20; Isa. 10:7).
        - 2) God tramples the enemy as a thresher threshes grain (Jer. 51:33).
      - e. God saved His people in the past as He will in the future (3:13; cf. Ex. 15:2; Ps. 20:6; 28:8).
      - f. God's enemies destroy themselves (3:14; Judg. 7:22).

- g. God “walked through the sea” and through “great waters” in the past, and so He will for His people in the future (3:15; Ps. 77:18-20)
- C. Habakkuk’s faith and trust in the Lord soars to great heights (3:16-19).
  - 1. The prophet is full of Godly fear at the thought of God’s coming judgment (3:16; Jer. 4:19; 23:9; Dan. 8:27; 10:8).
  - 2. No matter what happens, the prophet will rejoice (3:17-19).

## Haggai

- I. Knowledge of the personal background of Haggai, whose name means “festival” or “festive one,” is found in this book and the book of Ezra.<sup>97</sup>
  - A. Haggai’s designation as “the prophet” (1:1 ,3; 2:1, 10; Ezr. 5:1; 6:14) indicates that he was well known.
  - B. Because of his name, some believe that Haggai was born on or around one of the major Jewish feasts (Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles).
    1. Haggai may be a shortened form of “Haggiah” (Festival of Jehovah).
    2. There are others whose name comes from this same root (cf. Gen. 46:16; 2 Sam. 3:4).
  - C. Internal evidence and Jewish tradition suggest that Haggai was very old when he prophesied and that he saw Solomon’s Temple before it’s destruction in 586 BC (cf. 2:3).
  - D. Haggai’s prophetic ministry was likely very short, lasting only about four months.
- II. The date of Haggai’s prophecy is 520 BC.
  - A. The prophet dates his work in the second year on Darius I (521-486 BC), who was the fourth king to rule over the conquered city of Babylon (1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 20).
  - B. Haggai was a contemporary of Zechariah (cf. Zec. 1:1, 7; 7:1).
- III. Historical background during the time of Haggai.
  - A. General background of the time of restoration.
    1. Haggai is the first of three post-exilic prophets.
    2. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by Babylon in 586 BC amounted to the death of the nation.
      - a. The only other event in Jewish history comparable to the exile was the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
      - b. The common feeling among the exiles was one of despair – “we might as well be dead” (cf. Ps. 137:1-4; Ezk. 37:1-14).
    3. Jewish history dawned a new era when Cyrus established himself as the king of a new world empire by taking Babylon in 539 BC.
    4. Cyrus was the king under whom the Jews were first permitted to return to their homeland (Ezr. 1:1-4).
      - a. Isaiah mentioned Cyrus by name over 150 years earlier (Isa. 45:1).
      - b. Cyrus allowed exiles to return to their homeland so that they would rebuild the temples of their gods and invoke their support for him.
    5. Two significant extra-biblical sources contain information about this period.
      - a. The Nabonid Chronicles is a clay tablet that relates the activities of the last king of Babylon and the capture of Babylon by Cyrus.
      - b. The Cyrus Cylinder is a clay cylinder that contains an account of Cyrus’ conquest of Babylon and policy of allowing captives of all nationalities to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples.
    6. The return from captivity took place in at least three stages.
      - a. In 536 BC, Sheshbazzar, with Zerubbabel having an important role, lead about 50,000 captives back to Jerusalem (Ezr. 1:8-2:70).
      - b. In 457 BC, Ezra led a second group of about 2,058 (Ezr. 8:1-34).
      - c. In 445 BC, Nehemiah returned with a third group (Neh. 2:1-20).

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<sup>97</sup> Introductory material taken from Kenyon 148.

- B. Specific background relating to Haggai's prophecy.
1. Upon the first return (536 BC), the altar was re-established amid the ruins of the Temple and sacrifices were once again resumed (Ezr. 3:1-6).
  2. In the second year after the first return, the foundation of the Temple was laid, accompanied by great rejoicing and praise to God (Ezr. 3:8-13).
  3. However, rebuilding of the temple came to a halt because the returning Jews refused to compromise with the people who inhabited the lands (Samaritans) during the Exile (Ezr. 4:1-24).
    - a. Cyrus died in 530 BC, and his successors were not as generous.
    - b. A letter was sent to Artaxerxes, king of Persia, falsely accusing the returning Jews of rebellion, so, as a result, he commanded all rebuilding to cease (Ezr. 4:11-24).
  4. The unfinished temple remained for 16 years while the spirit of defeat and indifference predominated.
    - a. It is to this problem that Haggai is called upon by God to address.
    - b. Haggai is a man of courage with a message, "Build the Temple!"

## Haggai 1

- I. The Lord, through Haggai, rebukes and admonishes the people concerning the unfinished temple (1:1-15).<sup>98</sup>
  - A. Haggai and his commission (1:1).
    1. Haggai precisely dates his prophecy, making his book one of the easiest to date.
    2. Haggai is the instrument through which God speaks/writes (cf. Lev. 8:36; Josh. 14:2).
    3. Haggai directs the prophecy to the two most accountable leaders.
      - a. Zerubbabel, whose name means “seed of Babylon,” is the “governor of Judah.”
        - 1) The extent of his governorship is uncertain, but the word for governor is from Akkadian decent and thus serves as a reminder that his appointment had been made by a Persian king through the providence of God.
        - 2) Zerubbabel is the grandson of King Jehoiachin, thus the heir of David’s throne (cf. Lk. 3:27-32).
        - 3) Zerubbabel may be the same person as Sheshbazzar (cf. Ezr. 1:8, 11; 3:8, 10; 5:14, 16).
      - b. Joshua, whose name means “Jehovah is salvation,” is the high priest.
  - B. The people are rebuked for their indifference toward God’s work (1:2-6).
    1. They are more concerned with their own houses than with the Lord’s (1:2-4).
      - a. The people make excuses for their negligence of the Temple (1:2).
        - 1) Notice God says, “This people” instead of “My people.”
        - 2) Their primary excuse is that “the time has not come.”
      - b. The people are not focused on the Lord’s work (1:3, 4).
        - 1) The people made sure that their own houses were comfortable, while the Lord’s house remained unfinished.
        - 2) It is not inherently sinful to maintain a comfortable home; it only becomes a sin when, by doing so, the Lord’s work is neglected (Mt. 6:33).
    2. The people should have recognized God’s displeasure with them by the lack of blessings given by Him (1:5, 6).
      - a. Blessings (or a lack thereof) do not always indicate God’s approval/disproval (cf. Job; Mt. 5:43-45).
      - b. “Consider” is a characteristic expression of Haggai which calls his hearers to reflect on events in light of God’s word and providence (1:5).
      - c. God spoke to them through lack of blessing, yet they did not hear (1:6; cf. Amos 4:6-12).
        - 1) Although they work hard in the field, they do not have enough to eat.
        - 2) Their vineyards are not productive.
        - 3) Their clothing is insufficient to warm them.
        - 4) Their wages seem to disappear (likely due to inflation).
  - C. The people are admonished to get busy on rebuilding the temple (1:7-11).
    1. God will be pleased when they get to work (1:7, 8).

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid

- a. The solution to their problems: “Build the house!”
  - b. They are to bring wood for building (1:8).
    - 1) “The mountains” probably refers to the Lebanon range from where they imported cedar trees (cf. Ezr. 3:7).
    - 2) Other materials are not mentioned, likely because they are already available.
  - c. God is pleased and glorified when His work is being done (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Mt. 5:16; Jn. 17:4).
2. Leaving the temple in ruins is why the Lord withheld His abundant blessings (1:9-11).
- D. The people respond favorably to the word of the Lord (1:12-15).
- 1. The leaders, along with the people, obey God (1:12).
    - a. The “remnant” refers to the small number of Jews who returned from Babylon (cf. Isa. 10:21; 11:11, *et al*).
    - b. “The people feared the presence of the Lord” indicates that they recognized their inactivity as sin.
  - 2. The people are encouraged by the Lord (1:13, 14).
    - a. “I am with you” = the assurance of God’s help (1:13; cf. Mt. 28:20).
    - b. The Lord’s assurance is motivation for the people to work (1:14).
      - 1) “Stirred up the spirit” is to awake the spirit of a person; to make one willing and glad to carry out God’s will (cf. 1 Chron. 5:26; 2 Chron. 21:16; Ezr. 1:1).
      - 2) Having been corrected, the people took action.
  - 3. Twenty-three days elapsed before this work began (1:15; cf. 1:1).

## Haggai 2

- I. The Lord, through Haggai, encourages the disheartened people to work (2:1-9).
  - A. The disappointment of the past is translating into discouragement about the present and future (2:1-3).
    1. This section of Haggai's prophecy comes almost a month after the work began (2:1 cf. 1:15).
      - a. During this time, it is probable that that the work concentrated on preparing the site and the ruined Temple for construction.
      - b. The seventh month also involved many major festivals such as the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and various harvest celebrations (cf. Lev. 23:23-44; Deut. 16:13-15).
    2. The message is given to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the "remnant" (2:2).
    3. A source of their discouragement comes from a shallow comparison (2:3).
      - a. There are some among the remnant who witnessed the glory of the Temple build by Solomon.
      - b. When compared to the present state of the Temple, the ruins are "as nothing."
        - 1) The remnant does not have the resources pay skilled craftsmen, nor can they embellish the interior with gold as did Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 5-6).
        - 2) An unfair and unfavorable comparison between the glory of the past and the ruins of the present contribute to discouragement.
  - B. God's response to their discouragement: "Be strong" (2:4, 5)!
    1. Their true strength comes from the Lord (2:5; cf. Eph. 6:10).
      - a. "Be strong" is a common exhortation of the Lord when His people face great challenge (cf. Deut. 31:6, 7; Josh. 1:6, 7, 9, 18: 10:25).
      - b. Although God provides strength, His people must do their part; namely, "work!"
    2. The Lord's presence ("I am with you") gives courage, determination, and the assurance that He will not permit His cause to fail (cf. Isa. 41:10; Jer. 1:8, 19; *et al*).
    3. A proper understanding of the Lord's covenant removes fear (2:5).
      - a. God is with them now as He was in the Exodus.
        - 1) At Sinai, God claimed Israel as His own (Ex. 19:5, 6).
        - 2) Nothing would prevent that covenant from being fulfilled.
      - b. The same "Spirit" that empowered leaders of the past (Moses [Num. 11:17], Joshua [Num. 27:18], and David [1 Sam. 16:13]) will see that God's will is accomplished now and in the future.
      - c. Therefore, "fear not!"
  - C. The future "house" of the Lord will be far more glorious than the former (2:6-9).
    1. The Lord will intervene and fill His house (2:6, 7).
      - a. It seems clear that God has in mind not an earthly temple, but the future house of the Lord.
      - b. "it is a little while" seems to convey the message, "wait just a little while."
      - c. When the time comes, God will "shake" all of creation; "shaking" is often used to describe God's intervention to uproot and overthrow nations (cf. Isa. 13:10-13; Joel 2:10).

- d. As a result of the Lord's "shaking" of creation, His house shall be filled with glory.
    - 1) The "shaking" of the nations seems best to refer to the divinely decreed rise and fall of nations from this time until the coming of the Messiah (cf. 2:20-23).
    - 2) The "desire of all nations" seems to be a reference to the church.
  - 2. The Lord will provide the "silver" and "gold" which are already His (2:8).
  - 3. The Lord's "latter temple" will be greater than the former (2:9).
    - a. This, again, is ultimately fulfilled in the "Temple" that Christ built (cf. Mt. 12:6; Jn. 2:19-22).
    - b. In the "latter temple" the Lord promises peace – a characteristic fulfilled in the church (cf. Isa. 9:6, 7; Zec. 6:12, 13; Eph. 2:15-17).
- II. The Lord, through Haggai, promises blessings (2:10-23).
- A. Although there was some favorable response by the people, the Lord has not been fully pleased with their efforts up to this point.
    - 1. This prophecy comes about two months after the last message and exactly three months after the people began working again (2:10; cf. 2:1; 1:15).
    - 2. Zechariah began his ministry shortly before this time (cf. Zec. 1:1).
  - B. The people are unclean (2:10-14).
    - 1. The questions that are here posed, directed towards the priests (who should be familiar with the law), are asked in order to make a point (2:11-13).
      - a. A garment which is holy cannot impart holiness (2:12; cf. Lev. 6:27)
      - b. On the other hand, contact with a corpse renders one unclean along with all that he or she touches (2:13 cf. Num. 19:11-22).
    - 2. The correct answers to these questions have a direct application to the people and nation (2:14).
      - a. Israel had been originally set apart for the Lord (cf. Ex. 19:5, 6), but they have defiled themselves by coming into contact with that which was unclean.
        - 1) The ruined temple stood like a corpse in their midst, testifying to their sins of negligence.
        - 2) Neither the land to which they have returned, nor the altar that they had built can impart holiness to them.
        - 3) Notice again that God uses the term "this people" rather than "my people" (cf. 1:2).
      - b. Since they are defiled by their sin of negligence, everything that they touch is unclean.
  - C. A consideration of their past reveals that their uncleanness has resulted in severe reductions of produce (2:15-17; cf. notes on 1:9-11).
  - D. A look forward reveals a major difference: The Lord will bless them (2:18, 19).
- III. The Lord, through Haggai, assures future spiritual blessings (2:20-23).
- A. The Lord addresses this prophecy toward Zerubbabel (2:20, 21).
    - 1. This message comes on the same day as the previous one (2:20 cf. 2:10).
    - 2. Zerubbabel is the leader of the nation and a descendant of David (2:21; cf. Mt. 1:12; Lk. 3:27).
  - B. The Lord will defeat all rival kingdoms (2:21, 22).
  - C. The Lord will make Zerubbabel His seal of authenticity (2:23).

1. “In that day” points to a future time in which the heathen nations have been overthrown.
2. Zerubbabel will be as a signet ring to the Lord.
  - a. A “signet” was a king’s official seal used to endorse all official documents and was so valuable that it was worn on the king’s person, usually as a ring (cf. Est. 8:10).
  - b. Zerubbabel would thus be God’s “official endorsement” remaining inseparably connected to Him.
3. This promise is not fulfilled in the person of Zerubbabel, but in his lineage as a son of David.
  - a. The promise made to David (2 Sam. 7:11-14) is now renewed in Zerubbabel, the one through whom the Messiah would come.
  - b. Of His kingdom there will be no end (cf. Dan. 2:44; 1 Cor. 15:24).

## Zechariah

- I. Zechariah, whose name means “he whom Jehovah remembers,” is both a prophet and a priest.<sup>99</sup>
  - A. Zechariah was a popular name in the Old Testament (about 30 different people bear the name).
  - B. Zechariah’s genealogy shows his priestly descent (1:1).
    1. Zechariah was among the group of priests who returned from Babylon under the leadership of Zerubbabel in 536 BC (Neh. 12:4, 16).
    2. Internal evidence from the book also suggests that Zechariah was a priest.
      - a. Not only is Zechariah concerned that the Temple be complete, he has a special appreciation for the high priest (cf. 3:1-10).
      - b. Zechariah knows that the priest is absolutely necessary if the remnant is to have a meaningful relationship with the Lord.
      - c. Zechariah, like Ezekiel, is concerned for the cleansing of the land, removing its defilement (cf. 3:9; 5:3, 6-11).
  - C. As a prophet, Zechariah is called upon to help Haggai in motivating the completion of the Temple (1:1 cf. Haggai 2:1, 10).
    1. The text reveals that Zechariah is very familiar with the pre-exilic prophets (2:13 [cf. Hab. 2:20]; 3:2 [cf. Am. 4:11]; 3:10 [cf. Mic. 4:4]).
    2. Zechariah may be considered a sequel to Haggai in which Zechariah looks beyond the immediate Temple to the Messianic house of God.
      - a. In the opinion of many scholars, Zechariah is the most Messianic book in the entire Old Testament.
      - b. If Haggai may be compared to the builder of the temple, responsible for the solid structure, Zechariah would be the artist, responsible for the colorful windows of symbolism, glory, and light.
- II. According to the book itself, Zechariah prophesied in 520-518 BC (1:1, 7; 7:1).
  - A. Zechariah dates his prophecy in reference to the reign of Darius I (521-486 BC).
  - B. Some say that chapters 9-14 were written at a much later date, but that conclusion is not necessary.
- III. Historical background during Zechariah’s ministry is the same as that of Haggai.
  - A. The temple built by Solomon was destroyed along with Jerusalem in 586 BC.
  - B. Upon the first return under Zerubbabel, the altar was re-established and later, the foundation of the Temple was laid (Ezr. 3:1-13).
    1. The rebuilding of the Temple was brought to a halt by Artaxerxes because he believed a false report against the returning Jews (Ezr. 4:1-24).
    2. The Temple having remained in an incomplete state for 16 years, Haggai was called upon by God to motivate the remnant to resume reconstruction.
    3. Zechariah entered the scene two months after Haggai when enthusiasm was very low.
  - C. The success of God’s word through Zechariah (and Haggai) is evident in that the Temple was completed in 516 BC (Ezr. 6:14-15).
- IV. Some have questioned the authenticity of and unity of the book of Zechariah.
  - A. Although most scholars agree that chapters 1-8 are from the hand of Zechariah, many question chapters 9-14.

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<sup>99</sup> Introductory material taken from Kenyon 159.

- B. Arguments against chapters 9-14 being from Zechariah include:
1. Zechariah's name appears three times in 1-8 (1:1, 7; 7:1), but is nowhere mentioned in 9-14.
  2. There are no dates or explicit references to known events to make clear the historical setting in 9-14.
  3. The main theme of rebuilding the Temple seems to play no part in 9-14.
  4. There are no visions in 9-14.
  5. Key phrases found in 1-8 are not found in 9-14 and vice versa.
- C. These differences, however, do not necessitate a different author.
1. There is no manuscript evidence that suggests a different author for 9-14.
    - a. When every argument is considered, the fact still remains that all fourteen chapters have been handed down to us as one book in every manuscript so far discovered.
    - b. The alleged disunity of Zechariah seems to be based upon the false assumption that scripture is the product of man that has evolved over time.
  2. Although much focus has been given to differences between chapters 1-8 and 9-14, there are some similarities that must not be overlooked.
    - a. Pre-exilic prophets are referred to and quoted throughout the book.
    - b. Some key phrases occur throughout the book.
      - 1) "Rejoice, O daughter of Zion" (2:10; 9:9).
      - 2) "No man passed through" (7:14; 9:8) – the Hebrew wording is identical in both verses and occurs nowhere else in the OT.
    - c. Stylistic devices are common throughout the book.
    - d. There are similarities of thought such as the need for cleansing (1:4; 3:4, 9; 5:1-11; 13:1, 9), the overthrow and conversion of Israel's enemies (1:21; 2:8, 9; 8:20-23; 9:1-8; 12:4; 14:16), and the hope of the Messiah (6:12, 13; 9:9, 10).
  3. The fact that Zechariah, like most of the prophets, prophesied about his immediate situation as well as the future Messianic kingdom can account for any literary differences that may be present in the book.
  4. At the heart of the criticism is the desire to disprove the scriptures inspiration and thus its power.

## Zechariah 1

- I. Repent: For the word of the Lord endures (1:1- 6).<sup>100</sup>
  - A. Introduction to the prophecy (1:1).
    - 1. Zechariah precisely dates his book in reference to King Darius' reign.
    - 2. The source of his message is the "word of the Lord."
  - B. The Lord calls for the people to turn back to him (1:2-6).
    - 1. The Lord was displeased with the post-explicit Israelites (1:2).
      - a. Their corruption was incurable (cf. 2 Chron. 36:14-16).
      - b. The Lord's displeasure resulted in their captivity (cf. Isa. 60:10; Jer. 21:5).
    - 2. Though the former generation failed, there is hope for these people (1:3).
      - a. "Therefor" not only introduces the message, but marks the dawning of a new era.
      - b. "Return to me... and I will return to you" is the personal invitation to a personal relationship with God (cf. Mal. 3:7).
    - 3. These people must not repeat the mistakes of their forefathers (1:4).
      - a. Their forefathers were beckoned by the prophets to return 2 Kings 17:13; Jer. 18:11; 25:5).
      - b. Their fathers refused to listen (2 Kings 17:14-20; Jer. 17:23).
    - 4. Though their forefathers have passed away, the word of the Lord endures (1:5, 6).
- II. Zechariah's first vision: Patrollers of the earth – The Lord has not forgotten Jerusalem (1:8-17).
  - A. Zechariah see's a lead rider accompanied by an array of horse troops with him (1:8).
    - 1. Though many have speculated, the significance of the different colors (red, sorrel [speckled], and white) of the horses is unknown.
    - 2. However, we do see similar imagery in Revelation 6:1-6 that may provide us with some insight.
  - B. The horsemen are watchmen for the Lord, sent out to keep the Lord informed (1:9, 10).
  - C. The report of the horsemen: the earth is at rest (1:11).
    - 1. Initially, this may sound like a good thing.
    - 2. However, read in light of Haggai 2:7, it is clear that this report is bad news for the Jews; the earth has not yet been shaken.
  - D. The Lord gives comforting words (1:12-15).
    - 1. The Lord is questioned as to how long He will allow Jerusalem and Judah to suffer (1:12).
      - a. The angel of the Lord (the "man" from v. 8) intercedes for the people.
      - b. There were two periods of "seventy years" that associated with Judah's captivity: the seventy years of bondage in Babylon (606-536 BC [cf. Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10]), and the seventy years between the destruction of the Temple and its reconstruction (586-516 BC).
    - 2. The basis of the Lord's comforting words is given (1:13-15).

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<sup>100</sup> Kenyon 161.

- a. “I am zealous for Jerusalem” implies that God’s covenant love for Jerusalem will not be supplanted and that He will see through the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
    - b. The Lord used the nations to punish his people, but they abused that position (cf. with evil intent; 1:15; Hab. 1:11).
  - E. The promises of the Lord’s comforting words (1:16, 17).
    - 1. The Lord will return to Jerusalem and His house will be built!
      - a. At one point, the Lord departed from the Temple (Ezk. 10:18, 19; 11:23), but now he will return with “mercy”, a term sometimes linked to the rebuilding of the city (cf. Jer. 30:18).
      - b. The mention of a “surveyors line” is a clear indication that plans have been drawn up to rebuild Jerusalem.
    - 2. Jerusalem will once again be prosperous and secure.
- III. Second Vision: four horns and four craftsmen – The Lord will destroy the enemies of His people (1:18–21).
  - A. Zechariah see’s four horns; horns are a symbol of strength (1:18; cf. Dan. 7:7, 8; Amos 6:13).
  - B. The four horns are four world powers that have been responsible for scattering the Lord’s people (1:19).
    - 1. While some have attempted to identify the horns as specific nations, it seems best to leave them as repressing any and all people who have opposed God’s people.
    - 2. Therefore, these horns represent all the enemies of the Lord’s people.
  - C. In the second half of his vision, Zechariah see’s four craftsmen (1:20, 21).
    - 1. “Craftsmen [smiths ASV; carpenters KJV]” is a general term referring to a workman (context determines the particular trade being referenced).
    - 2. The four craftsmen have come to “terrify” the horns and to cast them out (1:21).

## Zechariah 2

- I. Third Vision: A Man With a Measuring Line – The Lord Will Restore the City (2:1-13).<sup>101</sup>
- A. Zechariah sees a man with a measuring line (2:1, 2).
    - 1. This man would have been surveying the land in preparation for its restoration.
    - 2. Zechariah has already alluded to the rebuilding of the city (cf. 1:16).
  - B. There is no need to measure Jerusalem, for it will need no walls (2:3-5).
    - 1. “Another angel” commands that the surveyor be restrained from measuring (2:3, 4a).
    - 2. Jerusalem will be inhabited as a town without walls (2:4b).
      - a. The constant growth from all who will wish to enter the city prevents city walls (cf. Ezk. 38:11).
      - b. This city cannot be over crowded (cf. Isa. 2:2).
    - 3. The Lord will be the protection and glory of the city (2:5).
      - a. “Wall of fire” denotes the idea that no enemy will be able to enter the city because it is providentially protected (cf. Deut. 4:24; Isa. 4:3-6).
      - b. God “will be the glory in her midst” because all will glorify Him as a result of His protection and presence (cf. Ex. 40:34).
  - C. Zechariah reinforces the implication of the second and third visions (2:6-13).
    - 1. Exiles must flee from the nations, for they shall be destroyed (2:6-9).
      - a. “Up, up!” Is an exhortation from sympathy and pity addressed to the Jews still in exile (cf. Isa. 55:1).
      - b. “Land of the north” refers to the area from which invasion would come and in which the exiles were carried (cf. Jer. 1:14; 6:22; 10:22).
    - 2. God will “shake” the nations, turning them into spoil (2:8, 9).
  - D. Come to Jerusalem, for there the Lord will dwell (2:10-13).
    - 1. The Lord’s city will include all nations (2:10, 11).
      - a. “Sing and rejoice” because the Lord will once again be enthroned among His people (cf. Zeph. 3:14, 15).
      - b. “Many nations shall be joined to the Lord” makes it clear that God has in mind even the gentiles (cf. Isa. 2:2, 3).
    - 2. The Lord will once again take possession of His people (2:12, 13).
      - a. “Inherit Judah” refers to the people as the Lord’s inheritance, not the geographical location (Ex. 34:9; Deut. 32:9).
      - b. The “holy land” is wherever God dwells (cf. Ps. 2:6; 15:1; 48:2; 99:9).
      - c. The people are instructed to “be silent” to show reverence toward the Lord because of His greatness (cf. Hab. 2:20).wcdVD

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<sup>101</sup> Kenyon 164.

## Zechariah 4

- I. Fifth Vision: The Golden Lampstand and Two Olive Trees – God’s power will Enable the Completion of the Lord’s house (4:1-7).<sup>102</sup>
  - A. Zechariah sees a Golden Lampstand between two olive trees (4:1-3).
    1. Although the lampstand that Zechariah sees is subject to various descriptions, the prophet has no problem identifying it, indicating that it looked like other lamps with which he was familiar (4:1, 2).
    2. The two olive trees that stand adjacent to the lampstand on either side are the source of its oil (4:3).
  - B. The Lord’s power will remove all obstacles (4:4-7).
    1. The angel expects Zechariah to understand the vision (4:5, 6).
    2. The message specifically concerns Zerubabel, the governor of Judah (4:6a)
    3. The vision assures that God’s power, not man’s, will be responsible for the completion of the task (4:6b, 7).
      - a. “Might...power” = military power, human strength, and prowess.
      - b. “My Spirit” may refer to the Holy Spirit (cf. Gen. 1:2) or to God’s “breath” of life (cf. Ex. 15:8, 10; 2 Sam. 22:16; Ezk. 37:9).<sup>103</sup>
      - c. No obstacle is too difficult for the Lord to overcome (4:7; Mt. 17:20).
      - d. The “capstone” signifies the “stone of primary importance,” and since the foundation of the Temple has already been laid (Ezr. 3:8-13), it must refer to the finishing stone which would complete the Temple.
- II. God will use His Servants to Accomplish His Will (4:8-14).
  - A. The Temple will be completed during Zerubbabel’s Governorship (4:8-10).
    1. Completion of the Temple will provide further evidence that the Lord, His angels, and His messenger are true (4:8, 9).
    2. Discouragement and lack of faith will be replaced by rejoicing due to accomplishment (4:10).
  - B. The two olive trees symbolize an inexhaustible supply of oil (4:11-14).
    1. The angel has explained the meaning of the lampstand, but what about the olive trees (4:11, 12)?
      - a. The prophet introduces a new element in the vision that has not yet been described – “two golden pipes” (4:12).
      - b. The Hebrew word translated “pipes” is used nowhere else in the OT, thus its exact meaning is unknown, but given the lamp imagery, they seem to be supply tubes which keep oil going to the lamps.
    2. The olive trees are the Lord’s anointed (4:13, 14).
      - a. The “anointed ones” are Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the Governor.
      - b. Under the Law, these two offices were held by men who were anointed: High Priest (Ex. 30:30; Lev. 8:30) and king (1 Sam. 10:1; 2 Kings 9:1-6).
  - C. How this vision encourages the completion of the Temple:
    1. The lampstand seems to represent the God-glorifying influence of the remnant through the finishing of the Temple (cf. Mt. 5:14-16).

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<sup>102</sup> Kenyon 168.

<sup>103</sup> The Hebrew word for “spirit (רוח)” can be translated: breath, wind, spirit, blast, mind, vain, cool, side.

- a. In this post-exilic setting, Joshua and Zerubbabel were to keep the “light” burning by doing and encouraging God’s will among the people.
  - b. Joshua and Zerubbabel, “standing” by the Lord, have an unlimited supply of “oil” (cf. “My Spirit,” 4:6).
2. The church, God’s spiritual temple, is to be the God-glorifying influence today (cf. Rev. 1:10).
    - a. Jesus the Christ is the true light (Jn. 8:12; 12:46), and He will empower us to do His will (cf. Phil. 4:13).
    - b. We must keep the “light” burning (cf. Acts 13:47; Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15).

## Zechariah 5

- I. Sixth Vision: A Flying Scroll – The Lord Will Judge Those Who Break The Covenant (5:1-4).<sup>104</sup>
- A. Zechariah sees an opened scroll flying in the sky for all to read (5:1, 2).
1. A “scroll” was made of leather or parchment and was rolled up on two sticks.
  2. This scroll is flying like an opened banner (5:2).
    - a. This scroll was of unusual dimensions (“twenty cubits” by “ten cubits” = approximately 30’ x 15’).
    - b. Although some compare this size to the porch Solomon built (1 Kings 6:3) and indicate that the scroll demands holiness upon all who draw near to God in the temple, nothing in the text would demand such a conclusion.
- B. The scroll contains a two-fold curse (5:3).
1. “Curse” is used several times in connection with a covenant (cf. Gen. 24:41; 26:28; Deut. 29:12; Ezk. 16:59).
    - a. The Mosaic covenant involved “blessings” to those who kept it and “curses” to those who broke it (cf. Deut. 28).
    - b. The curses are thus directed toward the covenant-breakers.
    - c. Therefore, “the whole earth,” understood in this context, would indicate the people of God, those of the covenant.
  2. One side of the scroll curses thieves and the other side of the scroll curses those who swear falsely (5:3).
    - a. “Every thief” represents those who express covetousness and violate the law (Ex. 20:15).
    - b. “Every perjurer” represents those who attach God’s name to an oath, but has no intention to keep that oath, and thus violates the covenant (Ex. 20:16; Lev. 19:12).
  3. The penalty is the same – each shall be “expelled.”
- C. The Lord assures their destruction (5:4)!
1. The Lord’s curse will find its way where man’s judicial system cannot – in the private lives of His people (cf. Ps. 147:15; Isa. 55:11).
  2. The Lord’s curse will be like a consuming fire, remaining in the family of transgressors until destruction is complete.
- II. Seventh Vision: A Woman Contained Inside an Basket – Wickedness Will Be Removed From the Land (5:5-11).
- A. Zechariah sees a woman sitting inside a basket (5:5-7).<sup>105</sup>
1. Zechariah probably recognizes what he sees, but he does not know its significance, hence the question, “What is it?” (5:5, 6b).
  2. Inside the basket sits a woman (5:6b, 7).
    - a. The basket and what it contains represents the people.
    - b. The “lead disc” would have been a lid for the basket (5:7).
    - c. The woman, made visible by lifting the lid, shows that she, like the evil she represents, is mostly hidden from sight.
- B. The woman inside the basket represents wickedness (5:8).

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<sup>104</sup> Kenyon 170.

<sup>105</sup> An “ephah” (basket NKJV) is a unit of measurement (for dry goods) that is equivalent to 23 liters, or 5 gallons.

1. Because the Hebrew word is feminine, wickedness, the opposite of righteousness, is often personified as a woman (5:8a; Isa. 1:21; Hos. 2:5; Ezk. 23).
2. Wickedness is strong, but not stronger than God's power (5:8b).
- C. The basket, with its wickedness, is carried far away (5:9-11).
  1. Zechariah sees two winged women lifting up the basket (5:9).
  2. The basket is being carried to Shinar (5:10, 11).
    - a. "Shinar" is the name of a region of Babylon in which cities were established that, from their earliest existence, stood in rebellion to God (cf. Gen. 10:10, 11; 11:1-9; Dan. 1:2).
    - b. "Shinar" is sometimes representative of Babylon as a whole.
    - c. "Shinar" here symbolizes the place of Satan, the place for wickedness (cf. Rev. 18:2, 10, 21).

## Zechariah 6

- I. Eighth Vision: Four Chariots with Colored Horses – The Lord is in Control (6:1-8).<sup>106</sup>
  - A. Zechariah sees four chariots with different colored horses coming from between two bronze mountains (6:1-3).
    - 1. The two bronze mountains represent the gateway to heaven through which these heavenly horses pass.
    - 2. Although we can't be certain, it is possible that the colors of these horses have a similar significance to those that John saw (Rev. 6:1-8).
      - a. "Red" = persecution and bloodshed.
      - b. "Black" = grief and famine
      - c. "White" = honor and victory
      - d. "Dappled" = strong and powerful
  - B. The horse drawn chariots are sent from the presence of the Lord to various parts of the world (6:4-6).
    - 1. The horses are God's messengers (6:4, 5).
      - a. The four "spirits of heaven" (6:5) liken the horses to God's "winds" which He sends to accomplish His will (cf. Jer. 49:36; 51:1; Dan. 7:2).
      - b. They "go out" with the message of God.
    - 2. The chariots with black and white horses go "north" (6:6a).
      - a. "The north country" is representative of Babylonian and Assyrian cruelty (cf. Jer. 1:14; 4:6; 6:22).
      - b. The white horses which "go after them" are either going beyond, possibly extending west, or are simply following the black horses.
    - 3. The chariots with "dappled" horses are going south (6:6b).
      - a. The "south country" is representative of Egyptian cruelty (cf. Isa. 30:1-6).
      - b. With horses headed north and south, all of God's enemies are confronted.
    - 4. The chariots with red horses are not mentioned; some say that a word or phrase is missing from the Hebrew text.
  - C. The horse drawn chariots fulfill the commission of the Lord (6:7, 8).
- II. The Crowning of Joshua the High Priest(6:9-15).
  - A. The crowing of the High Priest is attached to the final vision to point to the One for whom the Temple is intended (cf. Mal. 3:1).
  - B. Joshua, the High Priest, is to be crowned (6:9-11).
    - 1. The introduction (the word of the Lord came to me) indicates that this is not another vision, but an oracle from God.
    - 2. Zechariah is to take silver and gold from some returning captives in order to make a crown (6:10, 11a).
    - 3. This crown was to be placed on the head of Joshua the High Priest.
      - a. Crowning a High Priest would be something completely foreign to Israel, as it was not a part of God's instructions for the High Priests.

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<sup>106</sup> Kenyon 173.

- b. Therefore, the crowning of Joshua must be symbolic for a more significant event!
- C. Joshua's crowning points to the coronation of One who is greater (6:12, 13).
  - 1. The Branch shall build the ultimate Temple of the Lord (6:12).
    - a. "Branch" refers to the Messiah (cf. Isa. 11:1, 10; Jer. 23:5).
    - b. "Branch out of His place" = He will come unexpectedly, where there is seemingly no hope, as a "root out of dry ground" (Isa. 53:2).
  - 2. In addition to building the Temple, the Branch will:
    - a. "Bear the glory" is to be clothed with splendor, honor, and power (cf. Jn. 17:5, 24).
    - b. "Sit and rule on His throne" shows Jesus sovereignty as King (cf. Matt. 28:18).
    - c. "Be a priest on His throne" combines kingly and priestly functions in the Branch (cf. Heb. 7:28).
- D. The crown of excellence is to be kept in the Temple as a memorial (6:14).
- E. The ultimate Temple will include all people (6:15).
  - 1. The "Temple," as here discussed, is not a literal structure, but a spiritual temple (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5).
  - 2. Those who are "from afar off" are Gentiles (Isa. 2:2, 3).

## Zechariah 7

- I. The People Inquire of the Lord About a Fifth Month Fast (7:1-3).<sup>107</sup>
  - A. This prophecy is dated 518 BC, almost two years after the “night visions” (7:1; cf. 1:7).
  - B. A delegation was sent to ascertain the Lord’s will about the fast (7:2, 3a).
    1. While there is some difficulty surrounding the translation of this section,<sup>108</sup> it is evident that fasting was a subject of great concern.
    2. “Priests” and “prophets” are the proper ones to consult because they are God’s divinely appointed representatives.
  - C. The question directly concerns a post-mosaic fast (7:3b).
    1. The question is asked on behalf of the community represented by the delegates.
    2. The fast of the “fifth month” marked the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 2 Kings 25:8-11; Jer. 52:12, 13).
      - a. It is unclear how long the fast was to last, but the people would have abstained from all food for a time.
      - b. For seventy years the Jews observed this fast, but now the Temple is being reconstructed and the Lord is reestablishing His city; their question is: will it still be necessary to keep the fast?
- II. The Lord Responds to the Question (7:4-14).
  - A. Their fasting was not for the Lord (7:4-7).
    1. God responded to their question through the prophet Zechariah (7:4, 5a).
    2. This fast was not something that God required of them (7:5b).
      - a. The “seventh month” fast was in memory of the murder of Gedaliah, the governor appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, and a number of Jews at Mizpah (cf. 2 Kings 25:25).
      - b. The Lord authorized only one day of the year for a national fast: the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16:29-34; 23:26-32).<sup>109</sup>
      - c. Other self-proclaimed fasts included the ninth day of the fourth month which marked the date Jerusalem’s wall was breached (Jer. 39:2), and the tenth day of the tenth month which marked the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kings 25:1, 2; Jer. 39:1).
      - d. Their motive for fasting was their own self-pity.
    3. Their eating and drinking amounted to self-satisfaction (7:6).
    4. Their selfishly motivated fasting would have never occasioned if they would have listened to the former prophets (7:7).
      - a. Jerusalem would have still been prosperous and its region teeming with life if only it had heeded the warnings of the prophets.
      - b. The ravaged and ruined landscapes bear witness to their refusal to hear the earlier prophets.

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<sup>107</sup> Kenyon 176.

<sup>108</sup> Zechariah 7:2–3 (ASV): Now they of Beth-el had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to entreat the favor of Jehovah, and to speak unto the priests of the house of Jehovah of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?

<sup>109</sup> The phrase, “afflict your souls” in these texts should be understood as a call to fasting.

- B. The Lord has always required a righteous manner of life, whether one fasted or not (7:8-10).
  - 1. The Lord is now saying what He has already said by the former prophets (7:8, 9a).
  - 2. Four precepts sum up the standards by which God has always required His children to live (7:9b, 10 cf. Mic. 6:8).
    - a. “Execute true justice” = doing what is right to all people, thus promoting peace and harmony (cf. Ex. 18:19-23; Jer. 7:5; Ezk. 18:8, 9).
    - b. “Show mercy and compassion” = showing love and generosity (cf. Hos. 6:6; 12:6).
    - c. “Do not oppress...” = do not exploit the weak (cf. Ex. 22:21-24; Isa. 1:17, 23; Jer. 7:6).
    - d. “Let none of you plan evil in his heart” = do not even consider doing wrong to others (cf. Isa. 32:7; Mic. 2:1).
- C. God’s people in the past stubbornly rejected God’s instruction (7:11, 12a).
- D. The rejection of God’s word through the former prophets resulted in their own destruction (7:12b-14).
  - 1. God’s great wrath resulting from their refusal to obey needed no elaboration, for it is evident all around them (7:12b).
  - 2. God fulfilled His promise not to hear their cries when calamity came (7:13; cf. Isa. 1:15; 59:2; Jer. 7:16).
- E. The point of this first response to the question posed is obvious: obedience to God, not fasting, is what renders one acceptable to Him!
  - 1. Fasting in and of itself is not bad, but it will not make one more religious (cf. Lk. 18:12; Mt. 6:16-18).
  - 2. “Obedience is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22)!