

Minor Prophets

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Minor Prophets Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction

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Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through the Minor Prophets two times.

Introduction

(about 3 pages)

Outline

1. The Success of Old Testament Prophets
2. The Purpose of Old Testament Prophets
3. The Activities of Old Testament Prophets

1. The Success of Old Testament Prophets

A. Prophets who ministered before Joshua

Prophecy and "prophets" existed from the very beginning. For example, Jesus identified Adam and Eve's son Abel as the very first prophet (Luke 11). Enoch, described as the seventh from Adam, prophesied (Jude 14). In Genesis 49, Jacob assembled his sons and in his final blessing he foretold to them what would take place in the distant future. In Exodus 7, God designated Aaron as Moses' prophet, or mouthpiece.

Moses functioned as the ideal model for all later prophets. He interceded between God and the people by approaching God, receiving His word, and reporting back to the people what God said.

B. Prophets who ministered during the judges

Following Moses, God kept sending a succession of prophets who regularly preached to the people to follow God. Unfortunately, the Israelites stubbornly rejected the Word of the Lord (Jer. 7).

The book of Judges (chapter 6) mentions an anonymous prophet who reminded the people of God's past provision and their present disobedience. When Samuel was a boy, the voice of prophecy was rarely heard (1 Sam. 3); but during his adult ministry, a whole "company of prophets" arose (10:5).

Members of this prophetic group were probably disciples of Samuel. It is possible that several such groups arose with each one located at the various stops on Samuel's judicial circuit (7:15–17). Some Israelites wondered if King Saul were not a member of a company of prophets (10; 19).

C. Prophets who ministered during and after David

A host of prophets ministered during the days of the kings of Israel and Judah. They may be classified into two groups: non-canonical prophets, who did not write books of the Bible, and canonical prophets, who did.

One of the more famous non-canonical prophets was Nathan, who prophesied during the reigns of David and Solomon (2 Sam. 7; 1 Kings 1). On one occasion he confronted King David regarding his

sins of adultery and murder (2 Sam. 12). This shows how the true prophets of God demonstrated great courage while making their pronouncements.

The prophet Gad ministered before and during David's reign (1 Sam. 22; 2 Sam. 24; 1 Chron. 21), and Ahijah predicted the division of the kingdom during Solomon's reign (1 Kings 11).

Years later, Micaiah was not afraid to warn King Ahab of his impending death in battle—even though the king's messenger cautioned Micaiah that all four hundred of the king's personal prophets had unanimously foretold success (1 Kings 22). Just like Nathan, Micaiah was not afraid to confront a king. Unlike Nathan, Micaiah was imprisoned because of it.

Probably the two best known non-canonical prophets are Elijah (1 Kings 17—2 Kings 2) and Elisha (2 Kings 2—13). These two prophets announced divine judgment against Israel and performed many miracles. Elijah and Elisha called the people to return to the God of their fathers and to forsake the false gods, especially Baal.

Elijah was fed by ravens at the brook Cherith, and later from the widow's self-replenishing flour bin. He prayed and God sent back the widow's son from the dead, sent fire from heaven upon Mount Carmel, and sent an abundant rain to end the long drought. After the "mountaintop experience" at Carmel, Elijah momentarily lost his courage and fled from Queen Jezebel.

God reassured Elijah of His presence with him and then revealed to Elijah that there were seven thousand other follows of God in Israel too. After returning to Israel, Elijah designated Elisha as his successor by casting his mantle on him. In the end, Elijah was carried to Heaven in a whirlwind after being separated from Elisha by a chariot of fire.

Elisha became Elijah's heir to ministry since he had received a double portion of his master's spirit (2 Kings 2). As Elijah's successor, Elisha performed many miracles. Most notably, Elisha instructed Naaman the Syrian to wash in the Jordan so he would be healed of his leprosy, led the blinded Syrian army to Samaria, performed a miracle with the widow's oil, and raised the Shunammite's son from the dead. Elisha predicted the rise of Hazael to the throne of Syria and sent one of the "sons of the prophets" to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel.

The "sons of the prophets" were all followers of a senior prophet (either Elijah or Elisha). They were not wealthy (2 Kings 4:1; 6:5), and so they survived on the alms of the people (2 Kings 5:15; 8:8; 1 Sam. 9:8) and on their own foraging (2 Kings 4:39). Some lived together and shared meals (2 Kings 4:38—41), others were married and lived in their own houses (2 Kings 4:1,2).

Some of the sons of the prophets acted as messengers for their senior prophet. For example, Elisha called on one of them to anoint Jehu as king over Israel (2 Kings 9:1—10).

In addition to the non-canonical prophets, sixteen canonical prophets wrote seventeen books of the Old Testament. Their writings include the books of Isaiah through Malachi. Jeremiah is the only one to write two books, Jeremiah and the book of Lamentations.

The first five books, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel are known as the Major Prophets. The last twelve of these books, Hosea through Malachi, are known as the Minor Prophets. We do not call them "Minor" in the sense that they are of little significance. We call them "Minor" because the length of their writings are generally much shorter when compared with the much longer prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. In the Hebrew Bible, the Minor Prophets were all copied onto one scroll and were entitled "The Twelve."

Most of the Minor Prophets ministered before the Babylonian captivity. Three ministered after the exile. Some prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel, others to the southern kingdom of Judah, still others to foreign nations.

2. The Purpose of Old Testament Prophets

God sent His servants, the prophets, for a reason. Fundamentally, their function was to convey the word of the Lord. Their messages were of divine origin and were given under divine compulsion. The titles used to designate the Old Testament prophets give insight into their God-given purpose. Two primary English terms appear in the Bible: "seer" and "prophet."

The common title for a prophet during the early years of Israel's history was "seer" (1 Sam. 9). This title emphasized the prophets' role of receiving the divine message. The title "prophet" emphasized the prophet's function of speaking God's message.

The terms "seer" and "prophet" each emphasize a different aspect of the prophetic ministry. As a seer, the man of God received the divine message. As a prophet, he proclaimed that message. The prophets' primary function, then, was to speak the messages that God had revealed to them. Isaiah 30:10 succinctly points to this twofold purpose of seeing and then speaking.

3. Activities of Old Testament Prophets

A. Preaching

The prophets were divinely appointed moral preachers, and they sounded warnings against the dangers of religious apostasy and formalism. In this capacity they sometimes confronted not only the populous at large but priests and kings in particular. Ethical preaching is difficult because no one is perfect but God. Yet God still called His imperfect prophets to this ministry.

B. Detailed predictions

Prophets made numerous predictions concerning the future of Israel and the Gentile nations, and they foretold specific details concerning the coming Messiah. Their Messianic prophecies took two forms. Some prophecies spoke of a suffering Servant (Jesus Christ's first coming) and a victorious King (Jesus Christ's second coming).

C. Great poetry

The prophets were premier orators and great poets. Their messages provide us with the finest literature in the world. To arrest the attention of their audiences, the prophets also communicated at times by means of symbolic acts.

For example, Jeremiah wore a yoke (Jer. 27; 28)

Isaiah walked about naked and barefoot for three years (Isa. 20)

Ezekiel enacted the siege and destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek. 4; 5)

and Ahijah tore a new garment to represent the division of the kingdom (1 Kings 11:30—39).

God will never ask us to go three years without wearing clothes, but He does expect us to have the same courageous obedience we see in His prophets in the Scriptures.

The Book of Hosea

(about 7 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Hosea two times.

Outline

1. Introduction to Hosea
2. Hosea's Marriage and Family (1:2—2:1)
3. The Chastisement and Restoration of Israel (2:2—23)
4. The Restoration of Hosea's Wife (3)
5. Jehovah's Case against Israel Stated (4:1—6:3)
6. Jehovah's Case against Israel Expanded (6:4—11:11)
7. Jehovah's Case against Israel Concluded (11:12-13:16)
8. Israel's Conversion and Restoration (14: 1—9)

1. Introduction to Hosea

Although Hosea is the first minor prophet in the arrangement in our Bibles, he was not the first minor prophet to write a book of Scripture. The books of Joel and Jonah most likely were written before him. Hosea means "Jehovah saves."

1.1 - Hosea was the son of Beerī. Nothing else is known of Hosea's ancestors. His hometown is not mentioned, however, he referred to many places in the Northern Kingdom and so, we assume he was from the Northern Kingdom. Hosea may have grown up in a rural area, for his writing contains references to farm life.

Hosea started his ministry during the reign of Uzziah in Judah and the end of the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel. He completed his ministry in the days of King Hezekiah of Judah and saw the northern kingdom go into captivity. The total years of his ministry were perhaps 40 to 45 years.

Hosea's prophecy probably overlapped at the end of Amos' ministry, so it is possible that Hosea may have known Amos when he was a boy. Both Micah and Isaiah also prophesied at the time of Hosea.

Hosea's book contains portions of messages he preached during his ministry. Three common themes run through them: sin, judgment, and deliverance.

2. Hosea's Marriage and Family (1:2—2:1)

The first three chapters of Hosea deal with the marriage and family of the prophet.

1.2-3a – God told Hosea to marry a “wife of whoredoms.” For many, it seems out of character for God to command marrying a prostitute and it has caused much discussion among Bible teachers as to what a “wife of whoredoms” mean. There are three general thoughts.

1. Gomer was only guilty of spiritual adultery as an idol worshiper. I think this theory is unlikely.
2. Gomer was a prostitute but stopped when she married Hosea. I think this theory is likely.
3. Gomer was pure when God told Hosea to marry her, but later she became unfaithful. Those who hold to this view say that Gomer is used in the book as a picture of Israel. Israel served the Lord at first and then later became unfaithful worshiping other gods.

Hosea and his wife had three children. Each child's name is significant.

A. Jezreel (1:3b–5)

1.3b-5 – Gomer bore Hosea a son and God told him to name him Jezreel. The name "Jezreel" means "God sows" or "God scatters." Jezreel is the name of the valley between the mountains of Samaria and Galilee and also the name of a town located in that valley.

King Ahab had a palace in Jezreel. Next to the palace was the vineyard of Naboth. Ahab wanted the vineyard, but Naboth would not sell it. So, Jezebel, Ahab's wife, had Naboth murdered. Then in 1 Kings 21, Elijah pronounced judgment on Ahab's family. In Jezreel, Jehu carried out the judgment by destroying the line of Ahab and becoming king himself.

But since Jehu did not serve the Lord, God pronounced that Jehu's children to the fourth generation would sit on the throne. At the time Hosea began his ministry, Jeroboam II was king of Israel. He was the third generation of Jehu. He would be the last of the line to live out his life. His son was assassinated after taking the throne (2 Kings 15). This judgment is clearly stated by God in Hosea 1:4.

B. Lo-ruhamah (1:6, 7)

1.6-7 – Gomer then bore Hosea a daughter. God instructed Hosea to name her Lo-ruhamah which means "not pitied," or "not-cared-for." The child was real; and this was her real name, but it also was a symbolic name. It was a prediction of the downfall of Israel.

God said in verse 6, "For I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away." When God withdrew His mercy and protection of Israel, the nation fell to Assyria.

3. Lo-ammi (1:8, 9)

1.8-9 – Gomer then bore Hosea a second son. God instructed Hosea to call his name Lo-ammi, which means "not my people." Because of Israel's sin, God no longer considered the nation to be His people. The Abrahamic covenant is unconditional, and God will never break it; but Israel's sin had nullified the blessings that would have been available for them if they obeyed God.

Then there is a definite shift in tone and God reverses the symbolic names. Hosea stopped talking about the demise of Israel and predicted the restoration of Israel and Judah.

1.10 - God spoke of a great increase in population. Instead of not being God's people (Lo-ammi), they would now be "the sons of the living God".

1.11 - The northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah will be united once more.

2.1 - This portion of Hosea's prophecy has not yet occurred, but it will occur after the future 7-year Tribulation period during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Then those who were scattered will be sown in the land (Jezreel); they will then be Ammi (my people) and Ruhamah (cared for).

Note: In interpreting prophecy there can be time gaps of thousands of years w/i verses (Daniel).

3. The Chastisement and Restoration of Israel (2:2—23)

A. Israel's chastisement (2:2—13)

2.2 - The LORD and Israel are pictured as a husband and wife.

2.5 - Israel turned to idolatry and God likened that to Israel committing spiritual adultery going after "her lover," the Canaanite god, Baal. Baal was considered to be the god of rain and fertility.

2.8 - Israel did not "know" (acknowledge) that these came from Jehovah. God would withdraw these blessings so that Israel's yearly, monthly, and weekly celebrations would cease.

B. Israel's restoration (2:14—23)

2.14 - In the last half of chapter 2, Hosea spoke of the restoration of Israel. The Lord would take Israel to a place where she would be alone with Him and He would speak to Israel tenderly.

2.16 – Ishi means husband and Baali means master - restoration

2.23 - Closes with a play on words of the names of Hosea's three children – sow (Jezreel), will have mercy (Ruhamah), and my people (Ammi) – the last two without the "Lo-"

4. The Restoration of Hosea's Wife (3)

3.1 - Chapter 3 records the restoration of Hosea's wife. Even though she left him, God commanded Hosea to go get her. She had sunk so low that she was up for sale in the slave market.

3.2 - Hosea bought her for the usual price of a slave, paying half in money (fifteen pieces of silver) and the other half in grain.

3.3 - She was to devote herself to him, and he would devote himself to her. Hosea truly loved Gomer.

3.5 - The restoration of Gomer serves as an illustration of the restoration of Israel "in the latter days".

5. Jehovah's Case against Israel Stated (4:1—6:3)

A. The nation's guilt exposed (4:1—19)

4.1a - Hosea 4 begins with a call to Israel to hear the word of the Lord, because the Lord has a case against Israel. The setting is that of a courtroom.

4.1b-2 - Instead of pursuing the virtues of truth, mercy, and the knowledge of God, the nation had fallen into swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery. Israel stood guilty of breaking half of the Ten Commandments.

4.3 - Because of the people's sin, God would send a drought.

4.4-10. The priests were as guilty as the people. The greedy priests encouraged the people's unlawful gain which meant more for themselves because they received a percentage of all the offerings. They had no interest in knowing God and serving Him.

4.12 - The people had fallen into the sin of divination—using sticks to get answers. Their practice including drawing a circle on the ground and dividing it into sections. They assigned an answer to each section of the circle and then held a stick upright in the middle of the circle. When they let go of the stick, they believed it would fall into the section of the circle that represented the answer they should follow. (Thai Buddhism).

4.13-14 - Israel also engaged in cultic prostitution, which was a part of Canaanite worship.

4.15 - Gilgal, the place where Israel had entered the land after crossing the Jordan, had become a place of idol worship. Bethel, where Jacob dreamed had become Beth-aven. After the northern kingdom separated, Jeroboam I made two golden calves and set them up in Bethel and it became a pagan shrine in Israel. Gilgal and Bethel were two of Samuel's circuit covered in the introduction.

4.16-19 - Israel had no intention of returning to the Lord. They stubbornly rejected Him and committed spiritual adultery against Him by seeking help from their false gods.

B. The nation's judgment announced (5:1—14)

5.1 – Judgment is announced

5.5 - Both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah would be judged for their pride and iniquities. Their pride played a major role in keeping them from repentance. God's judgment on His people was two-pronged.

5.6-7 – (1) He would remove His aid from Israel and Judah.

5.8 - (2) There would be war. The enemy would sweep over Israel all the way down to Judah's border. Gibeah, Ramah, and Beth Aven (v. 8) were border towns.

5.9-14 – Assyria would overwhelm the whole northern kingdom of Israel and threaten the southern kingdom of Judah as well.

C. The nation's restoration foreseen (5:15—6:3)

5.15-6.3 - Hosea then turned to end-time events including the eventual repentance and restoration of Israel. The Lord would set aside Israel for the time being but when Israel turns to God at the end of the Tribulation, God will again pour out His blessings on her.

6. Jehovah's Case against Israel Expanded (6:4—11:11)

A. The nation's guilt and punishment (6:4—11:7)

6.4 – Their goodness easily disappeared as the morning cloud and dew.

6.5 - He sent prophets who hewed unfaithful Israel and Judah down to size with words judgment.

6.6 - Empty rituals were not enough to please God. He desired mercy and the knowledge of God.

6.7 - Violence was another major problem in Israel in Hosea's day.

6.8 – Gilead is one example of the depravity of Israel that became a center for wicked men. This town was one of the cities of refuge for manslayers so they could receive justice (Josh. 20:8). Instead, the city became known for violence and injustice.

6.10-11 - Restates the fact of Israel and Judah's then pending punishment. Their punishment would be like a harvest, an event certain to happen.

7.4 - Israel's lust for adultery is likened to a fire in an oven that is burning at low heat while the baker kneads the dough and waits until the yeast has leavened the bread before he turns up the flame. Israel's passion will burst forth.

7.7 - Hosea used the oven figure of speech again. This time Israel is likened to an oven that is hot, referring to the deception and violence, which was prominent in Israel.

7.11 – Then Hosea likens Israel to a “silly” dove, a dove without understanding. They vacillated between allying with Egypt against Assyria or allying with Assyria against Egypt.

After Jeroboam II of Israel died, within a few years, 4 kings of Israel were assassinated. Due to the changing government, Israel's foreign policy was constantly changing. Menahem submitted to Assyria. Pekah helped form an alliance against Assyria. This was crushed by the Assyrians. Hoshea, the last king of Israel, submitted for a time, then rebelled and tried to form an alliance with Egypt against Assyria. As a result, Assyria came and carried the Northern Kingdom into captivity.

7.16 – A deceitful bow is a weapon that does not shoot straight. It will miss the target. When a person returns to God in an outward show only (sacrificing) but not in their heart, they are like a deceitful bow. They have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. The bow appears functional, but the strength of the bow is gone. The shooting of an arrow has no power or ability to do its job.

Chapter 8 contains more picturesque descriptions of the sinful activity of Israel and its destructive result. As an example,

8.9 - As a wild donkey wandering alone, Israel was without help or security. Israel's idolatrous worship and her unstable foreign policy would, in the end, bring her multiplied troubles.

Then in chapter 9, Hosea gives lessons from Israel's history.

9.9 - Israel was corrupt in politics, in religion, and in morals. Hosea compared their corruption to "as in the days of Gibeah". He referred to the crime of Gibeah (Judg. 19).

In the days of the judges, a Levite's concubine left him and returned to her father's house. He went there to get her to return with him. He was taking her home when nightfall came on them. He stayed overnight in the Benjamite city of Gibeah.

There his concubine was brutally raped and murdered by evil men of the city. The next morning the Levite divided her body into twelve pieces and sent one piece to each tribe of Israel. This action brought on a civil war. Israel's morals had fallen to the lowest levels in the days of the judges; in Hosea's day, she was there again.

9.10 - Hosea wrote that Israel "went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto that shame". This was a reference to the time towards the end of Israel's 40-year wandering in the wilderness. Israel was encamped near the borders of Moab. Balak, the king of Moab, hired a prophet named Balaam to put a curse on Israel (Numbers 22-24).

Each time Balaam tried to curse Israel, blessings flowed from his mouth instead. God would not allow Balaam to curse Israel. Then Balaam advised the Moabites and Midianites to engage in sexual immorality with Israel, which is a part of the worship of Baal-Peor. As a result, the judgment of God fell and 24,000 died.

10.14 - Beth Arbel. Hosea brought up another historical event the battle of Beth Arbel. This battle is not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. All we know is what is recorded here. So, it is unfamiliar to us today, but Hosea's audience was well aware of what transpired. What we do know is the leader of Israel's enemy was Shalman who committed great atrocities against the women and children. Hosea said that in like manner that Beth Arbel was defeated so shall it happen to Israel.

11.1 - The Exodus. It is a picture of Israel as a child being led out of Egypt by the hand of God.

11.5-6 - This section closes with a clear prediction of the Assyrian conquest of Israel because they refused to repent.

B. The Lord's compassion (11:8—11)

11.8 - God still loved Israel (compare with 4:17). Admah and Zeboim were among the cities besides Sodom and Gomorrah that God destroyed by fire and brimstone falling from heaven (Deut. 29:23).

The book of Hosea has been described as more sob than speech. Here we see the sobs from the heart of God over people whom He dearly loved in spite of their sin.

7. Jehovah's Case against Israel Concluded

A. The sins of Jacob (11:12—13:3)

As mentioned before, the book of Hosea is made up of portions of messages that Hosea brought over a ministry of 40 to 45 years. Many of these are not necessarily related to each other. In this final section, we find Hosea mentioning highlights from the life of Jacob.

12.3a - Jacob's birth is mentioned.

12.3b-5 - reference is made to Jacob's wrestling with the angel (cf. Gen. 32:24—32) as he returned from his twenty-year stay with his uncle.

12.12 - Jacob's flight to his uncle's home. Why did Jacob flee? What important truth could Israel learn from God's dealings with Jacob? All this was to remind Israel of her deceitful ancestor, but also when Jacob turned to God, He showed goodness to Jacob.

B. The coming destruction (13:4—16)

13.7-8 - God said He would be like a lion, a leopard, and a she-bear bereaved of her cubs and would destroy Israel in judgment.

13.9 - However, it would also be self-destruction, for she destroyed herself by her sins.

8. Israel's Conversion and Restoration (14:1-9)

A. The love of God

The book of Hosea is about sin and judgment, but it is also a book about love and mercy. In the opening chapters we saw the love of Hosea for Gomer, his wayward wife. He brought her back home. In the closing chapter we see Jehovah's love for Israel. Israel is still His chosen people.

14.1 - There is the call to Israel to return to God.

14.2 - Repentant Israel is exhorted to praise God. The "calves of our lips" is a reference to sacrifices of the mouth, that is, to words of praise spoken to God.

14.3 - No longer would Israel trust in Assyria ("Asshur") or military might or idols which she made, but rather in Jehovah.

B. Millennial prosperity

14.4 – Fast forward to the Millennial kingdom. Israel repents in the end times, God will turn away from His anger and will shower the people with His love. Israel shall prosper in the Millennium.

14.5-6 - Hosea likens the nation to a lily, known for its beautiful blossom, and an olive tree, celebrated for its long life and fruitfulness.

14.8 - Restored to her land, revived, and regenerated, Israel will serve the Lord again and will have nothing more to do with idolatry.

The Book of Joel

(about 5 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Joel two times.

Outline

1. Introduction to Joel (1:1)
2. The Plague of Locusts (1:2–4)
3. The Call to weep (1:5-12)
4. The Call to Humility (1:13, 14)
5. The Significance of the Locust Plague (1:15–20)
6. Invasion by the Northern Army (2: 1–11)
7. A Call to Repentance (2: 12–27)
8. The Promise of Blessing (2:28-32)
9. Judgment of the Nations (3:1-17)
10. Restoration of Israel (3: 18–21)

1. Introduction to Joel (Joel 1:1)

1.1 – Joel means “Jehovah is God” (“Jo,” comes from Jehovah and “el,” comes from El or Elohim, meaning God). Joel is a common name in the Bible. There are 13 other men in the Bible with this name. He was the son of Pethuel. This is the only occurrence in Scripture, so nothing more is known of the family.

Joel made references to several places in southern Palestine, so he probably came from Judah and may have lived in Jerusalem. It is thought that he might have been a priest, since he showed great interest in the temple and denounced the priests for their corruption. He was not only a prophet, and perhaps a priest, but also a poet, a man of prayer, and a preacher. He preached a message of repentance. He announced the coming of the great and terrible Day of the Lord (Tribulation time).

Since Joel made no mention of the kings of his day, the date of his prophecy must be determined from internal and external evidence. The Jews put the book in with the early prophets. Joel made no reference to Assyrians or Babylonians as we might expect if he wrote at a later period. Joel referred to the Philistines, Tyre, and Sidon as Israel's enemies, which suggests an earlier period.

Joel wrote with two purposes in mind. One purpose was to point out Judah's need for repentance. The other was to predict the Day of the Lord. The book of Joel was written in stanzas of lyrical poetry appropriate for singing, so the book of Joel could also be called "The Song of Joel."

2. The Plague of Locusts (1:2—4)

1.2-3 – The plague of locusts is the event that Joel is telling the people to talk about for generations. The plague was so bad that there was nothing else like it for five generations.

1.4 - There are four references to locusts: palmerworms, locusts, cankerworm, and caterpillars. Although there are several views on these four, most likely, Joel was describing successive swarms of locust. What one swarm left the next ate, and so on until the land was left desolate.

3. Call to weep (Joel 1:5-12)

Joel called on various types of people to weep and howl.

1.5 - The first group Joel called on were the drunkards. The drunkards were called upon to awake from their intoxication. He called on them to weep, because the supply of their wine would be cut off due to the locusts' destroying the vines. No vines – no grapes. No grapes – no wine!

1.6 - The locusts were described by Joel as a strong and innumerable nation. One locust cannot cause much damage; but there were thousands upon thousands of them! Their outstanding characteristic is their ability to eat. Thus, Joel spoke of them as having the teeth of a lion.

1.7 - Locusts have a great ability to destroy. They devastated the vines and they chewed the bark off the fig trees, exposing the white wood of the branches.

1.8 - The second group of people Joel called on to weep were those who worshipped at the temple. The idea is a bride who mourns the death of the man she was betrothed to or had just married.

1.9-10 - The worship services could not be carried on because the locust plague had destroyed the crops of grain and the olive groves which were need for offerings. The drink offerings included wine, which was also affected by the devastation in the vineyards. All this devastation led to the offerings of the house of the Lord to be cut off.

1.11-12 - The third group of people Joel called on to weep were the farmers. The reason for their mourning was that their produce had been destroyed.

4. The Call to Humility (Joel 1:13, 14)

1.13-14 - The Lord called on the priests to put on sackcloth and lament. The locust plague came as a chastisement from the Lord. The purpose of the chastisement was to lead the people to turn away from their sin. The Lord called on the priests to proclaim a fast, to convene a public gathering in which the leaders of the nation would humble themselves before the LORD and cry mightily unto Him.

5. The Significance of the Locust Plague (Joel 1: 15—20)

1.15 - The plague was a literal invasion of locusts, but it was more significant than that. It was an indication of the coming Great Day of the Lord during the future Tribulation period.

The Day of the Lord refers to a time when God openly intervenes in the affairs of men. Old Testament passages referring to the day of the Lord can speak of either a near term, a soon to be judgment from God, or a far term fulfillment that speaks of the end times from the Tribulation period through the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

Verses 16 through 20 give a detailed description of the aftermath of the locust plague.

1.16 - Starvation stalked the land. Their food was cut off before their very eyes.

1.17 - Following of the locust plague, a drought set in. With no present harvest due to the locusts, and no hope of a future harvest due to the drought, the granaries were deteriorating.

1.18 - The cattle and sheep were suffering as well.

1.19 - The drought, like a fire, had dried up the pastures and the water brooks.

6. The Invasion by the Northern Army (Joel 2:1-11)

Chapter 2 starts with a warning of an incoming invasion. There is some difference of opinions concerning this army. Some take this army to be another locust invasion. Others view the army to be an army of people, an invading foreign nation. I don't know – I can make a case for either scenario.

2.1 – The Jews blew trumpets for different reasons. Sometimes it was on feast days. Sometimes it was to assemble the people. And sometimes as it is the case here in verse one, it was to warn people of an invading army. He warned of the near-term fulfillment of the day of the LORD.

In chapter 3, Joel described the yet future Day of the Lord during the Tribulation time, but here in chapter 2, he said, "It is nigh at hand." He is warning them that judgment is near if they did not repent... which could have been either another wave of locusts after the events of chapter 1 OR a coming army of people. If it was an army of people, it could refer to 100 years later when the Assyrian army besieged Jerusalem in Hezekiah's reign (if they repent – spared; if not - judged).

Is this an army of people or an army of locusts. Let us see what scripture supports each view.

A. An army of people

Some say the army is an army of people. Those who hold this view point out that the locust plague was past but that this invasion is still future. Locusts usually invade Palestine from the southeast, but in v. 20 this army is called a northern army (probably Assyrian or possibly the Babylonians). In v. 2, the army is specifically called "people", but that could be speaking figuratively.

B. An army of locusts

Others say this army is an army of locusts, either a second reference to the locusts of chapter 1, or another wave of locusts that was about to descend on the land. In favor of the "army of locusts view," v. 4 states they were "like" horses and "like" horsemen. That would seem to mean they were not actually horses and horsemen. Also, in v. 9 they are described as running on the walls and climbing up houses and in v. 10 they darken the skies, both of which are characteristics of swarms of locusts.

2.2 - Joel used four terms to describe the darkness of this near-term day of the Lord – darkness, gloominess, day of clouds, and thick darkness. Together they emphasize impenetrable darkness. Joel then spoke of the great number of those in this army.

2.3 - Joel likened the destructiveness of the army to a fire. Before the arrival of the army, Judah's fruitful fields are likened to the Garden of Eden. After this army has passed through, the land is likened to a wasted desert. The country had been burned up, scorched, and reduced to ashes. The word pictures Joel used could indicate either a swarm of locusts or an army of people.

2.4-9 - Joel described the army. If it was an army of people, they looked like horses and horsemen running. Their sound was like the rumbling of chariot wheels and like the crackling of fire. This army was well disciplined and unable to be stopped. The warriors scaled the highest walls. Joel's description could be either an army of people or a swarm of locusts.

2.10 – Those who believe the army is locusts will further use this verse to support their claim.

2.11 – Also God refers to His army and according to v. 25 – God referred to the locusts in chapter one as His army. Despite the destruction of the locusts of Joel 1 and the invasion of the army of Joel 2, looms the future Day of the Lord. It will be such a great and terrible day that no one can endure it.

7. A Call to Repentance (Joel 2:12-27)

2.12 - In view of the approach of such a great army (whether people or locusts), Judah's only hope was to turn to the Lord. Only a genuine repentance would avoid judgment. Genuine repentance is an inner change, but it manifests itself in outward actions. Therefore, God called on the nation to fast and to weep and to mourn.

2.13 - Genuine repentance is not merely an outward ritual, however. God said, "Rend your heart, and not your garments". What God wanted from His people was an inner sorrow, an anguish over sin.

2.15-16. God called everyone to repentance. The elders, the children, the infants, and newly married couples were all singled out. Normally these groups were exempt from the obligation to attend public gatherings in Israel. Since all had sinned, the entire nation was to assemble before God.

2.17 - The priests were exhorted to take the leadership in the nation's turning to God.

2.18 – This is the turning point of the book.

2.19 - If the people genuinely repented and turned to God, God would send them prosperity in the form of bountiful crops.

2.20 - He would also destroy the northern army. Who is the northern army? Those who see locusts as the army would see this army driven into the desert and destroyed by God. Those who take the army to be men see this as another reference to Assyria or Babylon.

2.25-26 - God restored to the nation what she had lost to the locusts and food will be in plenty.

8. The Promise of Blessing (Joel 2:28–32)

2.28-32 – This brings us to a new section of Joel. In the Hebrew Bible these verses are a chapter by themselves, chapter 3. Thus, what we call chapter 3, the Jews call chapter 4.

Peter referred to these verses in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and used these verses as an illustration of a work of the Spirit in his day. Just as on the Day of Pentecost, God poured out the Spirit on some of the people (believers), so will God in the end times pour out His Spirit on all flesh.

The actual fulfillment of these verses is a prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the end times, specifically for when Christ returns to set up His 1,000-year reign, judges the nations, and places Israel in the land God promised to them.

9. Judgment of the Nations (Joel 3:1–17)

The focus of Joel 3 is on the future Day of the Lord. Joel's prophecy of the valley of decision finds its counterpart in Revelation and Jesus' end times discourse (Mt. 24) and the judgment of the sheep and the goats (Mt. 25).

A. The regathering of Israel (3:1)

3.1 - The regathering and restoration of Israel. Two thoughts: (1) Israel became a nation again in 1948 or (2) after the Tribulation at the return of Christ. This is most likely because what is written next.

B. The judgment of the Gentiles (3:2-17)

3.2 - The site of this judgment will be the valley of Jehoshaphat. The geographical location of this valley is unknown as it is not mentioned in any other chapter of the Bible, but many believe it is likely the Kidron Valley on the east side of Jerusalem.

3.2b-8 - The reason for the judgment is the treatment of God's chosen people, Israel. Some see similarities with Jesus' discourse of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25.

3.9-13 - The nations are called to make ready for war, beating their plowshares into swords and their pruning hooks into spears.

3.14-15 – It is God handing down His decision of judgment at the end of the tribulation. There will be astronomical signs in the heavens.

3.16-17 –Having assembled, the nations are judged by the Lord in the valley of Jehoshaphat, they have no chance to defeat the Lord. Return of Christ in Revelation 19.

10. Restoration of Israel (Joel 3: 18–21)

3.18-21 - Joel transitions to a description of the literal 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem that follows the Tribulation. Further, Revelation 20:1-7 refers to “1,000 years” six times. It seems that God desires us to know that the millennial kingdom is a literal time period.

The land will be fruitful. Agriculture will prosper. Water will be abundant.

A river will begin at the temple (2:18) and flow eastward (Ezek. 47). Even the valley of Shittim, normally a dry place, will be well watered.

The Book of Amos

(about 9.5 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Amos two times.

Outline

1. Amos's Prophetic Ministry (1:1)
2. Amos's Prophetic Themes
3. Amos's Prophecy against the Nations (1:3—2:16)
4. Message #1 - Hear about the Certainty of Judgment (3)
5. Message #2 - Hear about the Reasons for Judgment (4)
6. Message #3 - Hear about the Need for Repentance (5:1-17)
7. Message #4 - Woe to those who worship in hypocrisy (5:18—27)
8. Message #5 - Woe to those who live in excess (6)
9. The Five Visions of Amos (7 – 9)

1. Amos's Prophetic Ministry (Amos 1:1)

1.1 - The name "Amos" means "burden-bearer," and indeed Amos' heart was heavily burdened for the oppression of the poor and the corruption of worship. Amos was from the town Tekoa, located about ten miles south of Jerusalem.

Amos ministered during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah, and during from the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel. Under Jeroboam II's leadership, Israel was enjoying a political and military revival. As a result, the rich practiced social injustices against the poor, and the people no longer properly worshiped the Lord.

Amos mentioned the occupations he had prior to becoming a prophet. He worked as a herdsman meaning that he was a sheep breeder. In 7:14 Amos adds that he gathered sycamore fruit for additional income. Having sheep, cattle and possibly owning his own sycamore orchard, Amos would have lived in an average middle class lifestyle.

Sycamores did not naturally grow in Tekoa's high elevation. So, Amos would have traveled to the coastal plains by the Mediterranean Sea or in the Jericho Valley to tend to the sycamore orchard. This means that the prophet was a traveler. God used Amos's occupations to prepare him for the ministry. Amos's travels placed him in contact with many people, not just in the Southern Kingdom, but to the Northern Kingdom as well.

Amos was not a professional prophet when God called him, nor had he any official prophetic training. In 7:14-15, Amos explained that the Lord had taken him from following the flock and that the Lord had commanded him, "Go, prophesy unto my people Israel". At the time of his call, Amos was not a prophet, nor was he "a prophet's son".

2. Amos's Prophetic Themes

1. God is aware of the sins of other nations (1:3—2:3).
2. God expects more from those whom God reveals His will (3:2).
3. God demands repentance from sin (4:6-12; 5:4—15).
4. God dislikes hypocrisy; He requires inward reality (5:21—24).
5. God delights in justice (5:24).
6. God can use people with secular backgrounds and training to announce His message (7:14, 15).
7. God will one day bring great blessing to His people, Israel (9:11—15).

3. Amos's Prophecy against the Nations (1:3—2:16)

Amos denounced all the other nations around Israel before focusing on the sins of Israel. He starts by preaching against Syria to the northeast, then Gaza and the other Philistine cities to the southwest. Then came Tyre to the north and Edom to the south. Then came Ammon and Moab to the east. Then came Judah and finally Israel.

DAMASCUS (1:3—5). Amos announced judgment against the people of Damascus, the capital city of Syria, because they threshed the Israelites of Gilead with iron threshing implements. While this could be taken figuratively to describe severe oppression, it might also be taken literally. A threshing sledge was a heavy board, studded with sharp metal or even knives used to crush the heads of grain so that winnowing or separating the chaff from the grain could take place (sunflower seeds). The Syrians may have dragged these implements over bound Israelites. Because of the Syrians' war crimes, God sent the Assyrians, who destroyed Syria in complete fulfillment of Amos's prophecy.

GAZA (1:6—8). Gaza was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. They had captured a sizable population of Israelites and had sold all of them, including women and children, as slaves to the Edomites. The Assyrians would destroy the palaces, people, and kings of the Philistines.

TYRE (1:9, 10). Like Gaze, Tyre had also handed over Israelite captives to the Edomites. By doing such a thing, the Tyrians had forgotten a "brotherly covenant" that they had made with Israel when Hiram was their king back in the days of King Solomon (1 Kings 5:12).

EDOM (1:11, 12). The Edomites had pursued their Israelite brothers with the sword, showing no pity. The Israelites were related to the Edomites. They both descended from Isaac, Esau (Edom) and Jacob (Israel). The Assyrians would burn both Teman, the major city in southern Edom, and Bozrah, the major city in the north. All of Edom would be destroyed.

AMMON (1: 13–15). The Ammonites ripped open pregnant women in Gilead in order to extend their border into Israelite territory. The king and princes of Ammon would go into captivity after the Assyrians had burned Ammon's capital city, Rabbah.

MOAB (2:1–3). The Moabites had "burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime." It was important to people, especially to kings, that they be buried in their families' burial places. Exhuming a king's bones would have been a desecration and insult, but burning the bones to powder would have been an offense of the highest order.

JUDAH (2:4, 5). Judah's sins differ from those of the foreign nations. Judah had sinned against the law of the Lord as given by Moses.

ISRAEL (2:6–16). Then finally, we come to Israel. Amos condemned Israel for four transgressions.

1. The Israelites were guilty of greed (2:6).
2. The Israelites were guilty of unjust oppression (2:7a).
3. The Israelites committed gross immorality (2:7b, 8a).
4. The Israelites worshiped false gods (2:8).

Then Amos rehearsed how God WAS a blessing to Israel.

2.9 - God had helped Israel during the conquest under Joshua as they defeated the Amorites.

2.10 - He also had delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage and had provided for the people during their wilderness wanderings.

2.11 – God raised up of their men special people to be prophets and Nazarites.

2.12 – But Israel rejected this blessing. They told the prophets to stop prophesying, and they convinced the Nazarites to break their vows by giving them wine to drink.

2.13 - God was weighed down by Israel's sins like a fully loaded cart is weighed down with sheaves.

2.14 - Therefore, God would send the Assyrians to punish Israel. In the day of battle, neither speed nor strength would deliver the Israelite soldiers.

2.15 - Both archers and cavalrymen would die.

2.16 - And the most courageous soldiers would flee naked on that day.

4. Message #1 - Hear about the Certainty of Judgment (3)

A. The revelation of coming judgment (3:1–8)

3.1 - Amos invited the people of Israel to hear a pronouncement of judgment the Lord had spoken against the whole family of Israel.

3.3 – Amos starts asking a series of questions that all have a negative answer. In the first question, two people cannot walk together without first having agreed to walk together.

3.4a - Second, a lion does not roar unless he has first spotted his prey in the forest. The lion's roar immobilizes his prey with fear so the lion can more easily rush upon it.

3.4b - Third, a young lion does not "cry out" (or growl) with satisfaction unless he has captured his prey and brought it to his den.

3.5a - Fourth, a bird does not fall into a trap unless the trap has been baited with a lure ("gin").

3.5b - Fifth, a trap will not spring up from the earth to snare its catch without the animal's first triggering it.

3.6a - Sixth, city dwellers do not tremble in fear unless the warning trumpet has first been sounded.

3.6b - Seventh, no evil calamity comes upon a city unless the Lord has allowed it.

3.7 - By asking the questions Amos made clear that judgment from God was not just a coincidence or chance, but for the punishment of their sin. God, in his mercy, did not send judgment until He revealed it or made it known through His prophets, who then compelled to prophesy....

3.8 – This gave the people the opportunity to repent. Without the people repenting, what God revealed through the prophets would certainly come to pass. By means of this twostep process, the people would know that the coming judgment was not a coincidence or chance but was punishment from the LORD for their sin and their lack of repentance.

B. The proclamation of coming judgment (3:9-15)

3.9 - Amos invited the people of Ashdod and Egypt to assemble themselves at Samaria, the capital city of Israel, and to observe the unrest and oppression in the city.

3.10 - Not only did the people of Samaria not do right, but they did not even know how to do right.

3.11 - Because the wealthy ruling class robbed from the poor and treated them violently, God would send the Assyrians plunder their palaces. This prophecy was fulfilled in 722 BC (2 Kings 17).

3.12 - The destruction of Samaria's citizens would be so complete that only the smallest remnant would survive, and they would be deported. The size and condition of the remnant is likened to a pair of legs or to a piece of an ear—all that remains of a sheep after a lion devours it.

3.13-14 - Judgment would not stop at Samaria, but would extend south to the altars of Bethel. When the kingdom divided after Solomon's death, Jeroboam I had set up one of two golden calves at Bethel (1 Kings 12). He developed a new priesthood, instituted a new feast day, and constructed a new altar.

The idolatry at Bethel had become so popular that Jeroboam II moved his royal residence there (Amos 7:13), and very likely many of Israel's wealthy class followed his example.

3.15 - God would destroy the king's cool summer house and warm winter house along with the ivory inlaid houses of his nobles.... Not a popular message is it?

5. Message #2 - Hear about the Reasons for Judgment (4)

A. Reason #1 - The affluent women exploited the poor (4:1-3)

4.1 - The rich women of Samaria threatened and harassed the poor in order to take from them what little they had. Amos called these overindulgent women "kine [or cows] of Bashan." Bashan, on the eastern side of the Jordan, was noted for its lush, abundant pastures that led to fattened cows.

4.2-3 - The Assyrians would break up Samaria's walls and lead the women out through the openings. They would then organize the women into single-file lines by fastening them together with hooks.

B. Reason #2 - The people worshiped in hypocrisy (4:4, 5)

4.4 - Amos sarcastically invited the people of Israel to go before the idols at Bethel and Gilgal, to offer sacrifices, and to multiply transgressions.

4.5 - Amos also invited the people to take their tithes, thanksgiving offerings, and freewill offerings because they loved these outward displays of religion.

For Israel, religion was only superficial, and they were not concerned with a heart that loves and pleases God: justice, mercy, and humility (Mic. 6:8). They developed their own beliefs to follow while ignoring God's clear commands.

C. Reason #3 - The nation refused to repent (4:6-13)

4.6-11 - God had sent famines, droughts, crop diseases, locusts, human diseases, war, burning fires, and yet the people still refused to repent of their sins. This explains why five times Amos bemoaned the fact that Israel had not returned to the Lord.

4.12 - Since the people refused to repent, God challenged them to prepare to meet Him in a terrifying confrontation of judgment.

4.13 - God would have His way with Israel, since He is the Lord, the God of hosts.

6. Message #3 - Hear about the Need for Repentance (5:1 – 17)

5.1 - In this third "Hear ye" speech, Amos invited the people to hear his lament. A lament was a poem sung while in a funeral procession. Amos constructed this one for Israel's funeral.

5.2-3 - Amos personified Israel as a virgin—young and in the prime of life; but she would fall, and none would restore her.

5.4-5 - Israel's destruction by Assyria was certain, but God invited individuals to seek Him instead of the idols at Bethel and Gilgal in Israel or at Beersheba in southern Judah.

5.6-7 - If they did not repent, God would break out like a fire against them, since they had distorted justice ("judgment") and forsaken righteousness.

5.8-9 - God would accomplish His will concerning Israel. None could stop Him. His power is so great that He created the stellar heavens, controls the sequence of night and day, and regulates weather patterns. Neither the strong man nor his strong fortress could withstand God's strong destruction.

5.10 - The Israelites deserved to be judged because they hated those who lived righteously.

5.11 – They also burdened the poor with excessive rent payments of wheat and used their ill-gotten gains to buy houses of hewn stone and pleasant vineyards.

5.12-13 – Also bribery flourished, poor people were denied court justice, and even prudent people refused to speak up for the poor.

5.14-15 - Still, Amos summoned individuals to repentance. God called on Israel to hate evil and love good. If they did, then perhaps Assyria would spare some of them in the land.

5.16-17 - When God would pass through Israel in judgment, there would be wailing in the city streets, in the country highways, and in the vineyards.

7. Message #4 - Woe to those who worship in hypocrisy (5:18—27)

5.18-20 - According to popular Israelite theology, the future Day of the Lord would be a time of great blessing and therefore, the people desired it. But this only further proved their spiritual blindness. Amos explained that the Day of the Lord would be a dark time of inevitable judgment.

5.21-23 - God despised their hypocrisy. They merely conformed outwardly to His standards. He hated their feast days, the smell of their solemn assemblies, and all their sacrifices.

5.24 - God desired justice and righteousness to cascade like streams down a mountain.

5.25 - Throughout its history, Israel offered plenty of sacrifices, but often not to God. Even in Moses' time, they sacrificed to the golden calf and to other false gods while in the wilderness.

5.26 - After their wilderness wanderings, they continued to worship images that they themselves had made and had carried about.

5.27 - For this reason, God would exile His people beyond Damascus into the realm of Assyria.

8. Message #5 - Woe to those who live in excess (6)

6.1 - Amos directed his final message to the citizens of both Jerusalem, and to Samaria, the capital cities of Judah and Israel respectively.

6.2 - Amos invited these high-society people to learn from the destruction of other great cities.

6.4-5 - The rich enjoyed the comforts of fancy beds and couches, the taste of lamb and veal, and the sound of music.

6.6 - They had wine to drink by the bowlful and the very best ointments, but they did not grieve over the coming afflictions of judgment.

6.7 - For this reason those who were rich would be exiled first.

6.8 - God abhorred Israel's pride and would destroy Samaria, including its palaces.

6.9 - If ten men survived the siege and hid in a house, they would still die.

6.10 - Amos described a scene where a relative would enter a house to bring out the dead bodies to burn them. Finding a survivor, the relative would ask if there were any others, and his answer would be no. The relative would then beg the survivor not to mention the Lord's name, fearing that the Lord would turn His attention upon the two of them and destroy them also.

6.11 - The invaders would destroy the houses and kill their inhabitants.

6.12 - It would be unthinkable for horses to run on rocks or oxen to plow rocks, but Israel had performed the unthinkable by twisting justice and righteousness into poison and bitterness.

6.13-14 - The people were arrogantly secure in their recent military successes under Jeroboam II, but God would surprise them with the invading Assyrians. The Assyrians would attack Israel from Hemath in the north to the "river of the wilderness" in the south, and this would prove a complete reversal of the territorial expansion under Jeroboam II.

9. The Five Visions of Amos (7 – 9)

A. Vision #1 - The vision of the locusts (7:1–3)

7.1 - Amos first envisioned a swarm of locusts ("grasshoppers"). The Lord God had formed the swarm when the late crop was beginning to sprout. Locust swarms were catastrophic, but to have them arrive at this time of the year would have been even more catastrophic. Extreme rebellion called for extreme discipline.

7.2 - Amos envisioned the locusts eating all the vegetation of the land. The sight proved too horrible for him, and he interceded for the people. He begged God to forgive the descendants of Jacob for their sins; otherwise, the nation would not survive, for it was small.

7.3 - God did not forgive the people, but He did repent or change his mind concerning ("for") this judgment. The Lord is without sin, so He does not repent in the same way that we do.

When Amos wrote that the Lord "repented," he meant that viewed from our human perspective God turned away from an earlier intent or changed His mind. Amos presents for our consideration a marvelous truth: While we cannot expect God to forgive other people's sins for our sake, He may choose to change their earthly punishment for our sake.

B. Vision #2 - The vision of the fire (7:4—6)

7.4 - Next, Amos envisioned an all-consuming fire. The fire raged so uncontrollably that it evaporated even the waters of the deep sea—no wonder it devoured the portion ("part") of Israel!

7.5 - The prospects of such a fire so stirred the prophet that he again interceded and asked God to desist ("cease") from such a judgment.

7.6 - God listened to Amos and relented concerning this judgment as well.

C. Vision #3 - The vision of the plumb line (7:7—9)

7.7-8 - Third, Amos envisioned the Lord standing on a wall with a plumb line in His hand. God would set a plumb line in the midst of His people to determine how straight their devotion to Him was. God found the people to be crooked.

7.9 - As a result, God would destroy the high places of worship and the sanctuaries. God would rise up against the dynasty ("house") of Jeroboam II with the sword. Notice that this time Amos did not intercede, and military destruction turned out to be Israel's punishment.

D. Intermission - The confrontation with Amaziah (7:10—17)

7.10 - No sooner had Amos finished declaring his vision, then Amaziah, the priest at the Bethel sanctuary, tried to intimidate Amos into leaving Israel.

7.11 - Amaziah said that Amos had predicted that the king would die by the sword.

7.12 - Amaziah ordered Amos to return to Judah.

7.13 - Amaziah wanted Amos far away because Bethel was one of the sites of the king's residence.

7.14-15 - We already studied this. Amos replied with his previous occupations and his call into the prophetic ministry.

7.16 - Amaziah had told Amos to stop prophesying against Israel

7.17 - Because Amaziah had tried to intimidate Amos, Amaziah and his family would suffer great misfortune. Amaziah would die in exile on foreign soil, his children would die by the sword, and his wife would be abused as a harlot by enemy soldiers. Whether Amaziah liked it or not, Israel would "surely go into captivity."

E. Vision #4 - The vision of the summer fruit (8)

8.1 - Fourth, Amos envisioned a basket of summer fruit.

8.2 - The Lord declared to Amos that the end had come to His people and that He would no longer pass by them without dispensing judgment.

8.3 - In "that day" of judgment, temple songs would turn into mourning. Dead bodies would lie everywhere, and people would silently cast them out to be burned so as not to attract attention.

8.4 - As awful as the judgment would be, the rich of Israel would deserve every bit of it. They had mistreated the poor in numerous ways.

8.5 - The wealthy could hardly wait for the completion of the monthly New Moon Festivals and the weekly Sabbaths so they could make their profits in the grain markets. They swindled the poor by rigging their containers and balances.

8.6 - Also they sold poor quality wheat and charged high interest on loans. As a result, the poor could not make their loan payments, so the rich sold them into slavery in exchange for silver and property.

8.7-8 - The Lord would not forget their deeds and He would judge the land of Israel.

8.10 - After experiencing God's judgment, the people would mourn.

8.11 - God would smite the land with a famine and drought worse than those of chapter 4. He would send a famine of the word of God (may be a reference to the 400 silent years).

8.12 - People in Amos's day rejected the word of the Lord, but in judgment they would wander from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Dead Sea in the southeast searching for a message from God. They would go from the east to the north thirsting for the Lord's words.

8.13 - In that day those who would otherwise be full of life and energy — virgins and young men — would faint, since God would remain silent.

8.14 - Those who once had sealed their oaths by the idols of Samaria, Dan, and Beersheba would fall, never to rise again. No false god anywhere in Israel or Judah, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, could rescue them from destruction.

F. Vision #5 - The Vision of the God of Judgment (9)

9.1 - Amos saw the Lord standing on the altar of the temple shrine at Bethel. He gave the command to strike the pillars so that the temple's roof would crash down. A similar collapse took place in Judges 16:25-30 when Samson pushed with all his might against the support pillars of the Philistine temple.

9.2 - God's judging hand would reach far and wide; it would know no limits. His people could not escape though they journeyed down to Hell or up to Heaven.

9.3 - The people could not escape from God though they climbed atop Mount Carmel or though they hid in the depths of the sea.

9.4 - Those who would go into captivity would find God's sword pursuing them even there. God had set His eye upon His people for harm—not for good.

9.5 - God's power knows no limits. God touches the earth, and it melts so that the people mourn.

9.6 - No one could flee from God into Heaven; after all, God is the One who made Heaven.

9.7 - The Lord would execute judgment impartially. He would treat Israel as He treated other nations. God would punish the Philistines and the Syrians, so why should He not punish Israel?

9.8-9 - God promised to rescue a remnant from destruction, only after He had sifted out all the unrighteous ones from among His people.

9.10 - All the sinners would die by the sword—the very ones who thought that no calamity would ever befall them.

Amos ended his book with five verses of hope for the nation of Israel. After the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, Israel and Judah would be taken captive, but one day that will all change. When Christ returns, He will establish His kingdom and pour out His blessing upon Israel.

9.11 - The dynasty of David became weak like a fallen tent, but God will repair, raise up, and rebuild the house of David. The solution will be that Jesus Christ, the Son of David, will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

9.12 - In addition to political revival, Israel will undergo territorial expansion. During the millennial Kingdom, Israel will possess all the Gentile ("heathen") nations of the world.

9.13 - God will bless Israel with agricultural abundance.

9.14 - God will also bless Israel with national stability. He will regather His people and restore them to the Promised Land. The people of Israel will rebuild their cities and plant their vineyards, and they will live in their houses and enjoy their gardens.

9.15 - Finally, God will grant His people peace of mind. They will never again need to fear exile. God will plant Israel in the land and the nation will never again be uprooted from it.

The Book of Obadiah

(about 3 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read through Obadiah 2 times.

Outline

1. An Introduction to Obadiah
2. The Destruction of Edom Predicted (1—9)
3. The Crimes of Edom Depicted (10—14)
4. The Day of Edom's Doom Defined (15, 16)
5. The Restoration of Israel (17—21)

1. An Introduction to Obadiah

The name "Obadiah" means "servant of Jehovah." There are at least thirteen men in the Bible named Obadiah. We know nothing of this Obadiah's personal life or family.

The date of the book of Obadiah is uncertain since Obadiah gave no dateline of the kings who reigned in his day. The only hint at the date is a reference to a plundering of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was plundered several times. There are different views as to the one to which Obadiah was referring.

(1) By the Philistines and Arabians in 848 BC (recorded in 2 Chron. 21:16, 17)

(2) By Babylon in 586 BC (recorded in 2 Kings 25 and 2 Chron. 36).

It seems better to go with the 848 BC date. Obadiah did not mention Babylon, whereas other prophets writing at or near the 586 BC date always did. Moreover, Obadiah did not mention the destruction of the temple, which was a prominent part of the 586 BC destruction. Also, Jeremiah seemed to have a knowledge of Obadiah's book. (Compare Jeremiah 49:14-16 with the last half of Obadiah 1-4 and Jeremiah 49:9 with Obadiah 5). This makes a case that Obadiah was written before Jeremiah.

2. The Destruction of Edom Predicted (Obad. 1-9)

1.1 - Obadiah begins by stating that he received this prophecy in a vision. It is a prophecy of judgment on Edom. The Edomites were the descendants of Jacob's twin brother, Esau (Gen. 36:1).

The "heathen" in v. 1 are Gentile nations. God often judges a nation by bringing other nations against it. He used Assyria to judge Israel and Babylon to judge Judah. He would use nations to judge Edom.

1.2 - Edom prided herself in her great wealth and her impenetrable fortress city of Petra. Yet Mount Seir, was not more than twenty miles wide or a hundred miles long. Edom's self-exaltation was far greater than her actual position among the nations.

1.3 - Edom was deceived by her own heart. Self-deception is a serious matter and something against which we all must be on guard.

Obadiah described Edom as "thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock." This is a graphic description of Edom's capital city, Petra, which was the central stronghold of the nation. It has been said that for natural beauty and natural defense, Petra was unique among the cities of the earth.

Petra was located in the mountains of Edom, south of the Dead Sea. It was surrounded on all sides by rocks. In Bible times the only way to enter Petra was by coming through one of two ravines, one leading in from the west and one from the east. The one from the east was the main way in.

It is a narrow gorge over a mile long. The walls of the canyon are one to four hundred feet high. At some places the chasm is so deep and narrow that it is almost dark even at noon. At the narrowest points, only two horsemen abreast can pass through. This made it easy to defend.

At the end of the ravine lies a great hollow basin over a mile long and two thirds of a mile wide. The basin was the location of the city of Petra. When the book of Obadiah states that the Edomites dwelt in the clefts of the rocks, that is what it literally means; for the Edomites carved their city out of solid sandstone rock. Some of the castles, arches, pillars, buildings, and stairways are still standing today.

1.4 - An eagle soars high and builds its nest on mountain cliffs. So Edom "exalted herself as the eagle and set her nest among the stars". The haughty spirit of Edom stemmed in part from her belief that she was invincible and unable to be defeated. But God assured Edom that He would cast her down.

1.5 - Obadiah asked questions to show how completely Edom would be destroyed. He wrote, "If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, would they not have stolen till they had enough? Thieves usually leave something in the house. But Edom's greedy invaders would leave nothing.

Obadiah asked a second, similar question: "If grape gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?" Grape gatherers normally left a few grapes for the poor. But even if they tried to get them all, they would miss some hidden in the leaves. Edom's invaders, however, would completely plunder her land and carry everything away.

1.6 - Even Edom's hidden treasures would not escape the plunderers.

1.7 - Edom was also proud of alliances with her neighbors, the "men of her confederacy", but even they deceived them and prevailed against them.

1.8 - Another source of Edom's pride was her wise men. But under God's judgment, her men of understanding would be helpless to keep her from falling.

1.9 - Edom was proud of her warriors. "Teman" is a city name that stands for the whole nation. These powerful men would be dismayed because the Lord purposed to slaughter everyone in Edom.

3. The Crimes of Edom Depicted (10—14)

1.10 - This is the key verse of the book. It clearly lays out the reason for judgment. Obadiah mentioned the word "brother" and used the birth-name of Jacob instead of the later name Israel. Violence is bad enough. Violence against one's own blood relatives is even worse.

1.11 - Edom was indifferent to the invasion of Judah, she "stood on the other side".

1.12 - She gloated over the children of Judah when their land was destroyed. She spoke proudly when Israel was in distress.

1.13 - She joined in the looting of Jerusalem.

1.14 - She blocked the escape of the refugees and turned captives over to the enemy.

4. The Day of Edom's Doom Defined (Obad. 15, 16)

1.15-16 - The "Day of the Lord" may refer to a near or far judgment.

If near, then some Edomites will again populate their land, but they will be destroyed or in the intertestamental period the Edomites were conquered by the Romans and ceased to exist as a nation. If far term it would be referring to the end times.

5. The Restoration of Israel (Obad. 17—21)

1.17 - While Edom will be destroyed, Israel will be restored.

1.19a - In the Millennium the Israelites in the south of Israel will occupy the land that had at one time belonged to Edom.

1.21 - Millennial day judges ("saviours" KJV) from Jerusalem will administrate the land that had been Edom and will serve under the Lord Jesus Christ, for "the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

The Book of Jonah

(about 4 pages of notes)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Jonah two times.

Outline

1. God's Call to Jonah (Jonah 1:1 – 16)
2. Jonah's Call to God (Jonah 1:17-2:10)
3. Jonah Preaches to the People (Jonah 3)
4. God Teaches His Prophet (Jonah 4)

1. God's Call to Jonah (Jonah 1:1-16)

Jonah is one of the strangest books of the Bible in some ways. Jonah was a prophet, yet there is no prophecy in his book except the one sentence he preached in Nineveh. This short sentence has only eight words in English (five in Hebrew). He was a missionary, but he did not want to go to the mission field. He saw great revival, yet he was very unhappy that the revival came about.

Jonah's name means "dove". He was the son of Amittai. The book of Jonah gives no other information about him. He is briefly mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 and is helpful in determining his town and tribe. Jonah's hometown was Gath Hopher, a city in the tribal lands of Zebulun between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, he was from the Northern Kingdom (Israel).

Also, based on 2 Kings 14:25, we know he prophesied in the days of the northern king, Jeroboam II. King Jeroboam II had a long and prosperous reign. He is noted as a great military leader who expanded the kingdom of Israel. This period is known as the golden age of the Northern Kingdom.

1.1 – How did the word of the Lord come to Jonah? In those days, God spoke to His prophets through an audible voice, a vision, or a dream, so it would have been one of those ways (probably audible).

1.2 - God's call to Jonah was a threefold command. He was to arise, to go to Nineveh, and to cry against it. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, the largest empire in Jonah's day. It was about 500 miles (800 km) from his hometown to Nineveh.

Nineveh was a massive city located on the east bank of the Tigris River. With its suburbs, it covered an area of about 25 by 30 miles. The inner city had great protective walls 100 feet high, 50 feet thick, and 8 miles in circumference. On the top of the walls were towers that reached upward another 100 feet. It had an estimated population of 600,000 people.

Assyria was known as the cruelest of all ancient empires. Nineveh was also associated with bloodshed and treachery. It brutally harmed the smaller nations around it. Its wickedness had come up before God. Now God called Jonah to go preach judgment on Nineveh. From Amos we learned the two-step process before God sends judgement.

First, God reveals his plan of judgment to the prophets. Second, the prophets prophesy unto the people. If the people repent, God changes His mind. If they do not, judgment comes as predicted.

1.3 – Instead of rising up and going to Nineveh, he fled to Tarshish, a place archeologists have yet to identify. Some Bible teachers think the city was in southern Spain and others feel it was on the northwest coast of Africa. In either case, Nineveh was east and Tarshish was west. Jonah could not have gone more contrary to the will of God.

Jonah went to Joppa to catch a ship. Joppa was a seaport town about fifty miles (80 km) from Jonah's hometown of Gath Hepher. Joppa is the modern city of Haifa, today the second largest city of Israel. Even in Jonah's day it was a busy port. At Joppa Jonah found a ship going to Tarshish. God is sovereign, and Jonah should have known he could not really run from God.

1.4 - The original language is very vivid here. God hurled a great wind onto the sea.

1.5 - The sailors did two things to alleviate the situation. They unloaded the cargo to lighten the ship and keep it from sinking. The other thing the sailors did was to call upon their gods. They were religious; but it was all to no avail, for their gods were helpless idols.

1.6 - The captain of the ship finally aroused Jonah and told him to attend the prayer meeting.

1.7-8 - When Jonah arrived on deck, the sailors cast lots to determine who the cause of the storm was. God intervened and saw to it that the lot fell on Jonah. So suddenly all eyes were fixed on him. The men then asked him to give an account of himself.

1.9 - Jonah told them about his nationality and his God.

1.10-13 – They questioned more of him. Then Jonah told them to throw him into the sea.

1.14-15 - The sailors tried to go back to shore but were unable to make it. So, they prayed to Jonah's God and cast him into the sea. Then immediately the "sea ceased from her raging".

1.16 – The sailors then offered a sacrifice unto God.

2. Jonah's Call to God (Jonah 1:17-2:10)

1.17 - Though Jonah was rebelling against God, God prepared a great fish to provide a place for Jonah for 3 days. God's plan for Jonah was not to perish in the sea, but to preach in the city.

2.1 - After three days of misery in the stomach of the fish, wishing for death but not being able to die, Jonah came to the end of himself and turned to God.

2.2 - Jonah acknowledged that God had chastised him, that he cried out to God and God heard him.

2.4 - He also expressed hope of looking again toward God's temple.

2.5 - He described sinking into the water and having the seaweed wrap itself around his head.

2.9 - He remembered a vow he had made, and he determined to keep it. He closed his prayer with the blessed thought that "salvation is of the Lord".

2.10 - God answered Jonah's prayer and directed the fish to deposit Jonah on the shore.

3. Jonah Preaches to the People (Jonah 3)

3.1 - The word of the Lord came to Jonah, but adds three significant words: "the second time." I'm so thankful that God is the God of the second chance. Jonah went to Nineveh in obedience to God's call. From where Jonah was to Nineveh was about a 500-mile (800 km) trip. It probably would have taken him about 3 weeks to make the trip.

3.3 - "... Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey." Archeologists have excavated part of ancient Nineveh and have found the outer suburbs of Nineveh was about sixty miles (100 km) which on foot would certainly be a three days' journey.

3.4 - Jonah preached as he walked into town. It seems that Jonah repeated God's message over and over as he walked into town. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

3.5 - The people of Nineveh believed Jonah's message and fasted. Their outward actions showed their inward change. They put on sackcloth as a sign of sorrow and humility. The people of Nineveh were genuinely sorry for their sinful ways, and they then humbled themselves before God.

3.6 - This revival touched people in all walks of life. Even the king humbled himself before God.

3.7-9 - He made an official proclamation decreeing a city-wide fast. The decree called on the people to fast, wear sackcloth, cry out to God, and turn from their evil ways.

3.10 - Verse 10 is a difficult verse. "Does God ever need to repent?" We covered this topic in Amos's visions. Man is sinful and needs to repent of sin, but God has no sin and therefore does not repent from sin. If the people repent at the preaching of the prophet, then God changes his actions.

He took note of the change in Nineveh, so He brought about a different result. Instead of judgment, He showed mercy. That is what "God repented" means.

Jonah's proclamation of God's coming judgment was conditional, not absolute. It was conditioned on the continued wickedness of the people.

If they had gone on as they were, judgment would have fallen. But since they forsook their evil ways, they were no longer under the threat of judgment. God was consistent. He always judges sin, and He always shows mercy to those who repent.

4. God Teaches His Prophet (Jonah 4)

4.1 - Jonah was exceedingly displeased and very angry. Why? There are several possible reasons for Jonah's desire to see Nineveh destroyed.

- Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, a ruthless and warlike people who were enemies of Israel. Nineveh's destruction would have been seen as a victory for Israel.
- Jonah probably wanted to see Nineveh's downfall to satisfy his own sense of justice. After all, Nineveh deserved God's judgment.
- Jonah was prideful. He said Nineveh would be destroyed, but by not being destroyed would make him look like a false prophet.
- Some speculate the Syrian army attacked Jonah's hometown and may have killed some of his family members.... Speculation only!

4.2-3 - He was angry because he did not want Nineveh to share in the mercy of God. In fact, he wanted God to kill him instead.

4.4 - God said, "Doest thou well to be angry?" He said in effect, "Jonah, stop and think for a moment. Is it right for you to be angry? Is this how you should react to Nineveh's repentance?"

4.5 - But Jonah made no reply. Instead, he made a booth so that he could sit out under its shade and wait to see if the city would still be destroyed.

4.6 - God prepared a plant that gave greater shade. Jonah was exceedingly glad for the gourd. This is the only time we read of Jonah's being happy.

4.7 - The next day God prepared a worm to destroy the plant and it withered.

4.8 - Later in the day, God brought a blistering desert wind to make things hot for Jonah. The sun also beat down on Jonah's head. Is it possible that the acid of the whale's stomach may have made him bald making it worse? The heat was too much for Jonah. He grew faint and wished to die.

4.9 - The Lord then asked Jonah another question: "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" Jonah answered in his stubborn way that he was right in being angry over the gourd vine.

4.10 - The Lord pointed out to Jonah that he had pity on the gourd vine, even though he did not plant it; he did not water it; he had done nothing to help the plant along. And yet for all this, Jonah expressed great compassion on this plant.

4.11 - God then asked Jonah one final, very pointed question. "And should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?"

The hundred and twenty thousand most likely refers to the children. God looked down from Heaven and saw 120,000 children in Nineveh in need of His grace, and His great heart yearned with compassion over this lost city.

Then the Lord drew out the application one step further when he added "and much cattle." If Jonah were right in grieving over one dried up gourd vine, surely it would be cruel to destroy Nineveh with all its innocent animals.

Jonah had no answer, and he quietly slips away from our sight. But not forever. At some point, Jonah got right with God and wrote this book under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

This very fact shows us the graciousness of God. He continues to work with us even after we fail Him. He is indeed the God of the second chance. For Jonah He was the God of multiple chances.

The Book of Micah

(About 6.5 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Micah two times.

Outline

1. Micah's Person and Prophecy (Mic. 1: 1)
2. Micah's Lament over Destruction (Mic. 1:2—16)
3. Micah's Warning to the Evildoers (Mic. 2:1—13)
4. Micah's Message against the Leaders (Mic. 3:1—12)
5. The Coming Kingdom and Its King (Mic. 4—5)
6. The Coming Judgment and Its Reason (Mic. 6)
7. The Coming Compassion and Its Prerequisites (Mic. 7)

1. Micah's Person and Prophecy (1:1)

1.1 - Micah was a Morasthite meaning his hometown was Moresheth-Gath, a village of Judah near the Philistine city of Gath. The people of Hezekiah's time corroborated his identity in Jeremiah 26:18. Micah prophesied during the reigns of three of Judah's kings: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Hosea, Amos, Joel, Isaiah, prophesied around the same time and most likely knew each other.

Micah's prophecy concerns both Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria was the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem was the capital city of the southern kingdom of Judah. In his book, Micah demonstrated that the Southern Kingdom was just as sinful as the Northern Kingdom.

Micah reminded God's people that sin leads to discipline. Judgment and future restoration are the book's major themes with the message of hope for a righteous remnant.

Micah contains amazing examples of messianic prophecy. He foretold the exact birthplace of the Messiah (5:2), and Jesus quoted from Micah to show that His first coming would bring about family divisions (7:6). Micah looked beyond the collapse of Israel and Judah to the incarnation of Christ and even further into the future by describing the millennial reign of Christ.

2. Micah's Lament over Destruction (Mic. 1:2—16)

1.2 – Micah starts off portraying a courtroom in session. He was confident that the jurors would render a guilty verdict after they had heard the Lord's testimony. He pictured the Lord as entering the courtroom from His holy temple in Heaven.

1.3 - God's presence was so overwhelming that Micah depicted Him as walking from one mountain summit to another—all in a single step.

1.4 - As a result, the mountaintops melted like wax and cascaded like water poured down a slope.

- 1.5 - Micah hinted at God's judgment against the pagan altars, or "high places," that stood on many of the hilltops of Israel and Judah.
- 1.6-7 - The Northern Kingdom and its capital of Samaria would experience judgment first. Samaria fell to the Assyrians first in 722 BC after a three-year siege (2 Kings 17:1-18). Micah accurately predicted that the city would be completely demolished even to its foundation (v. 6) and that the Assyrians would take away the idols of Samaria and beat them into pieces (v. 7).
- 1.8 - Micah mourned at the prospect of Samaria's certain destruction.
- 1.9 - Micah's mourning was for two reasons. First, Samaria's judgment was unavoidable; it was certain. Second, judgment would spread to the south so that it would come to the gate of Jerusalem. This prophecy was fulfilled during Hezekiah's reign when the Assyrians nearly overwhelmed Jerusalem, but Hezekiah prayed and God spared the city (2 Kings 19).
- Then Micah mentioned a number of villages in which the meanings of the names of the villages allowed Micah to create puns, jokes, or a play on words. These are around his hometown
- 1.10 - The prophet began with the command, "Declare ye it not at Gath" (v. 10). "Gath" sounds somewhat similar to the first part of the Hebrew word for "tell." (Gath ye it not at Gath).
- 1.10 - Those "in the house Aphrah," were to roll themselves in the dust. "Aphrah" means "dust," and so it would read, "those in the house of dust roll in dust."
- 1.11 – Saphir means beautiful, but the village's inhabitants would endure public disgrace.
- 1.11 – Zaanah means "going out", so those who lived in "going out" were not to go out.
- 1.12 – Maroth means bitter. Those who lived in bitterness (Maroth) would experience bitterness.
- 1.13 – Lachish is similar to the Hebrew word for "team", and it required a team of horses to pull a speeding chariot. Lachish inspired the rest of Judah to sin.
- 1.14 – Micah's hometown "Moreseth Gath" means "possession of Gath," and Judah would give the village to Assyria as a possession.
- 1.14 - "Achzib" means "lie" or "deception" and indeed the residences of that village would become deceitful. The fleeing Israelite kings and their troops would presume to find sanctuary in the village, but the people would refuse them shelter.
- 1.15 - Micah promised that God would bring an heir to the town of Mareshah. "Mareshah" means "inheritance," and it would be inherited by its new heir—Sennacherib, king of Assyria.
- 1.16 – Adullam means "refuge." Just as David once sought refuge in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1), so the nation's leaders would seek safety in the village of Adullam.

3. Micah's Warning to the Evildoers (Micah 2)

Micah pronounced a solemn warning of "woe" to the people of Judah for their sins of covetousness and materialism.

2.1 - At night the people plotted evil, and at dawn they busily carried out their schemes.

2.2 - They coveted fields, houses, and defrauded families by taking their inheritances.

2.3 - For those who devised evil work, God had devised His own disaster. Judgment was inevitable, and the "family" of Judah would not be able to remove it from their necks.

2.6 - False prophets spoke only that which people wanted to hear, and they tried to prohibit true prophets from prophesying.

2.7 - Micah responded by reminding people that the Spirit of the Lord is not restricted by the words of the false prophets. God's words, spoken by true prophets, do good to those who walk uprightly.

2.9 - Because of the false prophets, the Assyrians would cast mothers out of their homes and would take away their children.

2.10-11 - The false prophets preached a message of rest and safety that had made the people more comfortable in their sins and so destined them for utter destruction. Micah sarcastically chided the people for accepting the lying prophets since they envisioned wine and strong drink for their future.

2.12-13 - The second chapter ends with a glimmer of hope. Micah predicted that God would one day reassemble the believing remnant of Israel and that God would shepherd His people. One day Israel will be reunited with her Shepherd and enjoy being completely content and trust in God.

4. Micah's Message against the Leaders (Micah 3)

3.1 - In contrast to Israel's future millennial King, who will care for His people like a shepherd, the leaders of Israel in Micah's day did not "know judgment" or justice.

3.2 - Instead, they hated good and loved evil.

3.3 - he likened their injustices to a ravenous animal's devouring sheep.

3.4 - because of the maltreatment, God would not deliver the leaders from their deportation.

3.5 - Rather than lead the people to safety like caring shepherds, the false prophets led the people astray. People would come to the false prophets to hear a message from the Lord, and they would pay the false prophets an honorarium of food. the false prophets ate their food ("bite with their teeth"), they would proclaim a false message of "Peace" for those who fed them.

3.6 - Judgment would come upon the false prophets, and their prophetic insight would be darkened.

3.7 - The seers and diviners would be ashamed and would even cover their "lips" in disgrace.

3.8 – In contrast to the false prophets, Micah was "full of power by the spirit of the Lord". He proclaimed both God's "judgment" and His might.

3.9 - Empowered by God, Micah directly confronted the rulers of Israel and Judah because they abhorred justice. They also "perverted" (twisted) "all equity" (that which was straight).

3.10 - It is true that they had built up Jerusalem, but they had done it by violence.

3.11 - The rulers judged for reward, the priests taught for hire, and the prophets divined for money.

3.12 - The Babylonians would ruin Jerusalem, and the city would be plowed as a field. The heaps of ruins would remind everyone of Micah's accuracy. Even the "mountain of the house" (the temple mount) would become like any hilltop in the forest.

5. The Coming Kingdom and Its King (4–5)

4.1 - Micah predicted that the final fulfillment of his prophecy would take place "in the last days" denoting the future time periods known as the Tribulation and the Millennium Kingdom.

The Tribulation will be a time of unprecedented war and destruction. Christians need not fear this period because we will be raptured prior to the Tribulation. At the close of the Tribulation, we will return with Christ to the earth, where he will defeat His enemies, and establish His 1,000-year rule.

During the Millennial Kingdom, Mount Zion and its temple will be restored according to the specifications found in Ezekiel 40–43. Christ will rule from the mount, thus it will be exalted above all other hills (v. 1).

4.2 - People will throng to the temple in order to listen to the Lord teach His ways.

4.3 - Christ will judge the nations of the world and rebuke strong nations that are far from Israel. War will give way to an agricultural boom as weapons are recycled into farming implements. The people of Israel will return to the land of their inheritance, and they will recover ownership of their property.

4.4 - Everyone will sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid.

4.5 - Just as Assyria and Babylonia followed their gods, Israel will finally follow her God.

4.6 - Christ will bring deliverance to all those who are lame, outcasts, and to those who are afflicted.

4.7 - During the Tribulation, Jewish people will be persecuted severely and driven out of their land. When Christ returns, He will restore the righteous remnant, including the lame, to its land.

4.8 - Israel will become a strong nation under its King, who will reign throughout the Millennium and on into eternity, and Jerusalem will watch over the nations like a tower over a flock.

4.9 - Before the Millennial kingdom, however, Israel will go through two national hardships without a king. Micah compared these adversities to the pain of a woman in labor.

4.10 - First, Israel would go into exile to Babylonia. This took place in 586 BC., when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and deported many to Babylon. Eventually the people would return from exile, and this took place during the reign of Cyrus the Persian, who allowed the Jews to return.

4.11 - Second, at the close of the yet-future Tribulation, the nations of the earth will gather against Jerusalem. They will try to defeat the city, but not succeed because the Lord will fight against them.

4.12-13 - The nations will think that it is entirely of their own doing that they have gone against Zion, but, it is a part of God's plan. God will gather the nations as "sheaves into the floor" (v. 12), and Israel will thresh them (v. 13).

5.2 - This is probably the most well-known verse of the whole book. It is a messianic prophecy concerning where Jesus Christ would be born, the city of Bethlehem Ephrathah. This was the very same city from which David had come from (2 Sam. 17:12).

Even though Jesus was born into this world at Bethlehem, His activities, or "goings forth," had "been from of old, from everlasting." Jesus was present with the Father in eternity past before the creation of the world (John 1:1), and He was active during the creation of the world (Col. 1:16).

5.3 - Israel will be given over to its enemies until Christ returns as King and sets up His Kingdom.

5.4 - Micah continued the shepherd theme by predicting that Christ will "feed" His people in His strength and majesty.

5.5a - The Assyrians were able only to approach the gate of Jerusalem (Hezekiah) but during the future Tribulation, nations will attack Jerusalem and will enter the city and will tread through the palaces. But when Christ returns, He "shall be the peace" for Jerusalem by destroying the invaders.

5.5b - With the Lord's help, the Jews will have more than enough to resist the Tribulation invaders.

5.6 - When Christ returns to set up His Kingdom, the Jews, will turn the tables on their enemies and will conquer them.

5.7 - Israel's influence will extend over many people since Christ's Kingdom will be worldwide.

5.8 - Israel will dominate the other nations just as a lion dominates all other beasts—especially sheep.

5.9 - No nation will be able to resist conquest by Israel, which is led to victory by its King. Israel's tremendous conquest will be unlike so many of the other victories in her past.

5.10 - In the past she relied on horses & chariots, but Christ will remove her military power from her.

5.11 - In the past she relied on her walled cities and her fortresses, but Christ will remove her defenses from her.

5.12 - She had relied on witchcraft & fortune-telling, but she will not do so during the Millennium.

5.13-15 - In the past she relied on her false gods, but in the Millennium, Christ will execute judgment against any wayward nation.

6. The Coming Judgment and Its Reason (6:1—16)

6.1-2 - Micah returned to a courtroom scene. This time the mountains were the jurors, and God challenged Israel to stand before them and give her defense against the case God had presented.

6.3 - The Israelites often complained that God and His ways were wearisome, but God challenged His people to testify against Him.

6.4 - Far from being a burden, God demonstrated His goodness and righteousness to His people throughout their history. God delivered the people from Egypt and gave them leaders such as Moses.

6.5 - God reminded the people of the time that Balak king of Moab tried to get Balaam to prophesy against Israel (Num. 22—24). Instead of uttering curses, Balaam was led of God to pronounce blessings upon Israel.

6.6-7 - After hearing the Lord's case against Israel, Micah asked on behalf of the people what he must do in order to regain the Lord's favor. Micah asked if he should appear before the Lord with sacrifices for the sin. He even suggested that he bring his firstborn son to God as a sacrifice.

6.8 - God was not satisfied with sacrifices alone. He was displeased with His people because they thought that they could live in sin and then pay for their sins with sacrifices. They were wrong because God demanded a heart that was right with Him.

- First, God demanded justice. He did not want the people to distort justice for financial gain.
- Second, they were to love mercy. Mercy, as it appears here, has the idea of loyal love; it speaks of keeping one's commitments.
- Third, they were to walk humbly with God. This means enjoying obedient fellowship with God without arrogance or ungratefulness.

6.9 - Micah invited the wise people of Judah to listen to the Lord and to His rod of judgment. Nevertheless, most of the people did not listen.

6.10-11 - Wealthy people hoarded treasures with dishonest scales and false weights.

6.12 - And they were violent and deceitful.

6.13 - Because of their sins, God would punish them.

6.14 - They would eat but not be satisfied. The people would try to "deliver" or save some of their harvest, but their enemies would take it by the sword.

6.15 - They would not be able to eat the grain, use the oil, or drink the wine for which they had worked so hard.

6.16 - Since the people followed in the ways of Omri/Ahab, God would turn them into a desolation.

7. The Coming Compassion and Its Prerequisites (7:1—20)

7.1-2 - Micah sorrowed over Judah's sins. As a fruit picker who has gone out to gather fruit but finds none, Micah could find none who were upright. He found only those who were filled with violence.

7.3-4 - The princes, judges, and prominent citizens asked for bribes, and the leaders were so wicked that even the best of them was like a prickly shrub.

7.5 - Deceit abounded because the land was filled with deceitful businessmen (6:11, 12), bribed judges, and false prophets (3:5). People could no longer trust in a friend, or even in their spouse.

7.6-7 - With deceit everywhere, families began to fall apart. This was too much for Micah, and in sorrow he cried out to God.

7.8 - Micah spoke for the nation (he referred to himself fifteen times in 7:8—10). Judah would be defeated, but eventually God would deliver His people.

7.9 - Judgment would bring the people back to the light of God's righteousness.

7.10 - 11 - When Christ returns to establish His Kingdom Israel's enemies will be put to shame and will be trampled down like mud in the street. Israel will rebuild and her boundaries extended.

7.12-13 - People from Assyria and from around the world will come to Israel and worship after Christ judges the nations and makes them desolate.

7.14 - Micah called upon the Lord to feed His people like a shepherd, just as He had promised.

7.15 - God responded to Micah's request by promising a future display of divine intervention similar to that which surrounded Israel's exodus from Egypt.

7.16 - When Christ delivers His people at His second coming, the nations will be ashamed of their might. They will be speechless and not want to hear about Israel's victories.

7.17 - They will fear the Lord and will lay low like serpents and worms.

7.18 - Micah closed his prophecy by rehearsing the goodness and mercy of God. God is without equal in His willingness to forgive, and He delights in mercy.

7.19 - Micah looked forward to the day when God would subdue Israel's enemies and forgive its sins.

7.20 - Micah was confident that God would once again bless Israel because He is truthful and merciful and keeps His promises.

The Book of Nahum

(about 4 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Nahum two times.

Outline

1. Introduction to Nahum
2. Judgment on Nineveh Declared (Nah. 1:1 – 15)
3. The Judgment of Nineveh Described (Nah. 2: 1 – 13)
4. The Judgment of Nineveh Defended (Nah. 3: 1 – 19)

1. Introduction to Nahum

The name "Nahum" means "comforter" or "consolation." Nothing is known of the prophet except his name. There are two Nahums found in the Bible: this prophet and an unknown ancestor of Joseph, the husband of Mary (Luke 3:25).

1.1 - Nahum is called the Elkoshite meaning he was from the town of Elkosh. There are three different views as to the location of Elkosh.

- Some say it was a village twenty-four miles north of Nineveh and that Naham was one of the Israelites carried away captive by Assyria.
- Elkosh was a city in Judah, about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem.
- Elkosh was a town in Galilee. If this view is correct, then the Pharisees of Jesus' day were wrong when they said, "Look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:52).

Nahum does not name a single king who reigned during his ministry. Therefore the time of his ministry must be determined from internal evidence. Nahum mentions the destruction of No-Amon in upper Egypt as an already accomplished fact. That occurred in 663 BC. On the other hand, Nahum predicted the fall of Nineveh. This took place in 612 BC. Thus there is about a fifty-year period during which the book of Nahum had to be written.

Therefore, his ministry would have begun during the time of King Manasseh and continued through Amon and ended in the reign of Josiah. He was a contemporary of Zephaniah, and near the end of Nahum's ministry Jeremiah and Habakkuk came on the scene.

2. Judgment on Nineveh Declared (Nah. 1:1-15)

1.1 - The first sentence of the book of Nahum reads, "The burden of Nineveh." It is a one-topic book about the doom of Nineveh. It was a heavy message of judgment. In vv. 2 through 8, Nahum sets forth five outstanding characteristics of God are found in these verses.

1.2 - God is jealous over the ones He loves. Though God used the Assyrians to punish Israel, they humiliated Israel. So, God would take vengeance on the Assyrians.

1.3a - The reason God's wrath did not fall on Assyria earlier was because God is a loving and long-suffering God. He had been patient with them, but their time now ran out.

1.3b - Nahum spoke of the greatness of God. "The LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and the storm." People are often powerless when faced with powerful storms. God is omnipotent and can still the storms any time He wishes to do so.

1.4 - Nahum referenced the drying up of the Red Sea when Moses led Israel out of Egypt and He dried up the Jordan River when Joshua led Israel into Canaan.

Bashan was an area east of the sea of Galilee, which was noted for its lush pastures and large cattle. Carmel was a mountain range where Elijah faced the prophets of Baal and was known for its vineyards. Lebanon was a land just north of Israel and known for its great cedar trees. But all of these could be brought to nothing by God if He were to send a drought.

1.5 - God controls earthquakes and fire. Before Him the mountains quake, and the hills melt away. When God comes in judgment, even the rocks are shattered before His awesome power.

1.6 - Nahum asked the rhetorical question, "Who can stand before his indignation?". The answer is, of course, "No one." When God comes in judgment, no one, including Nineveh, can resist Him.

1.7 - Nahum also proclaimed that the Lord is good. God watches over His people and knows His own. He is caring, faithful, and merciful toward those who are His own.

1.8 - God can overwhelm His enemies with judgment. This was a message of comfort to the oppressed Israelites. God would make an utter end of Nineveh. When Assyria was being besieged by Babylon, the floodgates of the city were swept away by a sudden flooding of the Tigris River. This allowed the Babylonian army to enter the city and burn it. We can see God's hand in the fall of Assyria in fulfillment of His prophecy.

1.9 - The Assyrians had thought to destroy the Jewish nation and Jehovah, the God of that nation, as well. Nahum found it beyond comprehension that a pagan nation could even entertain the possibility of overthrowing the God of Israel. He said, "What do ye imagine against the Lord?".

Nahum said that God "will make an utter end" (1:9) and that "affliction shall not rise up the second time." Sennacherib, a king of Assyria, had attempted to capture the city of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18; 19). He failed after an angel of God killed 185,000 men of his army in one night. He returned to Assyria, and there he was murdered by two of his sons.

But the Assyrians continued to plot to take Jerusalem. God said in Nahum 1:9 they would not get a second chance. And they did not. Nineveh fell before the Assyrians could carry out their plot.

1.10 - He described the confusion of the people of Nineveh while they were drunken and under attack. During the time of the siege of Nineveh, the soldiers became drunk. During their drunkenness the final attack came, and they were unable to defend themselves. The city was then burned.

1.11 - Nahum spoke of its being "devoured as stubble fully dry". A fire leaves ash behind. Ashes of the temple and the king's palace have been unearthed by archaeologists.

1.12 - God said that Nineveh would be "cut down". God's verdict against Nineveh is also a promise to Israel. God promised, "Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more." God had used Assyria to punish Israel for her sin, but He would not do so again.

1.14 - God revealed that He had given a commandment that "no more of thy name be sown." Nahum was addressing Sennacherib and prophesying the end of his dynasty. This prophecy was fulfilled when his great-grandson, Saracus, committed suicide, and the line of Sennacherib became extinct.

1.15 – Chapter 1 closes with a prediction of the arrival of the news about Nineveh's downfall. The news "Assyria is no more!" would be proclaimed from mountaintop to mountaintop.

When the Jerusalem was besieged by Assyria, it was impossible for Judah to keep her feasts. Now Judah could once more celebrate unhindered. The Lord admonished the people to keep the vows they had made to Him in times of trouble.

3. The Judgment of Nineveh Described (Nah. 2:1 – 13)

2.1 - Nahum sounded a warning to Nineveh. The Assyrians for centuries had been besieging other cities. Now the opposite would be true. While the prediction of Nahum does not tell who the attackers will be, history now tells us they were the Babylonians.

2.2 - God had used Assyria to chastise His people, but the Assyrians were far more ruthless in their plundering than they should have been. They not only took away the harvest, but they also "marred their vine branches" (v. 2). Their viciousness contributed to their future demise at the hand of God.

Map – Assyria destroyed by Babylon. Nahum portrayed for us the confusion and frantic efforts of the Assyrians to defend their capital.

2.3 - "His mighty men" are the forces of the Babylonians. The chariots were made out of steel and glistened in the sunlight looking like flaming torches. The "fir trees" refer to the wooden spears used by the attackers. They were "terribly shaken," or wildly swung, as the enemy rolled into Nineveh.

2.4 - The chariots that raged in the streets. Nahum was describing the swiftness of the conquest after the walls had been breached. The attackers moved so swiftly that they looked like lightning.

2.5 - The "he" is the king of Assyria, who relied on his nobles and military advisors but failed the king. They would be caught off guard and stumble.

2.6 - Nahum is remarkable for the preciseness of his prophecies. Nahum 2:6 is a classic example: "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved." In the third year of the siege, a flood broke down part of the wall of the city. The flooding also destroyed the palace of the king.

The flooding was probably a combination of heavy rains and the enemy's damming of the Khosr river that flowed through Nineveh. The enemy released the pent up rain water behind the dam to create a rushing, destroying flood.

2.8 - The leaders of the nation commanded the people to stand their ground against the invaders, but the commands fell on deaf ears.

2.9 - The Lord now called upon the victors to plunder the city. Assyria had for centuries spoiled the smaller nations around it, carrying away their treasures of silver and gold. Now its wealth would be carried off by the Babylonians and Medes.

2.10 – In fear, the Assyrian's hearts melted, and their knees were knocking.

2.11 - In the past they had the courage of a lion. Nahum taunted the Assyrians again by asking, "Where is the dwelling of the lions?"

2.12 - A lion hunts, kills, and brings home what it has captured. Assyria, like a lion, slaughtered other nations and brought home treasures. The lion fears of no one. Now, however, the Assyrian lion was filled with fear.

2.13 – Assyria had every right to be fearful, because Almighty God was saying to her, "Behold, I am against thee".

4. The Judgment of Nineveh Defended (Nah. 3:1 – 19)

Nahum gave three good reasons why Nineveh deserved to be destroyed because of her own actions.

A. The cruelty of her wars (vv. 1 – 3)

3.1-3 - Assyria deserved to be punished first because of the viciousness of her wars. I won't even go into the details that they would do to the people they conquered... absolutely horrific.

B. Her evil influence on other nations (vv. 4 – 7)

3.4-7 - Assyria was an evil influence on the smaller nations about her. Nahum called Nineveh a "well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts" (3:4). She lured nations to destruction. The heathenism and demonic influence of Nineveh exerted a perilous influence on other nations.

C. She was no better than No-Amon (vv. 8 – 10)

3.8-10 - He asked a rhetorical question. "Art thou better than populous No?" No-Amon, was a great city of ancient Egypt. The Egyptians called it Thebes. Thebes has been described as the most magnificent city of any ancient civilization anywhere in the world. Though Thebes was a strongly fortified and greatly esteemed city, Assyria viciously reduced it to rubble.

The Assyrians carried its people away captive and ruthlessly massacred the children. Since Nineveh was no better than No-Amon, she also could expect to fall.

3.11 - Nineveh would stumble and fall as a drunken person as she drank from the cup of God's wrath. Having fallen, she would be hidden. After Nineveh was destroyed, she lay in dust and ashes. For more than two thousand years Nineveh was hidden until French and English archaeologists uncovered her ruins in AD 1842 (about 180 years ago from the date of this recording).

3.12 - Ripe figs fall from the tree with the slightest shake. So, too, Assyria would fall with ease.

3.13 – Women were not soldiers. Like a woman, Nineveh would be defenseless.

3.17 - In the cool of the evening the locusts would settle down on walls. But when the sun came up and warmed them the next morning, they would fly away, leaving no trace behind them. So, too, the brave men of Nineveh would flee in fear,

3.19 - The prophet expressed the feelings not only of his own people, but of all the nations who had suffered at the hand of this world-oppressing tyrant. They would rejoice at her downfall because her evil had come upon them all.

Nineveh has fallen never to rise again. Her mighty warriors will never again be counted among the living until the day of their final judgment.

The Book of Habakkuk

(about 5 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Habakkuk two times.

Outline

1. Habakkuk's Ministry
2. Habakkuk's First Dilemma (Hab. 1:2-11)
3. Habakkuk's Second Dilemma (Hab. 1:12—2:20)
4. Habakkuk's Prayer (Hab. 3)

1. Habakkuk's Ministry

Habakkuk did not date his prophecy based on the kings of Judah or Israel. So, internal evidence must be used to determine when he prophesied.

In fulfillment of Nahum's prophecy, Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian Empire, fell to the Babylonians in 612 BC. Without Assyrian interference, King Josiah of Judah spread religious reforms and Judah experienced a spiritual revival. However, this contrasts with Habakkuk's description of Judah's many sins (1:2—4). Therefore, Habakkuk must have ministered after Josiah's death in 609 BC, when the people again slipped back into idolatry and lawlessness.

The Babylonians became firmly in control of Palestine in 605 BC, but Habakkuk's writings show that was not yet the case. So, it is estimated that Habakkuk's ministry to be 609-605 BC. He ministered at the time of King Jehoiakim and Zedekiah and contemporary with Jeremiah, Daniel, and maybe Ezek.

We know very little about Habakkuk. He was a poet, and his writing style resembles that which appears in many of the psalms. Habakkuk intended the third chapter of his book to be sung in the style of a Shigionoth, or deeply emotional tune. So, Habakkuk may have been a gifted musician.

According to the last phrase of the last verse in the book (3:19), Habakkuk dedicated at least his third chapter to the chief singer. He himself may have been one of the Levitical musicians.

1.1 – God ordained Habakkuk to be a prophet and gave him a burden to proclaim.

2. Habakkuk's First Dilemma (Hab. 1:2-11)

The prophet's first dilemma was, "Is God unconcerned about sin?"

1.2 - Habakkuk began his book with a twofold question.

- Why did God seem so silent?
Habakkuk cried out to God, but He did not answer His prophet.
- Why did God seem so distant?
Habakkuk begged God to deliver those who suffered violence, but God did not help them.

From a human perspective, it appeared to Habakkuk that God was indifferent, inactive, insensitive.

1.3 – Sin was rampant, but it appeared to Habakkuk that God was unconcerned. Habakkuk saw sin and trouble on every side. Gone were the wonderful days of obedience to God under King Josiah. Jehoiakim, now sat on the throne. Corruption abounded, and lawlessness prevailed.

Habakkuk saw plundering, violence, conflict, and strife. Habakkuk wanted to know why God tolerated the sins of His people. If Habakkuk could not endure the situation, so how could God?

1.4 - Habakkuk also bemoaned the powerlessness of the law within society. People had turned away from God's law since the death of Josiah. As a result, justice never came from the courts. The wicked outnumbered the righteous, and the judges handed down twisted perverted judgments.

1.5 – God answered Habakkuk. He asked Habakkuk to look beyond the troubles within Judah and see what was taking place on the international scene. God was about to accomplish His will, and it would be hard for Habakkuk and his people to believe—even though God would tell them directly.

1.6 - God would raise up the Chaldeans (Babylonians), a ruthless nation. They would march throughout the entire region and possess houses that belonged to others.

1.8 - God described the rapidly advancing Babylonian Empire by describing their war horses and cavalymen. Their horses seemed faster than leopards and fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their horsemen swooped down like a bird of prey in a hurry to catch its meal.

1.9 - In their violent conquest they would advance like an easterly wind and gather captives like the sand, too great to number.

1.10 - The Chaldeans scoffed and scorned the opposing kings and the princes. They also ridiculed every strong fortress. They knew that no wall, no matter how high or how thick, could keep them out. They would simply heap up dirt into large ramps that reached to the top of the walls and then charge up the ramps and seize the city.

1.11 - Then God described another aspect of the Chaldeans, which would give rise to Habakkuk's second dilemma. God alluded to the iniquity of the Chaldeans. After they conquered, they attributed their victories to the power of their false god.

3. Habakkuk's Second Dilemma (Hab. 1:12—2:4)

The prophet's second dilemma was, "Why would God use the more wicked Chaldeans"?

1.12-13 - Habakkuk wondered how a holy God could use such an unholy nation as the Chaldeans to accomplish His will in judging and correcting His people. The prophet reasoned that God's eyes are too pure to look on iniquity and do nothing. Therefore, why would He look on those who deal treacherously (the Chaldeans) and not stop their advance?

1.14-15 - God in His sovereignty had made the people of the entire region, including Judah, like the fish of the sea and like creeping things that have no ruler. The Chaldeans needed only to take them up as with a hook ("angle") or as with nets. The net and dragnet symbolized the Chaldean military might and machinery.

1.16 - After their victories they sacrificed to their nets and dragnets; that is, they paid homage to their gods of war, which they thought had given them their victories.

1.17 – Habakkuk wondered, would God therefore allow them to empty their net and try again? Would God allow the wicked Chaldeans to continue slaying the nations without pity?

2.1 - Habakkuk said that he would patiently wait for an answer from the Lord for his question. He would station himself like a watchman on a city wall. He had not questioned God out of rebellion but out of faith, and in faith he would wait for God to answer.

2.2 – God responded with a vision and told him to write the vision plainly on tables (or tablets) so that running messengers would be able to deliver it from place to place.

2.3 - God cautioned him that the events of the vision would not take place immediately. At the appointed time the vision would become reality. Habakkuk was to wait patiently, because it would surely come to pass.

2.4 - God advised Habakkuk to observe two kinds of individuals.

- God pointed out the proud man whose soul is lifted up. The soul of the proud man is not upright within him.
- God pointed out the just man who lives by faith.

God's point was that proud people second-guess God's actions. Just people may question why God did what He did, but they will always trust Him. They may not understand, but their faith remains steadfast. God's ways are not man's ways. His answers to our questions may not satisfy us, but we simply must let God be God.

In verses 5-20, Habakkuk envisioned the Chaldean Empire from God's perspective. God was not ignorant of their iniquities; He was fully aware of their sins of greed, violence, and idolatry. And in God's time, He will destroy the Chaldeans/Babylonians.

2.5 - The Chaldeans satisfied their every greed, living in overindulgence. Habakkuk envisioned them transgressing with their wine. They were a proud people that did not stay at home within their own borders but enlarged their territories.

They were never satisfied with the extent of their military conquests, and in that regard they were insatiable like Hell and death. They could never subdue enough nations or peoples.

2.6 - Habakkuk looked forward to the time when those whom the Chaldeans had overpowered would take up a proverb against their old enemy. These conquered peoples would sing in taunt, "Woe to him that increaseth".

2.7 - Habakkuk anticipated the day when those who were plundered by the Chaldeans would turn and plunder them. The day of Chaldea's destruction would come suddenly, as nations under their dominion would awake to their senses and recover the treasures of Babylon for their own treasure.

2.8 - Chaldea had made enemies of many nations, and they had shed much blood in the country ("land") and in the city. The happiness they sought through bloodshed would not come to fruition.

2.9 - The Chaldeans had plundered the other nations in order to fortify their own city of Babylon. Under Nebuchadnezzar they had fortified their capital city with strong double walls and a network of tall towers; and Habakkuk likened this to a bird's nest high in the air. The Chaldeans hoped that their fortifications would deliver them from military defeat.

2.10-11 - Habakkuk envisioned the stones and timbers that composed the fortifications and buildings of Babylon as bearing witness against the shameful way that they had been constructed – from the plunder of other nations.

2.12 - They built their towns and cities with bloodshed and iniquity. They had murdered people in unnecessary battles fought out of greed, and they had enslaved many of the survivors.

2.13 - From God's perspective, their undertakings were all in vanity; no sooner had they finished their labors than they were consumed in fire.

2.15-16 - The Chaldeans violently treated their neighboring nations to brutal humiliations, a shame of the highest order, but at the last, the Chaldeans would find themselves treated in the same way that they had treated others.

2.17 - God would punish Chaldea for the violent way that it treated Lebanon. Lebanon, a country situated to the north of Israel, was famous for its tall cedar trees and many wild beasts, The Chaldeans had chopped down many of the cedars in order to build their palaces and temples, and they had randomly killed many animals in the forests. God would punish them for their violence against nature, but especially for their violence against humanity.

2.18 - The Chaldeans not only built walls and buildings; they also fashioned many idols.

2.19 - Judgment would come upon those who proclaimed of the wood and stone idols, "Awake" and "Arise, it shall teach!". Even though the images presented shiny gold and silver coverings, they had no life.

2.20 - In stark contrast, the Lord is very much alive and in charge, ruling the earth from Heaven. The whole earth is commanded to keep silent before the awesome presence of the living Lord.

5. Habakkuk's Prayer (Hab. 3)

3.1 - Habakkuk had come to the realization that the Chaldeans would defeat Judah and that others would in turn defeat the Chaldeans. Habakkuk could now see a series of wars, and he knew that wars lead to famines, hardships, and deaths. Therefore, he prayed to God.

3.2 - After hearing God's speech concerning the future destruction of Judah and Chaldea, Habakkuk was filled with a sense of reverent fear and awe. He requested a revival of God's dealings with His creation. Habakkuk desired to see God at work and to see God's mercy—both within his lifetime.

3.3-4 - In his prayer, Habakkuk praised the Lord for His past demonstrations of power and mercy. He remembered God descending on Mount Sinai when He gave His law to Moses. Lightning, thunder, smoke and fire accompanied the presence of God on Mount Sinai.

3.5 - Habakkuk then reflected on the pestilence that goes before the Lord like a messenger and the burning diseases ("coals") that follow him as a servant. This could be a reference to God's chastening hand on Israel during their wilderness wanderings. It could also be a reference to the troubles God brought on Israel's enemies, both in Egypt and the Promised Land.

3.6 - Habakkuk visualized the conquest, division, and settlement of the Promised Land.

3.7 - Habakkuk observed Cushan and the Midianites, nomadic peoples who lived in tents with curtains, trembling at the advance of Israel.

3.8 - God was not angry at the Jordan or at the Red Sea. He divided the waters so that Israel could walk across to freedom and victory. In his prayer, Habakkuk envisioned the Lord as fighting for Israel with His heavenly hosts like horses and chariots.

3.9 - While fighting for Israel, God uncovered His bow and fought in Israel's defense since He had bound Himself to do so by His oaths to the tribes.

3.10 - God is so powerful that even the deep currents in the depths of the seas lift up their hands, as it were, in acknowledgment of God's control.

3.11 - Habakkuk recounted the time that the sun stood still over Gibeon on the day that the Lord gave a great victory to His people.

3.12 - God marched with His people throughout Canaan and defeated their foes.

3.13-15 - Habakkuk turned from the victories associated with Joshua's conquest to Israel's victories in general. He ended this section of his prayer in which he praised the mighty God of Israel by recalling once again the wonderful display of God's power at the crossing of the Red Sea.

3.16 - Meditating on God's great power filled Habakkuk with a sense of awe and reverential fear, so much so that his lips quivered, and he shook inside and out. He prayed that he would have rest in the coming day of trouble when the Chaldean troops would invade the country of Judah.

3.17 - Habakkuk knew that the coming war with Chaldea would plunge Judah into circumstances that would make life hard.

3.18 - Despite coming difficult circumstances, the prophet would rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of His salvation. This is the high point of the book. Habakkuk moved from questions to simple trust to all-out joy.

3.19 - Habakkuk declared that the Lord God was his strength. During the coming hardship, God would put joy in his heart so that he could move about with a spring in his step, like that of a deer (or hind) during the low times.

The book ends with a subscript in which the prophet dedicated his poetic prayer for use in the worship services of the temple.

The Book of Zephaniah

(about 3.5 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Zephaniah two times.

Outline

1. Introduction to Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:1)
2. Judah's Coming Judgment (Zeph. 1:2–13)
3. The Day of the Lord (Zeph. 1:14-2:3)
4. Judgment upon Surrounding Nations (Zeph. 2:4–15)
5. Judgment upon Judah (Zeph. 3:1–7)
6. Israel in the End Time (Zeph. 3:8-20)

1. Introduction to Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:1)

1.1 - Zephaniah was the only prophet to give his genealogy going back four generations. He was the great, great grandson of King Hezekiah. Thus, Zephaniah was of royal blood, but his branch of the family was not the ruling line. His hometown probably was Jerusalem, the capital city. His name means "hid of the Lord" or "he whom Jehovah has hidden." Map – he prophesied to Judah

Zephaniah prophesied the downfall of Nineveh (2). He, therefore, ministered before the downfall of Nineveh. This would put him in the early days of King Josiah. Nahum and Habakkuk were his contemporaries. Jeremiah probably began to minister as Zephaniah's ministry was coming to an end.

2. Judah's Coming Judgment (Zeph. 1:2–13)

1.2-3 - Zephaniah's prophecies encompass the world. He earned the title "the prophet of global judgment." He stated that God will consume all things on land, sea, and air, including man, animals, birds, and fish. Zephaniah wrote of a complete devastation of the earth. Zephaniah then became more specific about God's judgment and zeroed in on the sins of Jerusalem and the nation of Judah.

1.4 - Zephaniah spoke out boldly against the syncretism of religion taking place in Judah. The Jews were incorporating false religious systems into their worship. One false religious system was Baal worship from the Canaanites.

"Baal" means "lord." Baal was considered to be the god of lightning and storm. The Canaanites worshiped him, hoping to appease him and thus get more rain for their crops. Baal worship featured grossly immoral fertility rites.

The Chemarims were idolatrous priests appointed by the kings. They were not from the tribe of Levi.

1.5 – A second false religious system was star worship from the Babylonians. Some Jewish people worshiped the stars from the flat roofs of their houses. Josiah's grandfather, wicked King Manasseh, had brought this false worship into Judah (2 Kings 21).

The third false system Judah was practicing was worship of Malcham, also called Molech or Milcom elsewhere in scripture. This was the god of the Ammonites. The idol was built with arms outstretched and had a grate on which children were burned alive as an offering.

1.6 – Then Zephaniah addressed those who were indifferent. This group had not turned to idols, but they did not worship the Lord either. They were practical atheists. Judgment would fall on them too.

1.7 - Zephaniah stated that the "day of the Lord" was at hand. This section deals with the "near" Day of the Lord, the Babylonian Captivity. The next section concerns the "far" Day of the Lord, which is an end-time event. This is the first of nearly twenty references to the "Day of the Lord" in this book.

Zephaniah called for silence in the presence of the Lord God. God had prepared a sacrifice, namely Judah and her people and invited Nebuchadnezzar and his army as guests to the sacrifice.

1.8 - Zephaniah began with the princes. Being of royal blood himself, Zephaniah had intimate knowledge of their pride and sinful ways. The princes are pictured in foreign clothes because they had adopted foreign practices, especially Egypt, the nation in whom they trusted for protection.

1.9 - God would also punish those who rushed to plunder others' houses.

1.11 - The inhabitants of the market district (Maktesh) would wail because the merchants would be cut down. This was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem in 586 BC.

1.12 - God will "punish the men that are settled on their lees." "Lees" are sediment deposited by wine (the "dregs"). To settle on the lees meant to become complacent and satisfied with oneself or conditions. They had become settled and thereby polluted, and they didn't even know it.

3. The Day of the Lord (Zeph. 1:14–2:3)

1.14 - The prophet went beyond the coming Babylonian captivity and spoke of the end-time Day of the Lord. He called it "the great day of the Lord." He was speaking of the end-time tribulation period.

1.17 – The reason for the terrible Day of the Lord, "they have sinned against the LORD".

1.18 - Sin is always at the center of God's judgment on people for God is a jealous God and deserves worship and adoration.

2.1-3 - Zephaniah gave a call to the nation to repent before the judgment fell upon them. They were to seek the Lord, to seek righteousness, and to seek meekness. If they truly repented, they might be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger. Zephaniah's name meant "hidden of the Lord." Verse 3 becomes a play on words with God's promise to "hide" those who humble themselves before God.

4. Judgment upon Surrounding Nations (Zeph. 2:4—15)

Zephaniah mentions five nations for judgment in chapter 2.

A. Philistines (2:4-7)

2.4 - The Philistines controlled much of Palestine by the end of the reign of King Saul, who lost his life fighting them in battle. They were a warlike people with five chief cities. Four of them are mentioned by Zephaniah.

2.5 - The Cherethites are likely Cretans who lived in Palestine.

2.7 - Along with the judgment on the Philistines comes a promise of restoration of Israel.

B. Moabites and Ammonites (2:8—11)

2.8-11 - These two nations descended from Lot and his daughters. They would be judged because of how they treated Israel. Their judgment would be as thorough as that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their lands would become a wilderness, a place of wild thorns. Pride was another of their sins.

C. Ethiopians (2:12)

2.12 - Ethiopia would be judged as well. Zephaniah did not say much about this land, nor did he give the reason for the judgment. He did say that the nation would die by the Lord's sword.

D. Assyrians (2:13—15)

2.13-15 - Like Nahum before him, Zephaniah predicted the downfall of Nineveh. Nineveh would be so utterly destroyed she would become a dwelling place for wild animals.

5. Judgment upon Judah (Zeph. 3:1—7)

3.1 - Zephaniah turned again to Judah and pronounced judgment on her.

3.2 - This judgment would fall because of disobedience.

3.3-4 - It would fall because of evil leaders.

3.5-7 - It would fall because the people did not learn from the judgment on the nations around them.

6. Israel in the End Time (Zeph. 3:8-20)

Zephaniah then turned his attention to end-time events once more as he closed his book, He dealt with the other nations first and then with Israel.

3.8 - God will destroy the nations by fire and pour out His fierce anger on them. This is again the tribulation period.

The Tribulation will be followed by God's Kingdom on earth. Israel will be in the Promised Land serving God in humility.

3.12-13 - They will have complete, humble trust in the Lord and will fear no one. In other words, they will fear God and realize the blessings that come from trusting Him.

3.20 - God will regather Israel and give them a name among the nations during His Kingdom. This would be particularly good news to those who would end up in Babylonian captivity.

The Book of Haggai

(about 3 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Haggai two times.

Outline

1. Haggai's First Message: Time to Rebuild (1:1-15)
2. Haggai's Second Message: Future Glory (2:1—9)
3. Haggai's Third Message: Blessings of Obedience (2:10—19)
4. Haggai's Fourth Message: Future Kingdom (2:20—23)

The last three Minor Prophet books were written after the Jews returned to Judah from Babylonian captivity. The first of the last three is Haggai and it consists of four messages which Haggai preached during the second year of the reign of the Persian King Darius I. Under Zerubbabel, the people started to rebuild the temple, but then opposition forced the project to a halt. Haggai motivated them to finish rebuilding the temple.

1. Haggai's First Message: Time to Rebuild (1)

1.1 - Haggai delivered his first message to a crowd of Jews gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the new moon and the monthly feast day. Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest were present.

1.2 - The people gave an excuse for not finishing the temple even though God had made it very plain that His will was for them to build the temple.

1.4 - God, through Haggai, pointedly asked if it were time for the people to dwell in fancy, luxurious houses with paneled walls ("cieled") while the temple remained a ruin.

1.5 - God wanted the people to consider their ways. They should have felt guilt and shame for responding to God's will so poorly.

1.6 - The people lacked because they chose to serve themselves instead of God.

1.7 - God again invited the people to consider their ways.

1.8 - Haggai challenged the people to go bring wood and rebuild the house of God. God would take pleasure in the completion of the temple project. It is important to note that it was not the building itself that would please God but the obedience of the people.

1.9 - At this point Haggai returned to the financial hardship of the people. The people had gone out into their fields expecting good harvests ("much"), but after harvesting they realized that their yield was low ("little"). In addition, once they brought their harvests home, the Lord blew some of it away.

1.11 - God had sent a drought on the fertile lands as well as the mountains, and it adversely affected every major gathering in Judah: grain ("corn"), grapes ("wine"), and olives ("oil"). If it grew in the ground, God had made sure that it produced less than usual.

1.12 - The leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, and all the remnant of the people responded favorably to God's message as they learned to fear God's presence.

1.13 - Haggai relayed to the people that the Lord was with them. The assurance of the Lord's presence would have encouraged them and would have strengthened their resolve.

1.14 - Haggai preached a highly motivational message, but it was the Lord who stirred up the hearts of the governor, high priest, and all the remnant of the people.

1.15 - The people came out to work beginning twenty-three days after Haggai preached his message.

2. Haggai's Second Message: Future Glory (Hag. 2:1-9)

2.1 – Almost a month passed by when Haggai delivered his second message.

2.2 - Haggai directed the message to the leadership and to the people. The people began to rebuild, but the original excitement had worn off, and some may have grown discouraged. The task before them was large, and the remnant of people was small.

2.3 - Evidently, some of the older people lamented the fact that this new temple looked nothing like the old temple of Solomon.

2.4 - Haggai continued by telling Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the people to be strong because the Lord was with them.

2.5 - The remnant had failed before; maybe they would fail again. To counter this problem, Haggai told them not to fear. There was no reason to be afraid because the very same Spirit of God Who had protected the people during their exodus from Egypt was present during the rebuilding endeavors.

2.6 - Haggai had a second point to his message. Haggai reminded the people that before the future temple in the millennium is built that God will send earthquakes and cosmic disturbances.

2.7 - At the second coming of the Messiah, He will shake the nations in battle. During the Kingdom, Jesus the Messiah ("the desire of all nations") will enter into the millennial temple, and His very presence will fill it with glory.

2.8 - Solomon's temple had far more gold and silver than the temple the remnant tried to build. But gold and silver do not impress God, since He owns all the silver and gold in the world.

2.9 - The glory of the latter, millennial temple will be greater than Solomon's temple, because God Himself will be present in the temple in the Person of Jesus Christ.

3. Haggai's Third Message: Blessings of Obedience (Hag. 2: 10—19)

2.10 –Haggai delivered his 3rd message two months later.

2.11 - God instructed Haggai to ask the priests a question concerning the laws of ritual purity.

2.12 - Haggai asked the priests about holy meat ("flesh") that was set aside for a sacrifice. Haggai asked if the holy meat were accidentally to come into contact with bread, wine, oil, or any food, would the sacredness of the meat transfer to the food? The priests said no.

2.13 - Haggai then asked if a person who was ritually unclean because he had touched a dead body were to touch any of the food items, would the food become unclean? The priests answered that the food would become unclean.

Haggai made his point: holiness does not transfer, but unholiness does. The same principle applies in the area of health: you can transmit your sickness to healthy people and make them sick, but you cannot pass your good health to a sick person to make them better.

2.14 - Haggai applied this principle to the people. Even though the people were disobedient in neglecting to rebuild the temple, the people thought that God accepted their offerings. But their offerings were far from acceptable to God. He had refused the sacrifices and as a result the land was impoverished. The Jews thought that the restored ritual of sacrifice would make their offerings holy, but their disobedience polluted even their sacrifices.

2.15 – It has been roughly 3 months since the people started building again.

2.16 - Before they worked on the temple, their grain yields had fallen 50 percent from their expectations and their grape harvests had fallen 60 percent.

2.17 - In the days of their indifference, God had sent blight ("blasting"), mildew, and hail.

2.19 – But now they could look forward to bountiful harvests.

4. Haggai's Fourth Message: Future Kingdom (Hag. 2:20—23)

2.20 - Haggai preached his fourth message on the same day that he preached his third one.

2.21 - It was a private message for Zerubbabel. Haggai again predicted the cosmic and seismic disturbances that would precede the Millennial Kingdom.

2.22 - He again predicted the destruction of the Gentile ("heathen") kingdoms. The Messiah would return and overthrow their governments and armies, and in confusion they would fight each other.

2.23 - Haggai spoke of Zerubbabel as the representative of the Messianic line. In the future millennial kingdom, the Davidic throne will be reestablished when Jesus the Messiah sits on the throne.

The Book of Zechariah

(about 10.5 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Zechariah two times.

Outline

1. Introduction (1:1)
2. The call to repentance (1:2—6)
3. Zechariah's 8 visions of hope (1:7 – 6:8)
4. The Crowning of the High Priest (6:9-15)
5. The Concern about Fasting (7)
6. Future Blessing for Israel (8)
7. The First Burden (Zech. 9—11)
8. The Second Burden (Zech. 12:1—14:21)

1. Introduction (Zech. 1:1)

1.1 - Nearly thirty men in the Bible bore the name Zechariah. Zechariah means "Jehovah remembers." He was from the tribe of Levi. His grandfather came back with Zerubbabel from Babylon. He began to prophesy two months after Haggai did. He is mentioned in both the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Zechariah's prophecies say more about the Messiah than any of the other Minor Prophets. His message is also one of submission to the kingship of Jehovah. Submission involved the nation's turning from the sin of going their own way and turning to fulfilling God's purpose of being a channel through which God would bless the Gentile nations.

2. The call to repentance (1:2—6)

1.3 - Haggai exhorted the people to begin rebuilding the temple. At the same time, Zechariah called the people to a spiritual awakening as well. If the people would turn to God, He would turn to them.

1.4 – Those that returned from Babylon would have understood what Zechariah was talking about. They experienced the punishment God warned their fathers about.

3. Zechariah's 8 visions of hope

1.7 - Zechariah then had a series of 8 visions

A. Vision #1 - The vision of the man among the myrtle trees (1:8—17)

1.8 - In the vision Zechariah saw a man riding upon a red horse. He stopped among the myrtle trees, and behind him were others on horses, some of which were red, some speckled, and some white.

1.9 - Zechariah asked the meaning and the purpose of the rider and the horses.

Who was the man Zechariah saw riding on a red horse? It is clear from 1:11 that He was the Angel of the Lord, a reference to the preincarnate Christ. He was riding on a red horse, the color of war and bloodshed. He "stood," or stopped, among the myrtle trees. A myrtle tree was a common shrub that grew in the "bottom," a deep or shady place, perhaps a ravine of some kind.

1.10 - The Angel of the Lord gave the interpretation.

1.11 - He said they were a sort of military patrol whose task it was to survey the world scene. The survey revealed the earth was at peace.

1.12 - The Angel of the Lord then pled with God the Father for Judah and Jerusalem. God had stated that the land would be desolate for seventy years, a reference to the Babylonian captivity. The Angel of the Lord referred to the fact that the seventy years were past, but that the land was still suffering.

1.13 - The Lord then gave comforting words who in turn shared them with Zechariah.

1.14 - God cared about Judah and Jerusalem.

1.15 - God also was displeased with the Gentile nations for the way they treated Israel. God used Gentile nations to chastise His people, but they were far more brutal than necessary. Therefore, God was angry with them.

1.16 - On the other hand, God stated that He would show His mercy to Jerusalem. The city and the temple would be rebuilt.

1.17 - Cities would prosper across the land.

B. Vision #2 - The vision of the four horns and four craftsmen (1:18-21)

Zechariah received the vision of the four horns and four craftsmen, revealing the judgment of God on the nations that afflicted Israel.

1.18 - Horns are a symbol of power and authority.

1.19a - For the second time Zechariah asked what is this vision all about.

1.19b - The four great world powers that Daniel spoke of, namely Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, and Rome. At this point in history, the Greek and Roman Empires were yet to come.

1.20 - Zechariah saw "carpenters," or craftsman skilled in wood, metal, or stone. The fact that the carpenters appeared after the horns is integral to the meaning and interpretation.

1.21a - Zechariah asked a question: "What come these to do?" The answer of the angel ties the horns and the craftsmen together, so we take them both to be part of one vision.

1.21b - The craftsmen came to "fray," or to terrify, the horns and to cast them out. In the interpretation it is clear that the craftsmen did something to the horns. The four craftsmen probably symbolize four successive powers that destroy the power before them. If so, then the carpenters are Medo-Persia (which destroyed Babylon), Greece (which destroyed Medo-Persia), Rome (which destroyed Greece), and the millennial Kingdom (which will destroy the revived Roman Empire).

C. Vision #3 - The vision of the man with the measuring line (2:1 – 13)

2.1 - Zechariah now received vision number three where he saw a man with a measuring line.

2.2 - Zechariah asked the question, "Whether goest thou?" The Lord told Zechariah that He was going to measure Jerusalem.

2.4-5 - The vision portrays the future blessing of Israel in the millennial period. The population will rise, for the Lord will be a wall of protection about them.

2.6-7 - The interpretation also includes God's judgment on the nations that plundered Jerusalem.

2.8 - The Lord referred to His people as the apple of His eye. This refers to the delicate part of the eye that lets in light. The Lord in essence was saying that His people were of extreme importance and value to Him.

Chapter 2 ends with the Lord's declaration that one day He will return to judge the nations and give them the just sentences they deserve.

D. Vision #4 - The Vision of the Clothing of Joshua (Zech. 3:1 – 10)

3.1-5 - Zechariah saw Joshua the high priest (not Moses' successor) standing before the Angel of the Lord and Satan as well. Satan was at Joshua's right hand to oppose him, to accuse him before God.

Apparently, Satan was stating that Joshua had no right to stand before the Lord because he was unclean. Satan had some basis for his accusation, for Joshua was clothed in soiled garments.

However, the Lord rebuked Satan. Then He commanded that Joshua be given a change of raiment and a new headband to wear and that he follow the Lord.

3.6 - Joshua was given a twofold commission.

3.7a - First, he was told to walk in God's way. Second, he was to keep God's charge, i.e., faithful performance of the priestly rituals that were laid down in the Mosaic law.

3.7b - God promised three results if Joshua and the other priests obeyed this twofold commission.

- They would govern the Lord's house, meaning they would continue to serve in the temple.
- Second, they would keep the Lord's courts. They would be given the responsibility of keeping the courts free from idolatry and in a pure condition.
- Third, they would have access to the presence of God.

3.8 - The Messiah is here called "my servant the branch." Christ is the branch of David, a descendant Who will spring from the root of Jesse.

3.9 - He is also called "the stone." He is the stone that the builders rejected. In Zechariah the stone had seven eyes. Eyes speak of intelligence and wisdom. Seven is the number of perfection. Jesus Christ is perfect in His wisdom and is all-intelligent.

3.10 - The coming of the Messiah and the removal of the iniquity from the land would lead to peace and safety in Israel. A person inviting others to join him under his vines and fig trees is an indication of peace and safety in the land.

E. Vision #5 - The Vision of the Candlestick and the Two Olive Trees (Zech. 4:1—14)

4.1 - Zechariah must have been tired, for he fell asleep.

4.2 - The angel asked Zechariah what he sees. He answered that he saw a lampstand made of solid gold with a bowl on top of it. The bowl was a reservoir to hold olive oil for the lampstand. The lampstand had seven lamps on it. He also saw a pipe running between each lamp and the bowl.

4.3 - Zechariah also saw two olive trees, one on the right side of the lampstand, the other on the left side. There was a sprout from each tree, which brought the olive oil directly from the tree to the bowl of the lampstand.

4.4 - Zechariah asked, "What are these, my lord?" Then the angel proceeded to tell him about it.

4.9 - This vision was an encouragement to Zerubbabel that he should stay with the construction project because his hands would finish the building.

4.10 - The people who thought the temple could not be rebuilt and who "despised the day of small things" would see Zerubbabel at work and they would rejoice.

4.11-12 - The lampstand had 7 branches with oil flowing directly from the olive trees to the lamps by way of the golden sprouts, the bowl, and the seven pipes.

4.14 - The angel identified the two olive trees, Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. Zerubbabel had started the building of the temple, but then it was stopped due to opposition. It was started again due to the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

The previous vision focused on Joshua the high priest, but this vision focused on Zerubbabel. Under the leadership of these two men, the temple would be rebuilt with the purpose of Israel being a light to the nations.

F. Vision #6 - The Vision of the Flying Scroll (Zech. 5:1—4)

5.1 - Zechariah turned and immediately saw another vision, a flying scroll.

5.2 - The angel asked Zechariah what he saw. He saw a large, unfolded scroll, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide (9 m. x 4.5 m.). The scroll was the exact size as the tabernacle of Israel. It was like a sheet flying through the sky and readable on both sides.

5.3-4 - One side stated that every thief would be expelled. The other side stated that every person guilty of perjury, or swearing falsely, would be cut off. This flying scroll went through the whole land, entering and destroying the houses of the wicked.

This vision concerned the rod-of-iron rule of Christ during the millennial Kingdom. The unsaved who survive the Tribulation will be judged severely before the kingdom begins. This vision brings hope because it gives assurance that Christ's rule will be perfect during the millennial Kingdom.

G. Vision #7 - The Vision of the Ephah and the Woman (Zech. 5:5-11)

5.5-8 - This vision, like the preceding one, deals with judgment. After the flying scroll had gone by, Zechariah looked up and asked the angel what it was. The angel replied, "It is an ephah," which is a measuring container, somewhat like a basket. It had a lid made of lead and a woman in the basket.

The woman was a symbol of wickedness. The interpreting angel had to keep this wickedness in confinement by putting the woman back in the basket and securing the lid of lead back on it.

5.9-11 - Two winged women carried the basket to Babylon. The removal of wickedness from Israel prepares that nation for the millennial blessing. The reestablishment of wickedness in Babylon lays the groundwork for the final judgment on Babylon.

H. Vision #8 - The Vision of the Four Chariots (Zech. 6:1—8)

6.1-3 – He saw four chariots. The first chariot had red horses; the second, black; the third, white; and the fourth, brown mixed with gray horses. The chariots came from between two brass mountains.

6.4-8 - This vision portrays God's judgment on the Gentile nations that oppressed Israel. There might be some significance in the colors of the horses.

When compared to Revelation 6: 1—8, we could conclude the red horse stood for war, the black for famine, and the white for death. The brown mixed with gray horse might be a reference to plagues.

The two bronze mountains are most likely a reference to judgment. Bronze is associated with judgment on sin in the Old Testament. The chariots that went north represent judgment on Babylon. The chariots that went south picture judgment on Egypt. God's swift and sure judgment on the nations is evident regardless of what is meant by the particular colors. This message certainly encouraged Zechariah and the Jews who returned to Judah.

4. The Crowning of the High Priest (Zech. 6:9—15)

6.9-11 - The visions having ended, Zechariah was instructed to crown Joshua the high priest with a crown of silver and gold. The crown was brought by exiles coming from the Babylonian captivity.

5. The Concern about Fasting (Zech. 7)

7.1 - Nearly two years went by between the end of chapter 6 and the opening of chapter 7.

7.2-3 - A delegation came from Babylon to Jerusalem to seek God's blessing and to ask about a certain fast. This delegation went to the temple priests and prophets. These should have been the right people to go to. However, they did not have the answer, so Zechariah had to step in vv. 4, 5.

The question concerned a self-imposed fast remembering the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25). The Jews had fasted on that day for seventy years since Jerusalem fell.

7.4-5 - The Lord told Zechariah to ask the people a question. In this question, the Lord exposed their hypocrisy. The two fasts were not done to the glory of God. The people regretted the destruction of their country, but they did not repent of their sin, which had brought about their captivity.

7.6-7 - The delegation was concerned about keeping a fast that God had not commanded, but they failed to obey God through the pre-exile prophets. Zechariah told them that they should look at what happened to their forefathers, who would not listen to the prophets. Before the captivity, Jerusalem and Judah were prosperous and full of people. And because they did not listen to the former prophets, their land was conquered, their cities wasted, and they were carried off into captivity.

7.9 - Empty rituals mean nothing to God. What God wants is practical righteousness in everyday life.

7.10 - God wants His people to treat each other kindly. The widows, the fatherless, foreigners, and the poor are particularly singled out. The weak and the unprotected have always been of special concern to the Lord, and any kindness shown to them will not be overlooked by Him.

7.12 - The Israelites hardened their hearts against the preaching of the prophets. Because Israel hardened her heart, God poured out great wrath on her. This judgment came in the form of Nebuchadnezzar and his army.

7.13 - When the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem, the Jews cried out to God, but God would not listen to them.

7.14 - He scattered them among the nations, and their land, the "pleasant land," was laid desolate.

6. Future Blessing for Israel (Zech. 8)

This chapter has to do with the return from exile in Zechariah's day, but it is also a picture of the restoration that will take place in the end times.

8.2 - God was "jealous for Zion". While God had to chastise Israel, He still loved her. Therefore, He will deal in fury with those who mistreat Israel.

8.3 - The Lord had turned away from Jerusalem before the Babylonian captivity began, but now God would "dwell in the midst of Jerusalem". This statement looks to the millennial period when Jerusalem will be called "the city of truth". The mountain upon which Jerusalem is built will be called "the holy mountain." Truth and holiness will prevail when Christ rules in the millennial age.

8.4-5 - This message portrays the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the millennial period. It is a beautiful picture of blessedness and peace. Elderly people will dwell in the streets of Jerusalem. Old age will be common, for there will be a return to the days of longevity like in the early earth.

8.6 - Bringing about such blessings are not difficult for God.

8.7 - God promises a regathering of Israel in that day.

8.8 - God is the One doing the regathering.

8.9-17 – These verses return to Zechariah's time and are an encouragement to Zerubbabel and the people to resume work on the building of the temple. If they would build it, God would bless.

8.19 - The answer to the delegation in this section. God's answer to the delegation's question, "Should we continue to observe the fastings?" was no. The fasts should come to an end. In their place there should be feasts instead. These feasts were to be a time of "joy and gladness."

8.20 – This section sets forth the time when Israel will be a blessing to all the nations. This is a prophecy of the Millennium. Israel at that time will fulfill the purpose God has always had for her to be a light to the nations. Once Israel turns to the Lord, conversion around the world follows.

8.21 - The inhabitants of many cities will invite one another to go to Jerusalem to seek God's favor.

8.22 - Many nations will want to serve the Lord. They will go to Jerusalem to worship God in truth.

8.23 - In the kingdom period, Israel will be the leader of the nations. In that day ten men will take hold of the hem of one Jew's garment and express their desire to go with him to Jerusalem. The men represent the Gentiles, and they come from "out of all languages of the nations". The reason that the Gentiles will want to go with the Jews to worship in Jerusalem is found in the last phrase of the chapter. They will "have heard that God is with you [the Jews]."

The first eight chapters of Zechariah were written relatively close together in time. When we come to chapters 9–14, we come to a later time in the ministry of the prophet. These prophecies may be divided into two sections, the first burden and the second burden. Each section starts with a heading that says, "The burden of the word of the Lord." A "burden" is a heavy prophecy, usually of judgment. The first burden covers chapters 9–11.

7. The First Burden (Zech. 9–11)

The first burden contains a number of prophecies. Some cover the intertestamental period (the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments). Some deal with the life of Christ. Some take us to the Second Coming of Christ.

A. A prophecy about Alexander the Great (9:1–8)

This intertestamental prophecy is so historically precise that many people who do not believe the Bible is God's Word, think this section was added later, after Alexander the Great's time.

9.1 - Hadrach was a city of Syria. It is linked in this prophecy with Damascus, another Syrian city. After taking Turkey from the Persians, Alexander the Great conquered a number of Syrian cities.

9.2 - Before marching east to pursue the Persian emperor, Alexander went down the Mediterranean coast to add that area to his conquests. This journey brought him to Sidon and Tyre.

9.3 – 250 years before the Babylonians tried to conquer Tyre for 14 years. When they finally broke into the city, they found that the people had moved away to an island half a mile out into the sea and had built a new city there. That is what Zechariah said "Tyre did build herself a strong hold." And the Babylonians left empty-handed.

For the next several centuries, Tyre grew rich through trade. Zechariah tells us that she "heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets".

9.4 - When Alexander came to Tyre about 250 years after Nebuchadnezzar, the city would not submit to him either. Alexander tried several methods to take the city. None worked. Finally, he had his army cast the rubble of the old city into the sea until they had made a causeway to the new city. It took him seven months to capture the city. When he succeeded, he executed many, burned the city to the ground, and sold the 30,000 survivors into slavery.

9.5-6 - Alexander then marched southward into the land of the Philistines and captured five chief cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, Ashdod, and Gath (which is not mentioned in Zechariah). This remarkable prophecy says "the king shall perish from Gaza". That prophecy was fulfilled when all of the Philistine cities surrendered to Alexander except Gaza, which was captured after a three-month siege. When that city fell, its governor was executed, and its people sold into slavery.

9.7-8 - God promised deliverance for Jerusalem and the Jews. Alexander passed by Judea on the way into Egypt and on the way back from it, but he did no harm to the temple, Jerusalem, or the Jews. This is another striking example of the accuracy of Biblical prophecy.

B. A prophecy about the triumphal entry of Christ (9:9, 10)

9.9-10 - Verse 9 takes us three and a half centuries beyond Alexander to the time of Christ and predicts the triumphal entry of Christ. The prophecy of the Triumphal Entry was fulfilled in all its detail on the first day of the week before Christ was crucified, buried, and arose from the grave.

C. A prophecy about the Maccabean Period (9:11-17)

Zechariah's next prophecy involved the time period between the Old and New Testaments. Part of that period is known as the Maccabean Period.

9.11-14 - God promised to help the Jews in their struggle against the sons of Greece. Alexander the Great died at a young age. Four of Alexander's generals made an agreement to rule his empire until his infant son was old enough. But after ruling for a few years, they did not want to give up their power. Alexander's son was killed, and the generals became kings who fought with one another.

About 167 BC a Greek king of Syria named Antiochus Epiphanes tried to force the Jews to accept Greek language, culture, and religion. At this the Jews rebelled, and Judas Maccabees and his brothers led them to independence.

9.15 - So great would be the victory of the Jews that the slaughter is likened to that of sacrifices at the altar. As the priests would catch the blood in bowls at the corners of the altar, so the blood of their enemies would flow in battle.

9.16 - In that day God would save His people to be His flock and the jewels of His crown.

9.17 - Zechariah broke forth with praise that is always true of the Lord.

D. A prophecy about the second advent of Christ (10)

Chapter 10 is a prophecy about the second coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. This chapter gives us a picture of the redemption and the regathering of Israel.

10.1 - The nation of Israel was encouraged to ask God for blessings and prosperity.

10.2 - Israel had looked to idols for help, but the idols were nothing. The people also listened to sorcery, divination, and interpretations by false dreamers, but those things were all lies. They were like a flock of sheep going astray without a shepherd.

10.3 - Worse yet, they were led astray by false shepherds, or false religious leaders. God's anger was against the false shepherds. It was also against the goats, the political leaders who led them astray.

In spite of all their failures, the people of Judah were still His flock. He made them like a "goodly horse"; that is, a war horse that is strong and skillful in battle.

10.4 - When Christ comes back at the end of the Tribulation, He will defeat the Antichrist and the armies of the kings of the East.

10.6 - Zechariah showed that in the end time God will unite and strengthen His people.

10.8 - God shall "hiss" for his people; that is, He shall whistle for them to come back to Israel.

10.12 - Brought back and redeemed, Israel will "walk up and down in his name".

E. Israel's rejection of the Good Shepherd (11)

Chapter 11 portrays the rejection of the Messiah by Israel and the subsequent judgment of the Lord upon the nation. It covers a dark period of Israel's history. This judgment is the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in the year AD 70 at the hand of the Romans. This destruction came because the nation rejected her Messiah.

11.4, 7 - The Jewish people are called the "flock of slaughter" in these verses because of the persecutions that had been their lot.

11.7 - Eastern shepherds had two staves: one was to drive off wild animals that would attack the flock; the other was used to keep the sheep together and to pull them out of difficult places. The first of these staves Zechariah called "Beauty," The second he called "Bands."

11.8 - "Three shepherds also I cut off in one month". Who are these three shepherds? Perhaps they are figuratively prophets, priests, and kings who were all unacceptable to God.

11.9 - It may speak of the cannibalism that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem before it finally fell to the Romans. That was perhaps the lowest of the low points in the city's history.

11.10 - Zechariah took his staff "Beauty," which was used to drive away wild animals, and "cut it asunder". This pictured God's breaking His covenant with the nations that had held them back from attacking Israel. Israel was now at their mercy.

11.12 - Now comes a remarkable prophecy of the rejection of the Messiah. "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver". This was the price of a slave who had been gored by a bull, a useless slave. It shows how little esteem the Jewish leaders had for their Messiah.

11.13 - In sarcasm, this amount is called "a goodly price". The Lord told Zechariah to throw pieces of silver to the potter. A potter's stock in trade was clay, which cost very little and could be replaced readily. This was done in the temple, the most public place. This prophecy was fulfilled in detail when Judas Iscariot received thirty pieces of silver for betraying Christ.

11.14 - Then Zechariah broke his other staff called "Bands". This pictures the harmony in the Jewish nation being broken. It was fulfilled when the Jews rebelled against Rome. They were divided into factions. Their city was destroyed in AD 70.

11.15-17 - Because they rejected the Good Shepherd, God would allow them to follow the foolish shepherd, the Antichrist.

8. The Second Burden (Zech. 12—14)

Chapter 12 speaks of an end-time siege of Jerusalem.

12.1-3 - In the end times, God will make Jerusalem "a cup of trembling" and "a burdensome stone" to the nations that are gathered together against her. Jerusalem will be a burden too heavy to bear. Those who come up against her will be destroyed in the end.

12.4-7 - God will step in and make the leaders of Judah like fire and their enemies like wood to be destroyed. God will begin the deliverance in rural areas ("the tents"; v. 7) so that the leaders of Israel do not try to take credit for the victory.

12.10-14 - Talks about the conversion of Israel at the second coming of Christ. The work is a result of God's grace.

Chapter 13 speaks of the cleansing of the temple.

13.1 - God will open a fountain to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse their sins and uncleanness. This fountain flows from Christ.

13.2 - Idolatry will be rooted out of the land, and even forgotten.

13.3 - False prophets will be put to death, even by their own parents.

13.4-5 - When a false prophet is questioned as to his activities, he will deny that he is a prophet; instead he will claim to be a farmer.

13.6 - When asked about the marks of a false prophet's hands, he will say he got it at a friend's house.

13.7-9 - Refers to the suffering of the Messiah on the cross. Zechariah prophesied the scattering of the disciples at Christ's death as well as the dispersing of Israel as a whole in AD 70 and during the Tribulation. The Tribulation suffering will be greater than anything Israel has ever faced. Two-thirds or the people will die. The third that is left will endure horrific suffering.

The book of Zechariah closes on a high note, the return of Christ to rule as King. However, before the Lord comes, Jerusalem will fall to its enemies, and half of its people shall be taken into captivity.

14.4 - When it seems that all is lost, Christ shall descend in power and great glory, and "his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives".

14.5 - The Mount of Olives will split and form a valley of escape for the Jews.

Christ shall put down the armies of the Antichrist and the kings of the East. The unsaved Jews and Gentiles will be put to death in judgment.

14.11 - Then Christ will establish the millennial Kingdom, a time of peace.

14.16-19 - The Gentiles still living will be saved, and they will go to Jerusalem for the yearly festivals to worship Christ or receive consequences from not going yearly to Christ.

14.20 - It will be a time of peace, prosperity, and holiness.

14.21 - There shall be no "Canaanite," no ungodly people when the millennial Kingdom begins.

The Book of Malachi

(about 5 pages)

Reading Assignment: Read one time through and then you will read the assigned passages for each major section of the notes. In this way, you will have read through Malachi two times.

Outline

1. Introduction (1:1)
2. The Lord's Love for Israel (1:1—5)
3. The Sins of the Priests (1:6—2:9)
4. The Sins of the People (2:10—3:12)
5. The Motivation to Serve the Lord (3:13—18)
6. The Coming Day of the Lord (4:1-3)
7. The Conclusion (4:4—6)

1. Introduction (Mal. 1:1)

1.1 - Malachi means "my messenger." He is the writer of the last prophetic book of the Old Testament. Malachi did not date his prophecy by mentioning any specific ruler. Therefore, his times must be deduced from some clues in the book.

- The word for "governor" in 1:8 is a term used of a Persian official. So, we conclude that the book was written after the return from the Babylonian captivity.
- The temple was complete, and sacrifices were being carried on. Therefore it was written well after Haggai and Zechariah.
- The sins of the people, which Malachi exposed, are similar to those found in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. Malachi ministered at the end of the Old Testament period.

Malachi was not a poet, like Nahum, but a moral lecturer. His book is well-reasoned and is based on logically presented arguments. He often made a statement, then gave a question his listeners or readers might voice, and finally refuted the question. Malachi called his message a "burden," or a heavy message of judgment. Malachi was the messenger, but the message came from God.

2. The Lord's Love for Israel (Mal. 1:2—5)

1.2a - God's people who returned from captivity had rebuilt the temple. Religious duties were being carried on, but mostly out of habit. Malachi started with a clear statement of God's love for Israel.

1.2b - However, the people questioned God's great love. "Wherein hast thou loved us?" they said to the Lord. God had been lovingly gracious and faithful to the remnant in the land. He led them back from captivity and allowed them to rebuild the temple. He promised to bless them as they obediently followed Him. He protected them in the land.

1.2c-5 – God’s reply was based on His treatment of Jacob, in contrast to Esau. Esau and Jacob were twin brothers, yet God chose Jacob and his descendants, the Israelites. They were chastened by the Lord and sent into the Babylonian captivity, but they were preserved.

God did not choose Esau and his descendants, the Edomites. Edom was also conquered by the Babylonians. The Edomites hoped to rebuild their devastated country, but God said He would throw it down. God judged the Edomites for their sin at the hand of the conquering Babylonians.

3. The Sins of the Priests (Mal. 1:6-2:9)

A. Despising Jehovah (1:6–14)

God's love for Israel is sharply contrasted with Israel's lack of love for God. It was the priests who led the way in showing lack of love and respect for God.

1.6 - God's love for Israel had been great, so He expected the honor that a son gives his father or the respect that a servant gives his master. Now God asked two pointed questions: "Where is mine honour?" and "Where is my fear?"

"Honor" is a word that is sometimes translated "glory" in the Bible. "Fear" has the idea of "respect" or "reverential awe." God, the great and glorious ruler of the universe, was not receiving honor and glory from Israel's worship, and the people were not treating Him with respect.

The priests, who were set apart by God to teach the people the ways of God, were singled out as the major violators. They boldly asked, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" Instead of repenting, the religious leaders said, in effect, "Prove it." They were insensitive to their sin.

1.7 - God answered the priests' question by listing two ways in which the priests were dishonoring Him. First, they were offering polluted bread on the altar. "Bread" in the context is referring to the meat of the animals that the priests were using for sacrifices. Instead of repenting, the priests come back with another question, "Wherein have we polluted thee?".

God's answer is that they had defiled Him by saying that the table of the Lord is contemptible, or to be despised or shameful. The "table of the Lord" most likely speaks of the altar of burnt offering where the animals were sacrificed.

1.8 - The priests were offering blind, lame, or sick animals. They would have known that such animals were not acceptable. Even their Persian governor would not be pleased with such animals. How could they expect God to be pleased?

The priests were also despising God with their attitude toward serving as priests.

1.13 - They considered their calling a source of weariness and found the job distasteful. The priests should have rejoiced in the fact that they were set apart to officiate in the offering of the sacrifices.

B. Disregarding the Covenants (2:1-9)

In addition to despising Jehovah, the priests were guilty of disregarding the covenants. God had made a number of covenants with His Chosen People. The Israelites should have lived according to the covenants, and the priests should have led the way.

2.1-3 - If the priests would not heed the Lord, He would send a curse upon them.

2.4-7 - The priests had a special responsibility as messengers of the Lord to model and to teach the covenant to others. The priests would have life and peace as they knew and lived by the covenant. Being a priest for the Lord was a privilege.

2.8-9 - The Levites not only failed to keep the covenant themselves, but they also led the nation astray. The priests had lost the respect of the people of Israel.

4. The Sins of the People (Mal. 2:10—3:12)

2.10 - Malachi began this section by asking, "Have we not all one father?". Was Malachi referring to God or to Abraham? It is true that the Israelites descended from Abraham, and in that sense they all had him as their father. It is better to take "father," however, as a reference to God.

He was the Father of all Israel by way of creation. In fact, the next line of the verse asks, "Hath not one God created us?" Hebrew parallelism implies that "father" in line one and "God" in line two of this verse are one and the same. The nation was meant to reflect the character of God the Father, Who had taught Israel to walk in His ways. In Malachi's day, Israel was not following God.

A. Marriage to unbelievers (2:11—16)

2.11 - The first problem was marriage of believers to unbelievers. The Jews of Malachi's day were marrying foreign pagan women who worshiped heathen gods/idols.

2.12 - Malachi gave a grave warning against the practice of marrying daughter of foreign gods.

2.13 - Because the Israelite men had been unfaithful in marriage, God would no longer accept their offerings. Instead of changing their hearts and turning from their evil ways, they tried to move God through external displays of grief.

They were "covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out". God is not moved by an outward show of emotionalism, but rather by an inward attitude of submission, which results in obedience to His commandments.

2.14 - As we saw before, whenever God confronted the people of Malachi's day with a sin in their lives, they would reject the charge with a question. They did the same here: "Yet ye say, Wherefore?". The prophet told them that each had dealt treacherously with the wife of his youth.

2.15 - One marriage problem was polygamy. These Jewish men had married Jewish wives earlier and then fell into polygamy by taking a second wife. In this manner they were dealing treacherously against the wife of their youth.

2.16 - Malachi 2:16 gives the clearest picture of God's view of divorce. Some Jewish men were divorcing their Jewish wives, whom they had married when they were young, so that they could marry foreign wives. God hated what they were doing.

B. Charging God with injustice (2:17—3:6)

2.17 - The people of Malachi's time were charging God with injustice. They were saying, "Every one that does evil is good in the sight of the Lord" and asking, "Where is the God of judgment?" They were having a problem with the fact that the wicked seemingly prosper and that the righteous suffer.

3.1 - The answer to their question is that the Judge is coming and He will set things right. The forerunner of the Judge was the Lord's messenger, who would prepare the way before the Lord. Jesus clearly identified this one as John the Baptist (Matt. 11). The second half of Malachi 3:1 then jumps to the second coming of Christ, when the Lord "shall suddenly come to his temple."

3.2 - When Christ comes as Judge, the wicked will not be able to "abide the day of his coming". He will purify Israel as a refiner's fire purifies silver and as a launderer's (fuller's) soap washes clothes. This cleansing process will start with the priests.

3.5 - All the wicked will be judged.

3.6 - God's judgment, though delayed, is certain because God does not change.

C. Robbing God (3:7-12)

3.8 - Another sin of Israel was robbing God of tithes and offerings. The tithe is a tenth part. The nation was to give a tenth of its income to the Levites, who were required to give a tenth of that income to support the priests.

3.9 - Because the Israelites had failed to honor God with their tithes, they were under a curse, as promised in Deuteronomy 28:20. The curse on Israel, an agricultural society, came in the form of drought, locust invasion, or similar devastation.

3.10-12 - God promised to bless the nation if the people would begin giving. If they would prove God's promise of blessing by bringing in the wheat, oil, firstlings of the sheep, and other tithes, God would open the windows of Heaven and pour out a blessing so great they would not be able to handle it.

5. The Motivation to Serve the Lord (Mal. 3:13—18)

3.13-15 - Some in Israel who kept the covenant and lived godly lives thought it was useless to serve God because the proud and the wicked were exalted.

3.16 - However, some began to encourage others to be strong in faith. God in Heaven took note and recorded what the faithful few were doing on earth.

3.17 - God promised the believing remnant that He would spare them at the time of judgment.

3.18 - At that time there would be a clear difference between the righteous and the wicked. The priests failed to make this distinction in Malachi's day. They believed that a sacrifice was good no matter what. They failed to fear God and truly honor Him.

6. The Coming Day of the Lord (Mal. 4:1-3)

4.1 - The proud and the wicked shall be destroyed, as stubble is reduced to ashes by fire, in the coming Day of the Lord.

4.2-3 - On the other hand, those who fear the Lord will rejoice in freedom from oppression, as a calf freed from the stall can romp and roam about the pasture.

7. The Conclusion (Mal. 4:4—6)

4.4-6 - The prophecy closes with God's exhortation to Israel to remember the covenant as expressed in the law of Moses.

There is also a prediction that Elijah will come to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to their fathers.

John the Baptist is called Elijah because his ministry was similar in power to Elijah's.

The reference here may be referring to the ministry of the two witnesses in the middle of the Tribulation. Elijah is thought by some to be one of those witnesses with Moses being the other.

Those witnesses will also minister in a way similar to Elijah.

God proved that people have no right to question Him. God deserves our utmost honor and respect. He is worthy of living in a way that reflects His glory.

