

**STUDIES IN THE
MINOR PROPHETS
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT**

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THE MINOR PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT¹

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

- 1. In addition to the Messianic teachings and teachings concerning the Doctrine of the Last Things, most of the prophetic books of the Major and Minor Prophets mainly deal with the sins of Israel and Judah in the times of these prophets and the judgments that God was going to bring upon them. In other words, these books concentrate upon the near times rather than the far future, but do include the far future to give hope to those who truly love God.**
- 2. In their prophecies, most of them conclude that these two kingdoms have gone so far in sin and rebellion that God has already determined their judgment and captivity, and that, no matter what steps they might take to reconcile with God, God will not change the judgment He has planned for them. SEE: II Kings 21:11-16; Jeremiah 7:16; 11:11-14; 15:1, 4;**
- 3. Both kingdoms had been given ample warning by the prophets of their day and yet refused to repent and completely return to full devotion and obedience to the Lord. God has no alternative but to judge them.**
- 4. This fixed determination of God is seen even in the reign of the righteous king JOSIAH who sincerely sought to bring the nation to revival and obedience and submission before God. His reward was that God would not permit that judgment of terrible retribution to come during his reign.**
- 5. Therefore, the only hope the prophets can give to Israel and Judah is found in the far future when they will be finally restored to the land and the blessing of God will return to them once again. Most of these promises are connected with the future coming of the Messiah to rule and reign which could only come to pass after He would first come as the Suffering Savior and then would be prepared to come as the Reigning King.**
- 6. The very temporary restoration God permitted under the Persians, at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, was limited and was only a tiny picture of the great restoration under the Messianic Reign in the far future. This temporary restoration would, in fact, soon be interrupted by future conquerors and the oppressions they brought.**
- 7. Though the destruction of Jerusalem, with its temple, and the captivity of the people of Judah under the Babylonians was more than a hundred years later than the captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel, the carrying away of the people of Israel in about 722 B.C. began the process of these later judgments.**

¹ Much of the material in this Study of the Minor Prophets is either taken directly from or adapted from information given in the book: Talk Thru the Bible by Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa

8. COMPARISON OF THE CANONICAL AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS.²

A. CANONICAL ORDER	B. CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER	APPROXIMATE DATES
1. Hosea	1. Obadiah	840 B.C.
2. Joel	2. Joel	835 B.C.
3. Amos	3. Jonah	760 B.C.
4. Obadiah	4. Amos	755 B.C.
5. Jonah	5. Hosea	740-730 B.C.
6. Micah	6. Micah	730 B.C.
7. Nahum	7. Nahum	660 B.C.
8. Habakkuk	8. Zephaniah	625 B.C.
9. Zephaniah	9. Habakkuk	607 B.C.
10. Haggai	10. Haggai	520 B.C.
11. Zechariah	11. Zechariah	515 B.C.
12. Malachi	12. Malachi	430 B.C.

9. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH³

Name	Date	Audience	World Power	Biblical Cont.	Theme
Isaiah	740-680	Pre-exile: Judah	Assyria	II K. 15:1-20:21	Salvation is from God
Jeremiah	627-580	Pre-exile: Judah	Assyria/Babylonia	II K. 22:3-25:30	Coming judgment
Ezekiel	593-571	Exiles in Babylon	Babylonia	II K. 24:8-25:30	Glory of the Lord
Daniel	605-535	Exiles in Babylon	Babylon and Medo-Persia	II K. 23:34-25:30	Sovereignty of God
Hosea	755-715	Pre-exile: Israel	Assyria	II K. 14:23-18:12	Loyal love of God
Joel	835	Pre-exile: Judah	Assyria	II K. 12:1-21	The Day of the Lord
Amos	760-753	Pre-exile: Israel	Assyria	II K. 14:23-15:7	Judgment on Israel
Obadiah	848-841	Pre-exile: EDOM	Assyria	II K. 8:16-24	Doom on Edom
Jonah	782-753	Pre-exile: Assyria	Assyria	I K. 13:10-25; 14:23-29	Salvation to Nineveh
Micah	735-700	Pre-exile: Judah	Assyria	II K.15:32-19:37	Justice of God versus Injustice of Judah
Nahum	664-654	Pre-exile: Assyria	Assyria	II K. 21:1-18	Destruction of Nineveh
Habakkuk	609-605	Pre-exile: Judah	Babylonia	II K. 23:31-24:7	Faith for the just
Zephaniah	632-628	Pre-exile: Judah	Assyria	II K. 22:1, 2	The Day of the Lord
Haggai	520	Post-exile Jews in Jerusalem	Medo-Persia	Ezra 5:1-6:15	Rebuilding the Temple
Zechariah	520-480	Post-exile Jews in Jerusalem	Medo-Persia	Ezra 5:1-6:15	Future blessing
Malachi	432-424	Post-exile Jews in Jerusalem	Medo-Persia	Neh.13:1-31	Need for revival

² Talk Through the Bible by Bruce Wilkinson and David Boa, pg. 229.

NOTE: Much of the material for the entire course is adapted from this same book by Wilkinson and Boa

³ Talk Through the Bible by Bruce Wilkinson and David Boa, pg. 227-228.

THE BOOK OF HOSEA THE PROPHET

1. HOSEA'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

- A. Hosea was a prophet during the time of Isaiah and Micah (SEE: Hosea 1:1; Isaiah 1:1 and Micah 1:1). However, whereas the ministries of Isaiah and Micah were directed toward the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the labors of Hosea, while possibly living in Judah, were centered mainly upon the Northern Kingdom of ISRAEL, which had been established during the reign of Jeroboam the son of Nebat immediately following the reign of Solomon.**
- B. We know little of his family background. Was his father also a prophet or was Hosea simply called out of his father's home to serve God as a prophet?**
- C. During his ministry, the nation of Israel had already long been divided into two competing/warring kingdoms, Judah in the south and Israel in the north. Their sins rather than their division was the issue.**
- D. Even though they were divided, God had promised blessing to the breakaway Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam I IF they would obey and follow Him completely (SEE: I Kings 11:26-39). Immediately however (SEE: I Kings 12:25-33) Jeroboam forsook all of the Truth he had known and turned as far from God as possible in order to keep his people from leaving him and returning to worship in Judah.**
- E. Since he ministered from the first year of Uzziah's reign to the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah, it is obvious that Hosea ministered over a period of more than 50 years. Some believe that his ministry may have extended even more than 60 years.**
- F. It seems that he completed his ministry shortly before the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C., ministering in the Southern Kingdom of Judah when his prophecies for the Northern Kingdom were complete.**
- G. It is clear that his prophecies for the Northern Kingdom would have had strong relevance for the nation of Judah in the south since they were also following the ways of the Northern Kingdom and their destruction from God was just as certainly to come. Therefore, the possible brief continuation of his ministry in the south would be important as a warning to them of their dangerous path of sin.**

- 2. POSSIBLE DATE FOR HOSEA. It was probably written between 732 B.C. and 725 B.C., continuing to the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah in Judah.**

3. THEMES AND PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA

- A. The themes of chapters 1-3 are repeated again and again throughout the Book of Hosea. The adultery of Gomer illustrates the sin of the Kingdom of Israel (SEE: chapters 4-7); the degradation of Gomer represents the judgment of Israel (SEE: chapters 8-10; and Hosea's redemption of Gomer represents the restoration of Israel (SEE: chapters 11-14).**
- B. Thus, more than any other O.T. prophet, Hosea's personal life and experiences, as directed by God, perfectly illustrated the prophetic message God commanded him to give.**
- C. In his relationship with Gomer, Hosea also portrays God's own faithfulness, justice, love and forgiveness in regard to His people. In chapters 1-3, we see the faithful and loving husband dealing with a wicked wife, and in chapters 4-14, we see a faithful and loving God dealing with a wicked and rebellious nation. In both cases, it is seen as a one-sided relationship with no return by the other party.**
- D. The theme of the HOLINESS OF GOD is developed in contrast to the corruption, rebellion and arrogance of Israel.**
- E. We note that Hosea makes more than 150 statements concerning the sins of Israel, and more than half of them specifically deal with the sin of idolatry. The forms their idolatry took went far beyond anything the people had ever done. There were even priests appointed to oversee and minister to the idols they created.**
- F. Except for Jehu, who carried out God's purposes regarding Ahab but who is also pictured as failing to please God in many of his actions, there was never a good king in Israel. This began with Jeroboam I, who had great potential to be blest of God (SEE: I Kings 12:38, 39), but who turned immediately away from God to the vilest forms of idolatry. They therefore deserved the full judgment of God upon them that came when the Assyrians took them captive in 722 B.C. and the nation of Israel was destroyed.**
- G. We note that Hosea was called by God to prophesy during Israel's last years as a nation just as Jeremiah will prophesy years later to the crumbling nation of Judah in the south. Even as Jeremiah later pleaded with the people of Judah to repent and turn to God, so Hosea also pleads with Israel in the same way.**
- H. When we also consider the ministries of prophets such as Elijah and Elisha, we can see God's constant pleading with Israel in their history.**

4. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA

A. The personal tragedy of Hosea in his relationship with Gomer is intended by God to be a perfect illustration of Israel's national tragedy. In the tragedy his relationship with Gomer illustrates, it is a story of one-sided love and faithfulness on the part of God but unfaithfulness and rebellion on the side of Israel.

B. THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF HOSEA

I. The Adulterous Wife and the Faithful Husband	1:1-3:5
A. Introduction to the Book of Hosea	1:1
B. The Prophetic Marriage of Hosea to Gomer	1:2-2:1
C. The Application of the Adultery of Gomer	2:2-23
D. The Restoration of Gomer to Hosea	3:1-5
II. The Adulterous Israel and the Faithful Lord	4:1-14:9
A. The Spiritual Adultery of Israel	4:1-6:3
B. The Refusal of Israel to Repent of Her Adultery	6:4-8;14
C. The Judgment of Israel by God	9:1-10:15
D. The Restoration of Israel to the Lord	11:1-14:9

THE BOOK OF JOEL THE PROPHET

1. JOEL'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

- A. Although there are several men named Joel in the Bible, the Prophet Joel is known only from this book. In the introductory verse, he identifies himself as the son of Pethuel meaning "persuaded of God."**
- B. His frequent references to Zion and the House of the Lord suggest that he possibly lived not far from Jerusalem.**
- C. His statements about the priesthood (1:13, 14; 2:17) suggest that he might also have been a priest as well as a prophet. Even if he wasn't a priest, he was a clear, concise and uncompromising servant of the Lord, preaching holiness and repentance from sin.**

2. DATE AND SETTING OF THE BOOK OF JOEL

- A. Since this book includes no specific time references, it cannot be dated with certainty.**

B. Some believe that it may have been written after the exile of the northern kingdom and even possibly after the exile of Judah under the Babylonians.

- 1) It does not mention the northern kingdom at all.**
- 2) The references to priests but not to kings also might indicate that it was written after 586 B.C.**
- 3) It also does not mention Assyria, Syria or Babylon and this may be that those countries had already been overthrown.**
- 4) If chapter 3, vs. 2 refers to the Babylonian captivity, then this would also indicate a post-exilic date.**

C. Those who argue for an earlier date, base their conclusions on:

- 1) His prophecies were directed to Judah not to Israel, and it was therefore not necessary for him to mention the northern kingdom**
- 2) Other prophets also omit references to kings (Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum and Habakkuk).**
- 3) This book seems to fit in with the situation during 841-835 B.C. when Athaliah took the throne after the death of her husband Ahaziah. In this time, the actions of Godly priests were emphasized and this could account for the emphasis in Joel also upon the priests.**
- 4) Although countries like Assyria and Babylon are not mentioned, he does mention countries like Phoenicia, Philistia, Egypt and Edom. These were countries prominent at the early date but not later. In this early time, the countries of Assyria and Babylon were not yet that prominent as a threat to Israel and Judah.**

D. It seems likely that the date for the writing of the Book of Joel may have been sometime between 835 and 825 B.C. It was written possibly during the time that the nation was purged of idolatry under Joash and Jehoiada the priest.

3. THE THEME AND PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK OF JOEL

A. The main theme of Joel is “THE DAY OF THE LORD.” This is emphasized both in reference to the past and the future.

- 1) In the past, there had been a terrible plague of locusts that had destroyed the crops and had brought great distress to the whole land.
 - 2) This plague is used to illustrate the coming **DAY OF THE JUDGMENT OF THE LORD** when God will directly intervene in their nation and in history to defend His righteousness. This coming time will be a time of unparalleled retribution upon Israel (2:1-11) and the nation of Judah, but it will bring great blessing and favor to those who will completely follow the Lord (2:18-32; 3:18-21)
- B. The theme of disaster runs throughout the book (locusts, famine, raging fires, invading armies, and celestial happenings), but prospects of hope are also emphasized throughout.**
- C. Overall, Joel was written as a warning to the people of Judah of their need to humbly and completely turn to the Lord with repentant hearts (2:12-17), so that God will be able to bless rather than punish them. If they persist, however, in spurning God's gracious call to repentance, judgment will surely come upon them.**
- D. The Book of Joel ends with the promise of the blessings of the kingdom upon the remnant of faithful Judah (3:20) and God's revenge on their enemies (3:21).**

THE BOOK OF AMOS THE PROPHET

1. AMOS'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

- A. This is the only O.T. appearance of the name AMOS and he is not to be confused with the man named AMOZ, the father of Isaiah.**
- B. Amos himself testifies: "I was no prophet, nor was I the son of a prophet, but I was a herdsman and a tender (keeper) of sycamore fruit." In other words, he was a farmer from a country area, with no background at all in a family or school of prophets, who was called by God out of this country setting to be a prophet. This unlikely background of Amos undoubtedly led him to be more completely devoted and obedient to God because of complete dependence on God.**
- C. Amos, both as a farmer and a prophet, lived a disciplined life, and his knowledge of the wilderness area often comes out in his writing. He was also well versed in the Scriptures. Though some would despise his**

lack of formal training, he was a deeply spiritual man God could both trust and use completely to deliver His message.

- D. We note also his fearlessness in proclaiming the truth that God had given him to proclaim. He delivered his message in Bethel because it was the residence of the King of Israel. He boldly and fearlessly attacked the greed, injustice and self-righteousness of the people of the northern kingdom.
- E. We note from history and the book itself, that he wrote during a period of national optimism in this northern kingdom of Israel. Business was booming and the boundaries of the nation expanded.
- F. However, beneath the surface of all this was the wickedness of the leaders and people of this northern kingdom. Thus they had a false sense of security and a growing callousness to anything concerning God and His disciplining hand.

2. DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK OF AMOS

- A. We note that he prophesied in the “days of Uzziah, king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam (II) the son of Joash, King of Israel, two years before the earthquake (1:1).
- B. We know that Uzziah reigned from 767 to 739 B.C. and Jeroboam II reigned from 782-753 B.C. Amos anticipates the 722 B.C. Assyrian captivity of Israel (7:11), but indicates that, at the time of his writing this book, Jeroboam II of Israel was not yet dead.
- C. It would appear that he prophesied in Bethel about 755 B.C.

3. THE THEME AND PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK OF AMOS

- A. The basic theme of Amos is the coming judgment of Israel because of the holiness of God and the extreme sinfulness of his people. Amos unflinchingly visualizes the causes and the course of Israel’s quickly approaching doom. God is gracious and loving but His justice and righteousness will not allow sin to go unpunished indefinitely.
- B. The sins of Israel are heaped as high as the heavens themselves: empty and meaningless religious ritual, oppression of the poor, idolatry, deceit, self-righteousness, arrogance, greed, materialism and complete callousness in regard to spiritual things. The leaders and people of this northern kingdom have broken every aspect of their covenant relationship with God and have no right to demand mercy from God.

- C. In spite of their sins and their callousness toward spiritual things, God's mercy and love are still offered to them if only they will turn back to Him. God has graciously sent Amos as a possible reformer to warn the people and bring them back to God if they are at all willing.

4. COMPARISONS THE BOOK OF AMOS WITH THE BOOK OF HOSEA.

HOSEA	AMOS
1. Preaches against idolatry	1. Preaches against injustice
2. Commands the people to know God	2. Commands them to seek God
3. Rebukes religious faults	3. Rebukes social faults
4. Aims at their worship of God	4. Aims at their walk with God.
5. Stresses their need for the Knowledge of God.	5. Stresses their need for justice
6. God rejects their sacrifices	6. God hates their offerings
7. Much rebuke of image worshipping	7. Little on image worshipping
8. Describes Israel as a privileged people	8. Describes Israel as a privileged people
9. Says much about loyal love for God	9. No mention of loyal love for God
10. Called for repentance	10. Aroused their consciences
11. Addresses them as a family	11. Addresses them as a state
12. Deals with his homeland	12. Deals with foreigners
13. Gives a national message	13. Gives a universal message
14. Refers much to the past	14. Refers little to the past.
15. Speaks of the grace of God	15. Speaks of the righteousness of God.
16. Speaks of God's loving kindness	16. Speaks of God's wrath
17. He speaks like a poet	17. He speaks like a philosopher
18. He speaks sympathetically	18. He speaks sternly and firmly.

5. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF AMOS

- A. Overall, his message of the coming doom of this northern kingdom of Israel would have seemed very strange to them because the **EXTERNAL** circumstances have never looked better for them. However, if they were but willing to honestly consider them, the **INTERNAL** circumstances have never looked worse: the injustice, greed, hypocrisy, oppression and arrogance
- B. **THE EIGHT PROPHECIES.** Amos 1:1-2:16. He prophecies against eight different countries including Israel and Judah. The first six are the nations surrounding Israel and Judah, but the sins of God's own people are just as vile and arrogant as those of the surrounding nations. We note that each of these eight prophecies begins with the

statement: “For three transgressions.....and for four...” and then proceeds to speak of God’s certain judgment.

- C. **THE THREE SERMONS.** Amos 3:1-6:14. In these chapters, he is led by God to deliver three sermons, each beginning with the phrase: “Hear this word.” (3:1; 4:1; and 5:1). The **FIRST** sermon is a general pronouncement of judgment because of Israel’s sins in the present (3:1-15). The **SECOND** sermon exposes the crimes of the people and describes the ways God has chastened them to draw them back to Himself in the past (4:1-13). The **THIRD** sermon lists the sins of the house of Israel and calls the people to repent in the future (5:1-6:14).
- D. **THE FIVE VISIONS.** Amos 7:1-9:10. These are visions of the coming judgment of God on this northern kingdom of Israel. **THE FIRST TWO** visions of locusts and fire do not come to pass because of his intercession for them. **THE THIRD VISION**, the plumb line, is followed by the only narrative section of the book where Amaziah the priest of Bethel wants Amos to go back to Judah. **THE FOURTH VISION**, the rotten fruit, pictures the way God sees Israel. **THE FINAL VISION** is a relentless portrayal of Israel’s unavoidable judgment.
- E. **THE FIVE PROMISES.** Amos 9:11-15. Although Amos had spoken strongly and firmly upon the theme of God’s divine retribution with his prophecies, sermons and visions, God leads him to end this book with a note of consolation. In this consolation, God promises to reinstate the Davidic line, renew the land and to restore the people to their place of being His favored and blest people. This section of consolation does not detract from God’s anger at their sins and rebellion against Him or His promise to bring judgment on them, but only offers future hope to those who will fully deal with the sins that bring His judgments on them and truly follow God.

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH THE PROPHET

1. OBADIAH’S BACKGROUND AND LIFE.

- A. A struggle that began in the womb between twin brothers, Esau and Jacob, continues in a struggle between their descendants, the Edomites and the Israelites. For the Edomites’ stubborn refusal to aid Israel in their wilderness journey (SEE: Numbers 20:14-21), and later, during a time of invasion, their refusal to help defend Israel, they are condemned by Obadiah and their eventual judgment by God is declared.

- B. We know little of Obadiah himself. He was an obscure prophet who probably lived in the southern kingdom of Judah. Although nothing is known of his town or family, it seems unlikely that he came out of the kingly or priestly line because his father is not mentioned.**
- C. There are 13 Obadiah's in the O.T. It is possible that he was close to King Jehoshaphat and might have been used to teach the law in the cities of Judah (SEE: II Chronicles 17:7).**

2. DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

- A. Since Obadiah mentions no kings, the only historical reference seems to be found in vs. 10-14 when he mentions an invasion by the enemies. It seems to have been a serious invasion that carried off the wealth of the city. The invasion was so serious that it seemed as though it might be the end of Judah. Edom, which had once been under Israel's domination, now is free to mock them and rejoice over their defeat.**
- B. This does not seem to be the invasion by the Babylonians because it does not seem to be the total destruction of the city that took place in 586 B.C. It could have been the first conquering of Judah in 606 B.C., except that Babylon alone did the invading at that time and there was no "casting of lots" with others for the city.**
- C. Some believe that he could be referring to the invasion by the Philistines as early as 848-841 B.C. This would make Obadiah a contemporary of Elisha and he would also be one of the very earliest of the writing prophets, predating Joel by a few years.**

3. THEME AND PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

- A. The main theme of the book is Edom's eventual doom and destruction because of its arrogance and cruelty to Judah. They had been subdued under David and Solomon, but successfully rebelled against Jehoram and again against Ahaz. Under the Babylonians, they were greatly reduced and forced to move from their homeland. Eventually, they became known as the Idumaeans and Herod the Great came from their line. After 70 A.D., they were never heard from again. Vs. 10, 18.**
- B. The other theme of the book is the restoration of Israel by God, (SEE: vs. 19-21), but the theme concerning Edom is the main theme and the theme concerning Israel is only lightly dealt with.**

4. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

- A. Obadiah is the shortest book in the O.T. (21 verses), but it carries one of the strongest messages of judgment in the O.T. What is lacking in**

the book is any plea to repent, a plea to return and any words of consolation for Edom. Their fate has been sealed by God and there is no possible mercy or deliverance for them. It only remains for the time to come when God would carry out this judgment.

- B. Their fate is deserved, for they had had opportunity to sympathize with their blood relatives, Judah, but they chose instead a path of arrogance and lack of compassion. They even went to extremes to mock and gloat over the troubles of the people of Judah, and God seems to hold them as much responsible for the sufferings that Judah went through as he did the invaders.

- C. In the closing section, vs. 19-21, Israel will not only be restored, but they will also occupy the territory of Edom

THE BOOK OF JONAH

1. JONAH'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE.

- A. The first verse identifies Jonah as “the son of Amittai”. Nothing more would be known about him except that he is also introduced in this way in II Kings 14:25 as a prophet in the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. We learn in this passage from II Kings 14 that the borders of Israel were expanded “according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher.”

- B. This identification of him as being from Gath Hopher tells us that he was a prophet of the northern kingdom, for Gath Hopher was three miles north of Nazareth in lower Galilee. Jewish tradition even says that he was the son of the widow of Zarephath whom Elijah raised from the dead.

- C. Some have tried to claim that he was a fictional character and that the whole book of Jonah is a fictional book written during the fifth to the third centuries to counteract prejudice against the Samaritans and others the Jews considered to be foreigners. As a fictional book, it is supposed to show God’s love for all peoples, whether Jew or Gentile.

- D. Much of the claim of those who believe that it was fictional is based on the problem they have with the miracles that God wrought to spare his life and send him on his way to Nineveh. In the absence of finding a fish capable of swallowing and keeping a man alive inside him, they doubt God’s ability to do such a miracle.

- E. However, it is clear that Jonah was actually a historical character (SEE: II Kings 14:25) and Christ Himself supported the historical accuracy of the book (SEE: Matthew 12:39-41). As far as the facts of the book are concerned, they have to be accepted as part of God's working in this world and the ability of the Creator of the universe to do anything He wanted to do to fulfill His purposes.**

2. THE DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK

- A. Historically, Jonah is a contemporary of Jeroboam II of Israel (782-753 B.C.), who ministered after the time of Elisha and just before the time of Amos and Hosea. Israel at this time was enjoying a time of expansion and prosperity and nationalistic fervor was probably very high. They had a smug sense of confidence with no fear for the future.**
- B. During this time, Assyria was in a period of decline, but still remained a threat to Israel. The repentance of Nineveh probably occurred in the reign of Ashurdan III (773-755 B.C.). Two terrible plagues (765 and 759 B.C.) and a solar eclipse (763 B.C) may have prepared the people for Jonah's message of God's coming judgment, and may have helped bring on their humbling and repentance before God.**
- C. As the first two chapters record, Jonah did not want to accept God's challenge to go to Nineveh and deliver God's message. His attempt to flee could not be accepted by God and so God had to deal with him very strongly to cause him to change his path.**
- D. The mercy of God towards any who would repent and turn from their evil ways is very clear in this book. For such repentance to come in a Gentile nation at this time seems strange to many, but the extreme circumstances noted under "B" make it possible. It is not surprising that Jonah, as a Jew, would bitterly resent God's demonstration of mercy to this foreign city, but God would not deny His mercy for them even though His spokesman protested.**

3. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF JONAH

- A. Jonah is a very different kind of prophetic book because it mainly is centered in the messenger God sent to deliver the message. Whereas in other books, we learn little about the messenger, the Book of Jonah examines the character of Jonah very thoroughly.**
- B. Also, unlike most other Old Testament books, it deals exclusively with a Gentile nation in a positive way. Most of the other O.T. prophetic books dealing with Gentile nations deal with them negatively as they face the coming judgment of God for their well deserved punishment.**

Jonah, however, gives us a picture of a nation God is touching with His love and mercy and a nation that responds to Him. We do not know when this attitude toward God ceased but it was strongly evident during the time of Jonah.

- C. Chapters 1 and 4 speak of the serious problem Jonah had in understanding and accepting the Divine perspective and plan. This is surprising in a prophet. They were supposed to be spiritual men in the very closest relationship with God and in complete agreement with all His desires and plans. Jonah goes against this pattern.**

THE BOOK OF MICAH

1. MICAH'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

- A. Micah's hometown of Moresheth Gath (1:14) was located about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem on the border of Judah and Philistia, near Gath. Like Amos, Micah was from the country. His family and occupation are unknown, but we know that Moresheth was in a productive agricultural zone of Palestine.**
- B. Although Micah was not as concerned with the political scene as Isaiah or Daniel, he did show a deep concern for the sufferings of the people.**
- C. His clear calling from God to be a prophet is shown in chapter 3, vs 8, where he declares: "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin."**

2. DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK OF MICAH.

- A. The first verse of chapter one indicates that Micah prophesied in the days of Jotham (739-731 B.C.), of Ahaz (731-715 B.C.) and Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.), kings of Judah.**
- B. Although Micah deals primarily with Judah, he also addresses the northern kingdom of Israel and predicts the downfall of Samaria (1:6). Much of his ministry, therefore, took place before the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 722 B.C.**
- C. During his ministry, the kingdom of Israel continued to crumble inwardly and outwardly until its final collapse and fall in 722 B.C. The Assyrian empire, after the fall of the northern kingdom, was a**

strong threat to Judah as well, but Hezekiah, with the help of God, successfully withstood an Assyrian siege and the threat went away.

- D. His strong denunciation of idolatry and immorality also suggests that his ministry took place before the sweeping religious reforms of Hezekiah. Thus, his prophecies ranged from about 735 to 710 B.C.**
- E. He was a contemporary of Hosea in the northern kingdom and of Isaiah in the court of Jerusalem**

3. THE THEME AND PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK OF MICAH

- A. Micah exposes the injustice of Judah and compares it to the righteousness and justice of God.**
- B. About one third of the book indicts both Israel and Judah for specific sins: including oppression, bribery among judges, prophets and priests, exploitation of the powerless, covetousness, cheating, violence and pride.**
- C. Another third of Micah predicts the judgment that will come as a result of those sins.**
- D. The final third of the book is a message of hope and consolation. God's justice will triumph and the divine Deliverer will surely come. True peace and justice will prevail only when the Messiah has come and rules.**
- E. Chapter 6, vs. 8 summarizes what God wanted to see in His people: justice and equity tempered with mercy and compassion as the result of a humble and obedient relationship with Him.**

4. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF MICAH

- A. Micah is the prophet of the downtrodden and exploited people of the society of Judah. He prophesied during a time of great social injustice and boldly opposes those who imposed their power upon the weak and poor for selfish ends.**
- B. Corrupt rulers, false prophets, ungodly priests and corrupt judges are all targets for his denunciations. The pollution of sin has corrupted every level of society in both Judah and Israel. These evils must be taken care of before the blessing and the favor of God can come.**

- C. After sin is punished and justice is truly established, “He will again have compassion on us and will subdue our iniquities.”
- D. The three sections of Micah are:
 - I. The prediction of the judgment of God (chs. 1-3);
 - II. The prediction of restoration (chs. 4, 5)
 - III. The plea for repentance (chs. 6, 7).

THE BOOK OF NAHUM

1. NAHUM’S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

- A. The only mention of Nahum in the O.T. is found in chapter 1, vs. 1, where he is called an Elkoshite. Most people believe that Elkosh was a city of southern Judah between Jerusalem and Gaza. This would make Nahum a prophet of the southern kingdom and may explain his strong interest in the triumph of Judah (1:15; 2:2)
- B. **COMPARISON OF THE MINISTRIES OF JONAH AND NAHUM.**

JONAH

**The mercy of God
 Ministry: 760 B.C.
 Repentance of Nineveh
 Emphasis on the Prophet
 Disobedient Prophet
 Obedient Nation of Nineveh
 Deliverance from water
 The great fish**

NAHUM

**The judgment of God
 Ministry: 660 B.C.
 Rebellion of Nineveh
 Emphasis on the Prophecy
 Obedient Prophet
 Disobedient Nation of Judah
 Destruction by water
 The great fulfillment**

2. DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK OF NAHUM

- A. In the more than 100 years since the revival under Jonah, the people of Nineveh have returned to their defiant and immoral ways. The revival was apparently short lived because the Assyrians, with Nineveh as their capital, returned to the practices that had always characterized them. They had always been known to be ruthless and cruel in their dealings with their enemies, and this characterized them in the taking of the northern kingdom of Israel and in attempting to take the southern kingdom of Judah under Hezekiah.

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

1. HABAKKUK'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE.

- A. In the introduction to the book (1:1) and in the closing psalm (3:1), Habakkuk introduces himself as “Habakkuk the prophet.” This suggests that he was a professional prophet.**
 - 1) We note that others had been called out of other occupations to be the special messengers/prophets of God, but there were also schools of prophets (SEE: II Kings 2) where prophets could study and prepare for a life work of being a prophet.**
 - 2) When you read of some of the corrupt and disobedient prophets in Judah and Israel in the latter days of the kingdom, (SEE: I Kings 22:12; Micah 3:5-7)) before the Babylonians invaded and carried them into captivity, you wonder if many of these corrupt and disobedient prophets had come from the schools of the prophets and perhaps the school itself had become corrupt.**
 - 3) Perhaps for this reason, God had to often reach completely outside the realm of the professional prophets (SEE: Amos 1:1; 7:14, 15) to find Godly men who would serve Him with all their hearts and whom He could trust to fully declare and carry out His Word without corruption or compromise.**
- B. The closing statement at the end of his psalm (“To the chief musician....”) suggests that he may also have been a priest connected with the temple worship in Jerusalem.**
- C. Some extra-Biblical writings have sought to link him with other O.T. characters such as Daniel, but there is no Biblical basis for such speculation.**
- D. It seems, from the challenging questions that he asked of God in the course of the writing of this book, that he had some spiritual struggles in his own life and that God had to give him some strong and clear teaching concerning His purposes and ways of working in the world.**

2. THE DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

- A. Habakkuk ministers during the final days of Judah before the invasion of the Babylonians in 606 B.C. that brought Judah under subjection and finally led to the final destruction of the temple and the City of Jerusalem and their captivity in Babylon itself in 586 B.C.**

- B. In several passages (1:6; 2:1; 3:16), he indicates that the Babylonian invasion is imminent and seemingly will come in that very period of time rather than as future event.**
- C. The descriptions of the Chaldeans indicate that Babylon had become a world power and was no longer under the domination of the Assyrians.**
- D. This means that the book could not have been written during the earlier reigns of Manasseh (686-642 B.C.) or Amon (642-640) when wickedness in the land would also have been completely rampant.**
- E. It also could not have been written during the time of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) because the moral and social reforms that took place under that righteous king do not fit the situation that Habakkuk describes.**
- F. Even in the time of Josiah, God had clearly said that, due to the vile sins of Judah under Manasseh and God's promise of judgment at that time, God would not change his mind about their future captivity though he would spare them in the time of Josiah himself. Therefore, his righteous reign did not change the plan of God for their captivity.**
- G. The date for the writing of Habakkuk seems to have been just after the close of the reign of Josiah. The date of 607 B.C. seems to be likely.**
- H. It is not inconceivable that Judah would so quickly (two years) turn back again to all of the rebellious practices they had had before, even so soon after the end of the reign of Josiah. This had often been their pattern after the reign of a righteous king earlier in their history. SEE: II Kings 20, 21, where Manasseh followed Hezekiah with the wickedest reign of any king of Judah and was the reason for God's promised final/unchanging judgment against Judah.**

3. THE THEME AND PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

- A. As noted before, Habakkuk seems to have had some spiritual questions that needed to be answered by God.**
 - 1) These seem to have come from genuine heart concerns that are not just expressed as a literary way/form of writing.**
 - 2) The answers he got from God may not have fully answered all the questions in the way that he wanted them to be answered, from a human standpoint, but they fully met his spiritual need and he accepted them and went on with his task.**
- B. Historically, God brought to pass all of his purposes and plans.**

4. NOTE COMPARISON OF HIS TEST OF FAITH WITH THAT OF JONAH

A. JONAH

**God called on Jonah
Jonah ran from God
Prayer in trouble/deadly peril (ch. 2
Ends in rebellious obedience (ch. 3, 4)
Bringing God's salvation to the
Gentiles of Nineveh (chs. 3, 4)**

B. HABAKKUK

**Habakkuk called on God
Habakkuk ran to God
Prayer after trouble (ch. 3)
Ends in strong faith/praise (ch. 3)
Teaching the sovereignty of God
over the Gentiles (ch. 3)**

5. We can understand the spiritual battles of Habakkuk more fully as we recognize that the circumstances of life sometimes seem to contradict what God has said about His power, sovereignty and purposes for mankind. We feel this way because of we look at things from a human/limited/finite standpoint rather than from a Divine/eternal standpoint

A. Habakkuk was troubled by two things that God seemed to condone/permit.

- 1) He could see that those who called themselves God's people flagrantly violate God's Law and distort justice on every level without fear of Divine intervention. With his limited understanding, he could not see that God, in His own good time and according to His plan, would someday deal with such people and finally judge them.**
- 2) He was even more troubled when he found out that God intended to use the wicked nation of Babylon as His rod of judgment against Judah since that nation was far more wicked even than those in Judah who had corrupted all that God had established. Again, with his limited understanding, he could not see that God would bring that nation of Babylon also to judgment but that He first wanted to accomplish his purpose in judging Israel by a powerful nation.**

B. God's answers in Habakkuk 2:2-20 satisfied Him. In spite of the appearances that bothered Him, he had faith that God is still on the throne. He may seem slow to wrath, but all iniquity will be punished by God, whether it be the sins of God's own people or the sins of the people of other nations. He was to have faith and wait on God. SEE: 2:3, 4.

6. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

I. The Problems of Habakkuk in Struggling to Understand God. 1:1-2:20

- A. The problem with the wickedness of Judah 1:1-4**
- B. God's first reply: Judgment is coming from Babylon 1:5-11**

- C. Problem with the wickedness of Babylon, God's avenger 1:12-2:1
 - D. God's second reply: Babylon will not escape judgment 2:2-20
- II. The Praise of Habakkuk in Fully Accepting God's Answers 3:1-19**
- A. He prays for the mercy of God 3:1, 2
 - B. He remembers that God's mercy never fails 3:3-15
SEE: Lamentations 3:21-27.
 - 1) The Glory of the Person of God 3:3, 4
 - 2) The Power of the Saving Acts of God 3:5-15
 - C. He trusts in the coming sustaining grace of God 3:16-19
 - 1) He dreads the coming judgment of God on Judah 3:16, 17
 - 2) He has faith that God will stand with him 3:18, 19

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

1. ZEPHANIAH'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

- A. During the history of this southern kingdom of Judah, there would often be wicked and rebellious kings BUT reform/revival/return to full fellowship with the Lord would come from time to time. Many believe that the ministry of Zephaniah was used by God as an important factor in the reign of Josiah, a righteous and God-fearing king who reigned shortly before the invasion of the Babylonians.
- B. Zephaniah 1:1 is very unusual because he traces his lineage back four generations to Hezekiah, probably referring to the King of Judah. This would mean that he comes from a royal family and that his ancestor was that Godly king under whose rule revival came to Judah.
- C. This ancestry and the royal line he came from may have given him free access to the royal court of King Josiah. It also indicates (SEE: 1:4; 1:9-10; 3:1-7) that he was probably an inhabitant of this royal city of Judah.

2. THE DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH.

- A. By identifying his writing with the phrase "in the days of Josiah son of Amos, king of Judah" we see him in a vital relationship with the king who reigned 640-609 B.C.
- B. Zephaniah 2:13 also indicates that the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. was still a future event and so his writing would have to be dated between 640 and 612 B.C.

- C. This book also seems to indicate that the writing of his book was written before the reforms under Josiah had been instituted and the sins that came from the reign of Manasseh and Amon still were predominating in the land of Judah. The first reforms of Josiah did not take place until 628 B.C. (SEE: II Chronicles 34:3-7). It was not until six years later, in about 622 B.C., that his second reforms took place as Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law in the temple. (SEE: II Chronicles 34:3-7).
- D. It is probable that he wrote the book between 630 and 625 B.C. As a contemporary of Jeremiah and Habakkuk, he was one of the last of the warning prophets in Judah before the invasion of the Babylonians.

3. THE THEME AND PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

- A. The bulk of the Book of Zephaniah, 1:1-3:8, describes the coming Day of Judgment of God on Judah and the nations. It teaches that the eternal sovereign God will not only judge His own people but also the peoples of the world. This Day of the Lord will be universal in its impact. That day came quickly for Judah and he nations (SEE: 2:4-15), but there is also a future aspect to it when all the earth will be judged.
- B. We also note in Zephaniah 3:9-20 that the day will come when God’s blessing and favor will also come after the judgment is finished. A righteous remnant will survive that severe judgment of God, and all who call upon Him and turn to Him, Jew or Gentile, will be blest by God. God will also re-gather and restore His people.
- C. Zephaniah is also written as a warning to Judah and a call to repentance. SEE: 2:1-3.

4. COMPARISON OF ZEPHANIAH, HABAKKUK AND LAMENTATIONS

A. ZEPHANIAH	B. HABAKKUK	C. LAMENTATIONS
Many years before the fall of Jerusalem. 630 B.C.	Just before the fall of Jerusalem. 607 B.C.	Just after the fall of Jerusalem. 586 B.C.
God will judge	“God, when will you judge?”	God has already judged
Preview of trouble to come	Promise of trouble to come	Presence of trouble
Day of the Lord	Dominion of the Lord	Destruction by the Lord
God is in your midst (3:15, 17)	God is your strength (3:19)	God is your portion (3:24)

5. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

- A. On the whole, the book of Zephaniah is a stern book of warning about the coming Day of the Lord. Desolation and darkness will strike

Judah and the nations because they deserve the wrath of God for all their sins. However, the book looks beyond this judgment of God to the time when God will cleanse the nations and restore Judah.

B. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

I. God's Judgment in the Day of the Lord	1:1-3:8
A. God's judgment on the whole earth	1:1-3
B. God's judgment on the Nation of Judah	1:4-2:3
C. God's judgment on the nations around Judah	2:4-15
D. God's judgment on the City of Jerusalem	3:1-7
E. God's judgment throughout the world	3:8
II. God's salvation in the Day of the Lord	3:9-20
A. God's promise of conversion	3:9-13
B. God's promise of restoration	3:14-20

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

1. HAGGAI'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

- A. In this book, Haggai is mentioned nine times. SEE: 1:1, 3, 12-13; 2:1, 10, 13-14, 20. In the context of these verses and also the verses from Ezra, his authorship and the dating of the book are uncontested.**
- B. Haggai is known only from these references from chapters 1 and 2 of this book and from the two references to him in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. In the Book of Ezra, he is seen working with the younger prophet Zechariah in the ministry of encouraging the rebuilding of the temple and perhaps actually working alongside those who did the rebuilding..**
- C. It seems that Haggai had returned from Babylon (under the Medo-Persian Empire) with the remnant under Zerubbabel, and seemed to have been living in Jerusalem with the leaders.**
- D. Some Bible teachers believe, from Haggai 2:3, that he was born in Jerusalem before the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C., and that he was one of those who remembered the original temple and wept when they thought of it. SEE: Ezra 3:12, 13. If this is true, this would mean that he was about 75 when he prophesied in about 520-525 B.C. Others believe that he was born in Babylon during the captivity.**

2. THE DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

- A. In the period between 538 and 536 B.C., Cyrus of Persia issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple. The first return was led by Zerubbabel, and in 536 B.C. work on the temple began.**
- B. Ezra, chapters 4-6, gives the background to the Book of Haggai, and describes how the Samaritans hindered the building of the temple and even wrote a letter to the Persian king with false and slanderous charges against those who were doing the rebuilding.**
- C. This strong opposition by the Samaritans added to the growing discouragement of the Jewish remnant, and their initial optimism upon returning was further dampened by the desolation of the land, by crop failure, by hard work and other hardships they faced. They had given up the relative comfort of the Babylonian culture to pioneer in a land that now seemed to be unproductive and unrewarding. Finding it easier to stop building than to contest with their neighbors, the work on the temple ceased in about 534 B.C.**
- D. The discouragement of the people and their leaders led to spiritual lethargy, and they turned instead to their own concerns about building for themselves and other concerns. They excused themselves by perhaps believing that it was not simply God's will for the temple to be rebuilt at that time.**
- E. It seems that sixteen years had passed since they had first begun the rebuilding and then stopped their work on the temple, and God sends both Haggai and Zechariah to deliver a strong message that their own lethargy and selfishness is sin in the eyes of God, and he calls them to renewed holiness of life and renewed faith and dedication to God with confidence in God who controls their future.**
- F. The Book of Haggai can therefore be precisely dated in September of 520 B.C. We note that the Book of Zechariah seems to have begun sometime about midway through the Book of Haggai.**
- G. Thus, after the fourteen years of neglect, when nothing at all was done with the rebuilding of the temple, the work was resumed and seems to have been completed in the year 516 B.C. SEE: Ezra 6:15.**
- H. We note from history that Darius I (521-486 B.C.) was now the ruler of Persia during the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah.**

- I. We note from the Jewish Talmud that the Ark of the Covenant was not in the rebuilt temple. It may have been completely destroyed by that time.

3. THE THEME AND THE PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

- A. The emphasis is clear that the remnant of Jews who have (536 B.C.) been permitted by Cyrus to return from Persia to rebuild the temple must diligently work to complete the job before they can expect the blessing and favor of God upon their efforts. Their spiritual indifference which grew out of their fears of persecution caused them to fail to respond to God's challenge to them to return to their original purpose for having been sent back to Jerusalem again and to deeply care about the unfinished task.
- B. The result God was intending to bring to pass was a turning away from the spiritual dryness and decline from their original fervor for the Lord and for the task He had given them.

4. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

- A. Haggai is second only to Obadiah in the brevity of its message, but in these few verses, he includes four short messages which are both powerful and effective in accomplishing God's purpose of stirring the people again to the zeal they had once shown in honoring Him by rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.
- B. The four messages he delivers to them are: The necessity for the completion of the temple (1:1-15); the glory that will accompany the completion of the temple (2:1-9); the present blessings of complete obedience to God (2:10-19) ; and the future blessings God promises (2:20-23).
- C. We note that as Haggai communicates this message of challenge to the remnant, Zerubbabel the governor, a symbol of the Messiah to come, Joshua the high priest and most of the people abandon the things that had diverted them from the task and resume the temple work. It seems that even the leaders had suffered some of the lethargy that had affected the zeal and obedience of the people.
- D. We also note that the same day that Haggai addresses the priests among the people, he shares God's promise that God will move in judgment in the future, and, in His power, he will someday overthrow the nations of the earth. At that time, Zerubbabel, the symbol of the coming Messiah, will be honored.

E. GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| I. The completion of the latter temple | 1:1-15 |
| A. The temple is not complete | 1:1-6 |
| B. The temple must be completed for God's blessing | |
| II. The glory of the latter temple | 2:1-9 |
| A. The latter temple is not as glorious as the first | 2:1-3 |
| B. The latter temple will someday be more glorious\
than the first one. | 2:4-9 |
| III. The present blessings of obedience | 2:10-19 |
| A. The disobedience of the remnant | 2:10-14 |
| B. The obedience of the remnant as the only answer | 2:15-19 |
| IV. The Future blessings by the promises of God | 2:20-23 |
| A. The future destruction of the nations | 2:20-22 |
| B. The future honoring of Zerubbabel | 2:23 |

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

1. ZECHARIAH'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

- A. Zechariah, which means “God remembers”, was a popular name shared by no fewer than twenty-nine Old Testament characters. It was a name that may have been given by many Jewish mothers as an expression of gratitude for the gift of a baby boy.**
- B. Like his predecessors, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was of priestly lineage as the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo SEE: 1;1, 7; Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Nehemiah 12:4, 16.**
- C. He was born in Babylonia and was brought to Palestine by his grandfather when the Jewish exiles returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest.**
- D. If he was the “young man” of chapter 2:4, he was called to prophesy at an early age in about 520 B.C. Matthew 23:35 says that he was “murdered between the temple and the altar” many years later when his work would already have been completed and this book written.**

2. THE DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

- A. As noted before, Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai the prophet, Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest. Therefore, the historical setting for chapters 1 to 8 of Zechariah (520-518 B.C.) are identical to that of Haggai and have to do with the finishing of the work on the temple. Work was resumed on the temple in 520 B.C. and the project was completed in 516 B.C.**
- B. The later chapters however, chapters 9-14 indicate that the book was finally finished many years later, with a date between 480 and 470 B.C. This is seen by the stylistic differences between these final chapters and the earlier ones. These later ones were probably written during the time of King Xerxes (486-470 B.C.) who made ESTHER queen of Persia.**

3. THE THEME AND PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

- A. After some years of lethargy and indifference to the rebuilding of the temple by the remnant that had been sent back for that purpose, Zechariah is commissioned to encourage them to finish the task.**
- B. Rather than exhorting them with strong words of rebuke, Zechariah seeks to encourage them to action by reminding them of the future importance of the temple. The temple must be rebuilt as a symbol of the glorious temple that the future Messiah will inhabit. The people are not merely building a temple, they are building this important symbol of the future.**
- C. We note that this book outlines God's program for His people during the times of the Gentiles until the Messiah would come to deliver them and finally reign upon the earth. This hope of glory was a source of reassurance to the Jewish remnant when times were difficult.**
- D. Overall, Zechariah is the longest of the Minor Prophets and is second only to Isaiah the prophet in Messianic teaching.**

4. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

- A. As already noted, the first eight chapters were written to encourage the Remnant while they were rebuilding the temple. The last six chapters were written AFTER the completion of the temple to anticipate Israel's coming Messiah.**
- B. The book divides into the eight visions (chapters 1-6), the four messages (chapters 7 and 8) and the two burdens (chapters 9-14).**

C. GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

I. The call to repentance	1:1-6
II. The eight visions of Zechariah	1:7-6:8
A. The horses among the myrtle trees	1:7-17
B. The four horns and the four craftsmen	1:18-21
C. The man with the measuring line	2:1-13
D. The cleansing of Joshua the high priest	3:1-10
E. The golden lampstand and the olive trees	4:1-14
F. The flying scroll	5:1-4
G. The woman in the basket	5:5-11
H. The four chariots	6:1-8
III. The crowning of Joshua	6:9-15
IV. The question of fasting as a means of pleasing God	7:1-3
V. The four major messages of Zechariah	7:4-8:23
A. Rebuke of hypocrisy	7:4-7
B. Repentance for disobedience	7:8-14
C. Restoration of Israel	8:1-17
D. Rejoicing in Israel's future	8:18-23
VI. The two burdens of Zechariah	9:1-14:21
A. The rejection of the Messiah	9:1-11:17
B. The reign of the Messiah	12:1-14:21

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

1. MALACHI'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

- A. We know little about Malachi except for his name in Malachi 1:1. Some believe that he may have belonged to a special group of Jews, "the Great Synagogue", that specialized in collecting and preserving the canon of the revealed Scriptures of the Old Testament. Although he shows great zeal in his writing and could well have had such a passion for God's Word, his identification with this group cannot be confirmed.**

- B. He was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and served God in that ministry many years after the time of Ezra. In Ezra's time (536-516 B.C.), there had been a time of restoration of the temple and a revival among the Jews who had returned from Persia.**
- C. Malachi ministered in the time of the governorship of Nehemiah and so was his contemporary. He thus prophesied more than a century after Haggai and Zechariah. He had the same relationship with Nehemiah that they had had with Ezra, Zerubbabel and Joshua the priest.**
- D. It is true that there had been problems during this time of restoration under Ezra and others, and the people had to be sharply rebuked by prophets like Haggai and Zechariah to leave their own selfish interests and return to the work that was to be their main focus, but they heard and responded and committed themselves again to God. What followed was a time of revival that may have lasted a long time.**
- E. Malachi, now writing many years later, has to direct his message of the judgment of God to a people who had left their fervor for the Lord under Ezra and Nehemiah and were now plagued with corrupt priests, wicked practices and a false sense of security in their privileged relationship with God. It seems that only a few were truly following the Lord (SEE: 3:16-18) and were living lives acceptable to Him.**

2. THE DATE AND SETTING FOR THE BOOK OF MALACHI

- A. Many believe that Nehemiah, who led in the rebuilding of the walls of the City of Jerusalem, and Malachi were from the same period of time, and were dealing with the same problems.**
 - 1) Malachi's position would be that he was the prophet who reinforced Nehemiah's own righteous stand with revelations from God dealing with the sins of the people.**
 - 2) The sins that stirred Malachi were the same ones that concerned Nehemiah: The defilement of the priesthood; the foreign marriages; and the neglect of the tithes and offerings.**
- B. We can clearly see the long period of time that had passed after the revival under Ezra as we note the complete decline in their spiritual condition before God and the absence of any concern or care for spiritual things.**
 - 1) They seemed completely insensible to the love that God had displayed toward them.**

- 2) They professed (“Yet, you say.....”) to be completely unaware of the enormity of their departure from the will of the Lord.
 - 3) They lacked reverence for the Lord and actually seemed to despise Him in their hearts.
 - 4) They were so hardened in their hearts that when their evil deeds were pointed out to them, they saw no harm in them.
- C. From the many questions he quotes from the people that defend their position and profess innocence in their stand and conduct before the Lord, and the strong evidence of their complete hypocrisy, we can see a resemblance between these people and the Pharisees and Sadducees of the time of Christ. SEE: Matthew 23; Philippians 3:4-6-9.
- D. From all of this, the date for the writing is between 432 and 425 B.C.

3. THE THEME AND PURPOSE FOR THE BOOK OF MALACHI.

- A. It is obvious that the people who had returned to the land of Israel from captivity now have the feeling that their return was not as wonderful as they had expected it would be and that God was disappointing them.
- 1) Rather than having a trouble-free return, they constantly were greeted with hatred and opposition. These troubles have continued down through the years from the time of Ezra to Nehemiah and Malachi.
 - 2) They also, even while having been permitted to return and rebuild, are still under the rule of Persia and, when that nation passes from the scene, other nations will come to rule over them and oppress them. In the time of Christ, they will finally be under Rome and the temple will again be destroyed in 70 A.D.
 - 3) Life in the land itself is difficult and the prosperity they seemed to have expected has not really come. Their very existence is difficult.
- B. The result of all of this is that they are not only denying God’s rightful place in their lives and blaming Him for failure to bring to pass all their expectations, but they are also using this to excuse their sins and defend themselves in their sinful ways.
- C. In answering these people, God is showing them that their lack of blessing from His hand is not due to His lack of concern for them or His indifference to what they are going through, but rather it is due to

their own compromise and disobedience which caused them to fail to meet His conditions for blessing and favor.

- 1) As He has taught them throughout their relationship with Him, while the AVAILABILITY and SUFFICIENCY of His love and mercy is absolutely UNLIMITED, the EXPERIENCING of His love and mercy is CONDITIONAL. SEE: Deuteronomy 30:15-20; II Chronicles 7:12-22; John 3:14-21; I John 1:7, 9.
- 2) When God's conditions are met by those who deeply love Him and are committed to following Him with all their hearts, there will be no problem with fully experiencing His love and mercy in daily life. However, the perfect life for His people will not come in their day but will come in the future when the Messiah has come and He rules and reigns. SEE: Malachi, chapter 4.
- 3) Even as they wait for that time, they can have His blessing.

4. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI.

A. From 1:1-3:15, the prophet repeats and answers the hypocritical questions that these people are asking God.

- 1) In answering them, he shows that these later questions are also arrogant because they are doubting God while ignoring their own sins and failures before Him. SEE: 1:1-5
- 2) He not only reveals the sins of the people themselves, but he puts special emphasis upon the corruption of the priesthood. SEE: 1:6-3:15.
 - a) The priests have lost all respect for God and His Name and dare to offer diseased and imperfect animals in their sacrifices.
 - b) By their failures in teaching the people, the priests must share much of the blame for the decline of the people into sin and rebellion. SEE: 2:1-9.
- 3) In that same section, he deals with the unfaithfulness of the people in marrying with the foreigners around them and leaving their own wives to do so. SEE: 2:10-14.

B. From 3:16-4:6, the prophet assures the nation that the time will come when the wicked will be judged and God's people who truly fear and follow Him will be vindicated and blest.

C. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI

- I. The Privilege of the Nation in His Presence With Them 1:1-5**
- II. The Pollution of the Nation 1:6-3:15**
 - A. The Sin of the Priests of Israel 1:6-2:9**
 - B. The Sins of the People of Israel 2:10-3:15**
- III. The Promises to the Nation 3:16-4:6**
 - A. The Rewards of the Book of Remembrance 3:16-18**
 - B. The Rewards of the Coming of Christ 4:1-3**
 - C. The Prophecy of the Coming of Elijah 4:4-6**

THE MINOR PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Professor: Dr. Carson K. Fremont

Course Syllabus

TEXTBOOK FOR THE COURSE:

The only textbook for this course will be the Bible itself. Through the required reading of these books of the Minor Prophets, the examination of these books in class sessions and the help of the Holy Spirit in understanding what is read and taught, the student can gain an adequate understanding of the important teachings of each book.

It is to be noted that only the King James Version of the Bible will be permitted and used in class study, but the students may consult other more modern versions of the Scriptures (e.g. NASB, NIV, etc) or versions of the Scriptures in the Greek language to more clearly understand language and phrases found in the KJV that are difficult to understand or are no longer in use in the English language of today.

Additional materials will also be distributed in class to supplement the daily class notes taken by the students themselves. These may provide additional background information on the books being studied and help point the students to the main ideas and purposes of each of the books.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Because of the number of books and chapters in this set of The Minor Prophets, it will not be possible to always do a verse by verse study of each book. However, all of the main ideas of the books, with their references in the text itself of each book, will be discussed in class.

Because of the need for extensive background studies, background material from the book TALK THRU THE BIBLE by Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa will be given to the student in written form and also discussed in class. The students will note that, in the class lectures, sometimes the material from this book has been adapted so that the class teaching is in closer agreement with the conclusions that other Bible scholars have drawn from the history of Israel.

PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THIS COURSE IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

The main purpose and goal of this course is to acquaint the students with the basic teachings of the Minor Prophets and to show how their teachings can apply to our faith and lives today.

It is also the purpose and goal of this course to lead the students into the conviction that the study of God's Word is a lifelong process, and does not end at the conclusion of this course or even at the end of their studies in this school.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

By the end of the end of the third week of study in this course, each student will be required to have read the entire set of books in the Minor Prophets at least one time

through. Students will be asked to confirm that they have completed this reading assignment, and failure to complete it will cause some loss in the final grade.

As preparation for each class session, students in the class will be given brief and simple assignments which they are faithfully to complete before the next class session. These may include brief written assignments that are to be handed in.

At the discretion of the Professor, occasional quizzes may be given to test both the faithfulness and understanding of the students in doing their assignments and in their class participation.

Except when these books of the Minor Prophets are being taught as a short-term module, there will be both a mid-term exam and a final exam. In a short-term module, only a final exam will be given. Before each major exam, a list of study questions will be given to the students from which a set number of questions will be selected for the exam.

It is also expected that faithful class attendance, close attention to the teaching given in each class session and the faithful taking of notes in class will be required of each student. At the discretion of the Professor, class notes may be collected for evaluation at the time of the final exam.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

As already stated, the main resource will be the Scriptures themselves.

As various books of the Minor Prophets are studied in class, it is expected that reference will be made to parallel passages of Scriptures or passages that may shed additional light on the topic under discussion in the text of a Minor Prophet. This recognizes the fact that sometimes a single passage of Scripture does not always give the entire teaching on a certain subject, and that the full understanding of that subject comes when Scriptures are compared with Scriptures.

The opinions of other authors or teachers may be referred to from time to time, but these will be evaluated and accepted only if the text of the Scriptures being studied verifies them and is in agreement with them. This recognizes that both authors of published writings and well known teachers may take positions concerning certain passages or issues that the Professor feels may be contrary to what is actually being taught in those passages. The true meaning of each passage therefore must be clarified and adhered to, and will be the goal of class lectures.

