

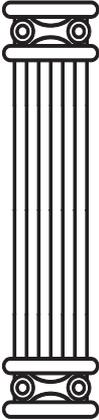




**GOD'S MESSAGES
BIBLE
COMMENTARY
SERIES**

VOLUME 17

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading.
(Nehemiah 8:8).



**COMMENTARY
ON THE BOOKS
OF
HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS,
OBADIAH, JONAH, MICAH,
NAHUM, HABAKKUK,
ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI,
ZECHARIAH, MALACHI**



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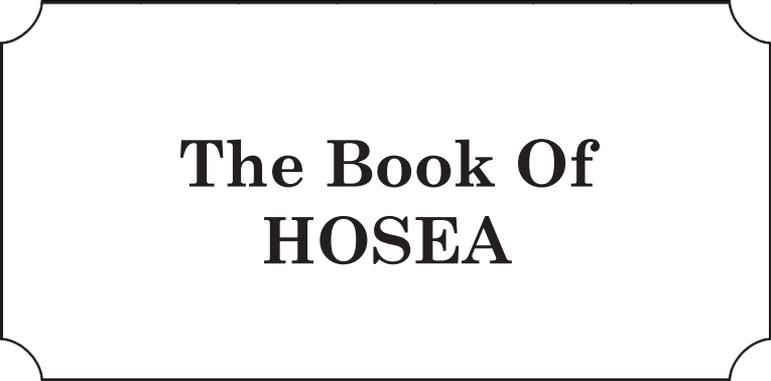
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**The Book Of
HOSEA**



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Introduction To Hosea

The Author:

Hosea and Amos both prophesied primarily to the northern kingdom in approximately the same time period. Amos home had been in the southern kingdom. He traveled to the north and addressed the message of the Lord to those who were relative strangers. Hosea had been a native of the northern kingdom and found himself speaking and writing to persons with a comparatively similar background.

Amos was one who proclaimed justice. He condemned Israel as sinners who had turned a deaf ear to Jehovah and who deserved to be sharply punished for their folly. Hosea pointed out the longsuffering of the Lord. He dwelt on the willingness of God to forgive those who were willing to repent. He was just as certain as was Amos that the people had sinned, deserving punishment for their disobedience. But he constantly held up the fact that forgiveness was available.

The Date:

The first verse of the book gives us general information as to the time period during which Hosea prophesied. More will be said under the comments on that verse. We should note, however, that both Amos and Hosea did their writing in the latter years of the northern kingdom, just before it was taken into captivity by the Assyrians.

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## **The Background:**

God had rescued His people from slavery in the land of Egypt. He had nourished and guided them through wilderness wanderings. He had appointed Joshua to lead them to victory over the inhabitants of the promised land. The law had been given to define sin. All should have been sufficient to bring forth gratitude and loving obedience on their part.

It had not been so. They had intermarried with the people of the land. They had adopted their worship of idols. Their morals had sunk to a deplorable level. They were in the process of finding out that God's truth makes men free, but when that truth is abandoned, the result is bondage. The promise had been made that through the seed of Abraham all nations of the earth would be blessed. However; those who choose to behave themselves as the seed of Satan will not share in such blessings.

Hosea had the unpleasant task of making such matters clear to both the obedient and the disobedient. There was unlimited evidence that God is love. Only the blind could overlook this fact. But, sometimes the love demands a lesson in the perils of disobedience.

## **A Living Example:**

God commanded Hosea that he was to take a wife from "whoredom." This could mean that his wife was to be a harlot when he married her. It could also mean that she was to come from a background where this was a more or accepted way of life. It might have been expected that a woman who had such a background would be very apt to treat her marriage with less respect than if she had come from one where purity was honored.

Gomer did just as might have been anticipated. She was unfaithful to Hosea. Hosea was to point out to God's people that Israel had done just as Gomer had. She had sold herself into slavery. God loved His people so much that He had sacrificed His Son to redeem His bride from the clutches of Satan.

Through the Messiah, God was calling for His bride to return to Him that He might continue to bless her in spite of her disloyalty.

The book closes with a joyful note in that Israel does hear the call of Jehovah and repents of her sins. This then brings an outpouring of blessings from the Lord. He does still love that remnant of Israel which returns to His embrace.



## *Chapter 1*

Hosea is told to pick a wife from the people of whoredom. He does so and finds that his wife Gomer is unfaithful to him. She gives birth to two sons and a daughter whose names are very meaningful in pointing out the disloyalty of Israel to Jehovah.

**Hosea 1:1 The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.**

The matters contained in this book of Hosea are not those of Hosea himself. They are truths being taught by the God of Heaven. The Lord a number of times chose men as channels for His teachings. On this particular occasion He not only used the lips or pen of Hosea; He used the marriage of the prophet to illustrate His lesson.

We know practically nothing about Hosea's father Beeri, nor are we able to pinpoint the years during which this prophet presented God's Word to Israel. It is thought that he began his work late in the reign of Uzziah and continued through the early years of the reign of Hezekiah. This would mean a starting point of around 750 B.C. and possibly a closing point of close to 725 B.C.

**Hosea 1:2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.**

The message was presented by Hosea, but it came to him from the Lord. He was commanded to take a wife and

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children from whoredoms. It is not likely that Gomer was a harlot when Gomer married her. She was to be a type of the people of Israel who turned from God after He had chosen them as His peculiar nation. However, she had come from a land which was saturated with immorality. Such behavior was accepted by Israel at that time as being a natural thing to do.

Already we can see the purpose of the Lord. He wishes to provide an object lesson to Israel that will show the disappointment He has felt as a result of the lack of loyalty by those who should have loved Him dearly for all He had done for them.

The question arises as to whether it was right for God to command Hosea to do that which God had defined as sin. If Gomer was actually involved in adultery at the time Hosea took her as his wife, she should have been stoned to death when the adultery was discovered. This also leads us to think that she was a virgin when Hosea chose her, but fell into the sinful ways of those among whom she had been raised.

Even if Gomer was a harlot when Hosea married her, we can point out that when God gives a command, obedience to that command is not a sin. God is holy. His commands have a purpose. He is the one who defines sin. Nevertheless, we feel much more comfortable with the view that Gomer was pure at the time of the marriage.

Hosea 1:3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

Hosea's first child through Gomer was a son. We can assume that he was proud of his new son, just as most fathers feel such pride in both their firstborn son, and the wife that bore him.

Hosea 1:4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.

Jehovah commanded that the new son be named Jezreel. The name “Jezreel” means “God scatters.” In the future God would scatter Israel among the nations. They had become a violent and immoral people. They must be chastised for their sins.

Why did God say He would avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu? Since God had commanded Jehu to slay those from the house of Ahab it would seem at first that God was punishing Jehu for doing that which he had been commanded to do. Rather, he was punished for taking pleasure in the task. He did it because it was his own will and not because it was the command of the Lord.

The outcome of this punishment was that the kingdom of Israel was to be dissolved and the people were to be scattered.

Hosea 1:5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel, in the valley of Jezreel.

The breaking of the bow of an archer in that day was to leave him helpless before his enemy. Israel would find that the same valley of Jezreel would be the site of great disaster.

Hosea 1:6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

Gomer bore another child, this time it was a daughter. There is reason to believe this child may have been

fathered by someone other than Hosea. This time God commanded that the name she was to be given was "Loruhamah." The meaning of this name was "no pity." By this time Israel had become so sinful that God would not save her from those who sought to take possession of her.

The northern kingdom of Israel would be removed from the land which the Lord had promised to the faithful. Israel had proven that she had interests which were more important to her than the commitment she had to Jehovah.

Hosea 1:7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

Even though the Lord had no more pity for the northern kingdom, He did still consider the southern kingdom of Judah to be faithful to the degree that He would protect them from foes.

But He would make certain that they understood such protection had come from His all powerful hand, and not from their own weaponry. They would not find salvation through horses and chariots. The success would come about in a most surprising manner.

When the Assyrian army came in and took the northern kingdom into captivity, they also had their eye upon the southern kingdom of Judah. They had amassed their forces in the area of Jerusalem and were ready to take it. During the night an angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. The Assyrian army retreated and left Judah alone. It was to be approximately 135 years before the Babylonians took Judah.

Hosea 1:8 Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

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As long as a child is nursing, the mother of that child is not likely to become pregnant. As soon as Gomer had weaned her daughter she conceived a third time. Again there is doubt that the new son was fathered by Hosea. This woman was not particular as to whom she picked for a sexual partner.

**Hosea 1:9 Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.**

The statement in this verse lends credibility to the idea that this second son was not that of Hosea. God commanded that the name given to him was to be “Loammi.” This name means “not my people.” After all that God had done for His chosen people, they had shown Him that they would follow their own ways. Since they were so determined not to let Him be their God, He would honor their desire. He would send them out on their own.

**Hos 1:10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.**

The closing two verses of this chapter present a vastly different view of the future of God’s relationships with mankind. The comparison is so drastic that some Bible critics have refused to accept these last verses as being written by the same author as the first nine verses. Could these two verses with their rosy outlook for Israel be a possible conclusion for the dismal attitude of God toward His nation of Israel in the previous condemnation?

Yes, the two closing verses are very much appropriate when we consider the new spiritual Israel which was to come into being through Jesus Christ. The number of faithful children God would produce through the new spiritual bride, the church, would be much greater than those who were the fleshly descendants of Abraham. They would be as uncountable as the sand of the sea.

Those who had been His people would no longer enjoy that distinction. Those who had not been His people would be invited to become His children. There would be neither Jew nor Gentile in the new family. All would be one in Christ Jesus.

**Hosea 1:11 Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.**

Yes, the descendants of both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah would someday find themselves united under one head. That head would be the very Son of God. All who were willing to separate themselves from the world and be faithfully married to Christ would be welcomed. The disaster of the valley of Jezreel would be reversed. Joy and salvation would be found in the spiritual kingdom of the Lord and Saviour.

## *Chapter 2*

The language of the book of Hosea is blunt. God was extremely disappointed with the nation of Israel. The nation was to be scattered and taken into captivity. This was to be done that she might have time and opportunity to reflect upon her idolatry which was actually spiritual adultery. God was her husband. She had betrayed Him. She would be allowed to see the consequences of choosing lovers from among the false gods of Baalim. God would welcome the faithful remnant back to Him. But He would bring in those who had not been His people and would claim them as His people.

**Hosea 2:1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.**

It is best to consider the first verse of chapter two as the real conclusion of chapter one. Lo-ammi would later become Ammi, and Lo-ruhamah would become Ruhamah. Those who had not been pitied would be pitied. Those who were not God's people would become His people.

**Hosea 2:2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;**

Jehovah was the father. The nation of Israel had been the mother. The faithful remnant were the children whom God was calling upon to plead with the adulterous nation to abandon her disgusting ways and be true to their Father. The language is plain, but it succeeds in drawing an accurate picture of the need for turning away from immorality and following the True and Living God in loving obedience.

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Hosea 2:3 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

This verse tells of the plight of an adulterous wife in that portion of the world at that time. A betrayed husband would strip his wife of all clothing and cause her to walk out into the midst of those who lived in the same area. She would not receive any of the benefits which he had previously provided her. She would be left hungry and exposed to shame. Even if the behavior was common to numerous other women, the shame would still be nearly unbearable.

Hosea 2:4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms.

The children would be those born with the shame of being produced by a sinful union between their mother and one who was not her husband. The sins of the mother would be a heavy burden upon the children. In fact, the children would very often follow in the wicked ways of their mother. Israel was traveling downhill with ever increasing speed. How would the present reader like to be known as the offspring of a publicly recognized harlot?

Hosea 2:5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

The nation of Israel had found lovers who were more attractive to her than Jehovah. She was giving these false



gods credit for the food, clothing and other items which she needed or desired. She was only following delusions. Any blessing of life comes from the hand of the Lord. The Baalim upon which Israel was fastening her attentions was a “nothing.” The licentious sexual orgies which were an intimate part of the worship of these imaginary gods could give momentary fleshly pleasure. This would soon fade and God looked upon the activities with absolute disgust.

Hosea 2:6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

All kinds of disaster follows in the steps of those who forget Jehovah and attempt to find satisfaction in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. To forsake the will of Jehovah and pursue the ways of the world brings disease, violence, and death.

This present commentator once worked in the record office of a state prison. It was very revealing to read the prisoner’s description of how he had arrived in prison. In many of the cases the prisoner was either unable or unwilling to see that he had been following a path which was almost certain to lead to that jail cell. The wall was there and the sinner did not see the end of the road.

Hosea 2:7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.

Israel’s lovers whom she followed were the Baalim whom she was giving credit for her prosperity. She did

not realize that the momentary pleasure of her sins would give way to inconceivable suffering under the bondage of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. She was not going to find her lovers because they were non-existent. As things became increasingly painful she would finally decide that there was a need to turn back to Jehovah, her original husband.

Hosea 2:8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

It was Jehovah who had provided the good things of life for Israel when she was taken from Egyptian bondage and given food and guidance in the wilderness. The silver and gold which Israel had fashioned into idols before which they could kneel had not been made available by Baal. They were a part of the creation of the universe. It was the Almighty hand of the Lord which had made those precious metals.

Hosea 2:9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.

Since the nation had refused to honor Jehovah for His provisions, He would take away many of those blessings. The crops would not produce that which was needed for food, drink, clothing and shelter.

Hosea 2:10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.

God was ready to punish Israel. Her ungodliness would be put out into plain sight where all could recognize the stupidity of it. She would find that those imaginary lovers whom she had adored would not be there when she called upon them to rescue her from her plight. Just how serious was this plight?

Hosea 2:11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

Worship of God is supposed to be a time of happiness and joy. But it is not to be a time of revelry. That is what Israel had been making it. The feast days, new moon celebrations, and sabbaths had become a mockery. Life was to be more than a giddy party. God would cause this folly to come to a halt.

Hosea 2:12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

God would make it clear that the blessings which they had been attributing to their false gods were not from that source. He would turn their grape vineyards and the fig trees which He had provided them into jungles where the animals would feed upon them and humans would not enjoy those benefits.

Hosea 2:13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgat me, saith the LORD.

Today we look at the word “visit” a pleasant time. God did not use it in that manner. The visit which He would make would repay Israel for her insulting way of life. She would be made conscious of the foolishness of burning incense to the Baalim and prancing around bedecked in jewelry as she sought to please those idols and that which they represented.

Hosea 2:14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

This is most amazing. God declares that after all of Israel's treachery, He still wanted her back. He would do similar things to that which He had done before when He had taken her from the clutches of the Egyptian Pharaoh and led her through the wilderness to the land of promise.

Young men use methods like this in the courtship of a young virgin which they would like to have as their wife. But in the case at hand, Israel is no young virgin. She has known the gracious care of the Lord and has treated Him as if His attention was not sufficient for her needs.

The only explanation which makes sense is that God looks much farther ahead than does man. He was able to envision a time when the insults which Israel had heaped upon Him would be recognized for what they truly were. Though the majority of that nation did not return to Him, the remnant did return. It was that remnant which furnished the core of the new spiritual Israel which we know presently as the Church of Jesus Christ.

Hosea 2:15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her

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**youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.**

Once more Jehovah would bless that faithful remnant. He would give her songs of joy like those she sang to Him in those days when she was released from slavery and led to Canaan.

**Hosea 2:16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.**

When the realization came that idolatry was a false hope, those who were ready to accept Him in a faithful relationship would cease to call upon the idols and would call upon “Ishi” which means “My husband.”

**Hosea 2:17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.**

We are reminded over and over in the Holy Scriptures that once Israel returned from the captivity brought about by their idolatry, they have not turned back to those idols. That remnant which is so precious to the Lord was ready to call upon the name of the Son of God and turn away from idols for ever.

**Hosea 2:18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.**

Some say that the predictions made in such books as this and the other prophets have all been fulfilled in the present Christian age. I think we need to be careful about such statements. The predictions do not all have to be filled at the beginning of the Christian dispensation. One must stretch the meaning of this present verse to restrict it to the Christians who were once beastlike in their nature, but who have conquered such violent tendencies after their conversion.

It may well be possible that the time is coming when there will be a return to the conditions which existed in the Garden of Eden before man fell. When the Lord gave dietary instructions to the first couple, He gave them the dominion over fowls, cattle and creeping things. But we are told that He gave man trees and herbs for meat. (See Gen. 1:28-30.)

*Gen 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

*Gen 1:29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.*

*Gen 1:30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.*

There appears to have been a change in the dietary regulations after the flood in the time of Noah. (See Gen. 9:1-3.)

*Gen 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.*

*Gen 9:2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.*

*Gen 9:3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.*

Now note Isaiah 11:1-12.

*Isa 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:*

*Isa 11:2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;*

*Isa 11:3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:*

*Isa 11:4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*

*Isa 11:5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.*

*Isa 11:6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*

*Isa 11:7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*

*Isa 11:8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.*

*Isa 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

*Isa 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.*

*Isa 11:11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.*

*Isa 11:12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.*

One of the most difficult things to understand in the Bible is when and to what degree figurative and symbolic language is being used. We may have a good bit to learn yet about prophecy and it's fulfilment during the Christian age.

**Hosea 2:19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.**

The promise is now made that God is going to betroth the new spiritual Israel to Himself through the Son of God. This betrothal will not depend upon fleshly ancestors. It will depend upon the nature of the parties.



God is Holy. In Him there is no sin. He desires that His betrothed be:

1. Righteous
2. Just
3. Loving and Kind
4. Merciful

**Hosea 2:20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.**

Then another characteristic is listed, as if the previous experience discussed in this book of Hosea had underlined the importance of faithfulness.

**Hosea 2:21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth;**

To “hear” as the word is used here is more than to receive sound waves in the ear. It means willing cooperation. God will be at the apex of this hearing process. He will hear know and respond to the call of the heavens. They, in turn, will receive and respond to the needs of the earth.

**Hosea 2:22 And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.**

The earth will respond to the needs of the various crops which feed mankind. The corn, wine and oil will then fill the needs of Jezreel. The name “Israel” has now been replaced by the name “Jezreel.” The two names both refer to the faithful of God in the Christian age.

**Hosea 2:23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.**

Why is the name Jezreel important? It is because that name means “God sows” or “God scatters.” Under the Christian age God is determined to sow or scatter the faithful throughout the world. Then those of all nations who have not been the people of God may become one in Jesus Christ. He shall claim those who are willing to love and obey Him as His people. They will then be able to say, “Thou art my God.”

God's command through Christ for Christians to preach the gospel to every creature in all the world is not a recent thought in His divine mind. That has been His eternal purpose.

## *Chapter 3*

We see now a parallel drawn between the conjugal relationships of Hosea and Gomer, and the relationship between Jehovah and Israel. God commanded Hosea to buy back his adulterous wife, as God was to buy back Israel who had committed spiritual adultery in idol worship.

**Hosea 3:1 Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.**

The Lord commanded Hosea to go, even though Gomer had sold herself to idol worship, and love her in spite of her disloyalty. The friend who loved her was Hosea himself. This action on the part of Hosea was to provide an illustration of the depths of God's love for His beloved Israel.

Israel had chosen the attractions of idol worship over the true worship of Jehovah. The other gods were represented by the idols which were no gods. The "flagons of wine" are translated as "cakes of raisins" in a number of versions. The joy which could have come through the worship of Jehovah had been less desirable to Israel than the fleshly pleasures associated with the idol worship of that time.

**Hosea 3:2 So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley:**

Hosea did as God had commanded. We do not know the identity of the one from whom Gomer was purchased.

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It could well have been a slave trader who was selling her “services” for his own profit.

The price which Hosea paid to redeem Gomer was fifteen pieces of silver, plus one and one half homers of barley. It is suggested that the sum of the two would have been thirty pieces of silver, which was the price of a wounded slave. If true, this is very meaningful when compared with the thirty pieces of silver which Judas received for the betrayal of Jesus Christ.

Exo 21:32 If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

Hosea 3:3 And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.

Gomer was unclean as a result of her adulterous sexual contacts. Therefore Hosea instructed her that she was to wait for many days before she could resume relations with him. During that time she was not to be with any other man. Just as she was to wait for him, he would keep himself for her. By the time she had proven herself loyal to him she would be considered clean.

Hosea 3:4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:

And here we have the lesson pointed out by Hosea as a prophet of God. The loss of conjugal relationships between Hosea and Gomer was a demonstration of the situation

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in which Israel would find herself for “many days.” She would neither have the companionship of Jehovah, nor the pleasures she had sought through her adulterous experiences with idolatry.

There was a time during the period between the return from captivity and the entrance of the Kingdom of God at the time of Pentecost that just such a set of conditions faced Israel.

**Hosea 3:5** **Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.**

Just as Gomer would have the privilege of a proper relationship with Hosea after these many days, Israel would have the privilege of obedience to the gospel and becoming a part of the “Bride of Christ.”

The cycle of prophecy would be completed. Israel would be scattered. She would for a time be “not My people.” After many days she would become a part of the church and along with the gentiles who also were privileged to become a part of that bride, she would help to sow the seed of the gospel.

## Chapter 4

The Lord presents His position with regard to the spiritual condition of those whom He has so specially blessed throughout many centuries. They are so enmeshed in their waywardness that it has become necessary to curtail many of those blessings. The northern kingdom will be separated from the land. The southern kingdom is warned not to follow in the footsteps of Israel, or they too will meet a similar fate.

**Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.**

The coming message is being presented by Hosea, but it is truly the message of Jehovah. He has a lawsuit against Israel. He finds neither truth, mercy, or the knowledge of God in their midst. Their attention has been diverted to the worship of idols. This has resulted in a nearly complete neglect of the Word of God. A people who have reached such a condition are indeed a pitiful mob. Without feeding upon spiritual food they have become alienated from Him who had offered them so much.

**Hosea 4:2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.**

The commandments had been available to them from the time of their reception by Moses on Sinai. Yet they are found to be breaking one after another of them until violence covers the land. The blood from one murder has

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not faded until another takes it's place. They had broken at least half of the ten commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of thy God in vain.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

Hosea 4:3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

As used in this verse, the land includes man, and also the three major classes of animals, fowls, beasts and fish. Misery has fallen upon every part of what should have been the finest environment on earth.

This would result in a removal of those blessings which had been granted to His people by the Lord of heaven.

Hosea 4:4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.

There is no excuse. One is as bad as another. The priests were charged with instructing the people. When one rejects the instruction which is offered to him, he may expect just such results as Israel was about to endure. If the people are so determined to turn from the truth, they will be allowed to find out what life is like in the absence of that truth.

Hosea 4:5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

The use of the terms “night” and “day” are probably only significant in that they point out a continuous rebellion by both the people and the prophets. The people will not hear the truth presented by the priests. The prophets fail to warn of the horrible consequences of this behavior. God has therefore decided to eliminate the nation (mother) of the kingdom.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Some persons sin for lack of knowledge because they have not had opportunity to be taught. This is not the case with Israel. They have had every opportunity to hear the will of Jehovah. They have been offered the truth and they have made the deliberate decision to turn from it. Since they have ignored Him, Jehovah will ignore them.

Hosea 4:7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame.

The term “increased” goes much farther than to point to numbers of persons. It speaks of the glorious advantages which the chosen nation had in comparison with those less fortunate. Other nations had reason to envy the blessings which Israel had enjoyed. Now God was ready to take away the glory and replace it with shame.

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**Hosea 4:8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.**

The priests who were supposed to feed the people with truth had instead fattened themselves through the sacrifices the people offered. They looked with hunger at the sins in that they received the sin offerings for their own use.

**Hosea 4:9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.**

Since both the priests and the people whom they were expected to teach had combined their efforts in opposition to God's truth, they would all be treated in like manner. They would be punished in accord with their determination to evade the will of the Almighty.

**Hosea 4:10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.**

The life the people had chosen would prove to be most unfilling. They would never have enough. There would be an emptiness which would not be satisfied. Their sexual activities would not lead to happy family lives. Their sinful choices must ever leave them unhappy.

**Hosea 4:11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.**

This whoredom is both spiritual and sexual. They had committed fornication and adultery under every green

tree. They had worshipped false gods and neglected Him who was their true spiritual spouse. One cannot wallow in sin and become drunken with alcohol without losing the strength of character which God expects. Men are to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. Israel had missed the mark badly.

**Hosea 4:12 My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.**

What can men obtain by asking counsel from sticks and stones? Those who should have been going to God in prayer were bowing before such objects as if they were capable of giving them advice as to the best choices of action.

Some contend that the manner in which these stocks were consulted was to hold up sticks and pray for an answer to some question. Then by observing which way the sticks fell when released, they felt they could determine truth. God has His ways of revealing truth. This is not one of them.

**Hosea 4:13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.**

The people had committed adultery with idols on every high hill and under every green tree. The incense which they had burned was not burned in honor of Jehovah. It was an offering to those false gods. Since God's children

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had turned from Him to idols, they would be allowed to see their children spurn them and turn to sin. Both their wives and their daughters would be caught up in sexual whoredom and adultery.

Hosea 4:14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall.

It would not be their wives and daughters alone which would be punished for their illicit actions. The husbands and fathers were just as guilty as the wives and daughters because of their example of spiritual infidelity. The neglect of accepting God’s teaching had caused their understanding to be warped to the extent that they no longer distinguished between good and evil.

Hosea 4:15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.

The Lord now issues a clear warning to the southern kingdom not to offend God as had the people of the north. Seeing one’s neighbor indulge in sinful actions is no excuse for one to follow in his path. God does not want Judah to go to sites where idolatrous actions are practiced. Nor are they to swear by the Living God that they will do this or that. Some of us can recall hearing another who has become angry say, “By God, I will get you for that.” Such is blasphemy. It is a very serious offense against the Creator.

Hosea 4:16 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

This is a very vivid picture in the mind of the present commentator. Back on those days at the farm it was sometimes necessary to load cattle on a truck. A rope would be tied around their horns and someone would attempt to pull them up a ramp into the truck. The cow would stiffen all four feet and pull back against the rope. Israel was doing the same. God was trying to lead them. They set themselves against that leadership.

The latter part of this verse has been interpreted in both a negative and a positive sense. The negative sense seems to fit the context better. It implies that God will someday turn Israel out of their land into a much wider field where they will find dangers as serious as a lamb might find when turned loose where wolves might prey upon it.

Hosea 4:17 Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

Since Ephraim was a leading tribe in the northern kingdom, it is used to speak of the entire people of the north. If the northern kingdom is determined to offend the Lord and suffer punishment, let the southern kingdom take notice and avoid joining them in captivity.

Hosea 4:18 Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye.

That which was so delightful to Israel had turned sour in her mouth. Whoredom has a way of doing just that.

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It may appear appetizing in the short term. The hour arises when life becomes bitter. This is true whether the whoredom be sexual or spiritual.

Let the servant of God abhor all sins, these in particular.

**Hosea 4:19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.**

A windstorm was just ahead for the wayward people of the northern kingdom of Israel. They would be swept away from the land which God had presented to them. When the punishment came, they would be faced with embarrassment rather than the pleasures of sin.

## Chapter 5

The prophet continues the accusations against all levels of the house of Israel. No group is excepted. There is no excuse for the infidelity they have demonstrated toward the Lord who gave them so many blessings in the past. The judgment is clear. The coming punishment is certain!

**Hosea 5:1 Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.**

The priests, the princes and the people are all told to pay close attention to what is about to be told them. They have used the high places for entrap one another in the service of Satan and his false gods. Mizpah and Tabor were the sites of abominable idolatry. The orgies which took place in the wicked worship were centered on lust and pride. The prince of demons could not have been more elated.

**Hosea 5:2 And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all.**

It was not that God had failed to provide spiritual instruction to the people. It was that they had deliberately ignored that instruction and His rebukes were mocked. It had gone so far that murder was not uncommon in their midst.

This is the recipe which has been proven over the thousands of years of human history. Apostasy leads to

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death. Although physical death is more easily observed, spiritual death is the greater catastrophe.

Hosea 5:3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled.

How was it possible that the rebels felt they could escape the penetrating eye of Jehovah. One does not hide from Him. He sees in the darkness as well as in the light of day. No secret hiding place is secure from His vision. Ephraim was the second largest tribe, second only to Judah in the southern kingdom. It's name is thus used to include the entire ten tribes of the north. Ephraim has embraced false gods and has become spiritually filthy in the sight of Him whose spouse she was expected to be. Her sins were in plain sight. Punishment will follow.

Hosea 5:4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD.

God's mercy and grace extend only so far. Israel had reached the breaking point. There comes a time at which God hardens men's hearts. This comes when He has determined that they are not about to repent and will continue their wickedness indefinitely. Men's actions are intended to be framed by the will of the Lord. When evil is the basis for framing life, God must take action to let His displeasure be known.

Hosea 5:5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity: Judah also shall fall with them.

What is the “pride of Israel” and to whom does it testify? God Himself is called the pride of Israel at times. Their attitude toward the Lord should have been one of great pride in His power and glory. In that case the testimony would have been that God is good and worthy to be worshiped. In the present case there was no such attitude. God would therefore testify against them. It is also true that the pride of Israel could be their own false pride in the wicked ways they were following. In that case the pride would be that in their own hearts. It would be a witness to testify of their defiance toward spiritual instruction.

The lesson is similar in either situation. Israel is guilty of great sin. Ephraim, the northern kingdom would fall first. Later the southern kingdom of Judah would follow in the same path.

Hosea 5:6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.

In past days when the people were true to the Lord, they would offer sacrifices to Him from their herds and flocks. At that time it was pleasing to Him. Now they had insulted Him so hideously that any offering they might make would be disdained. They had gone too far. The arm of the Lord would be extended in wrath.

Hosea 5:7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions.

Who were these strange children which they had begotten? Let us draw an analogy. If men and women are going to play loosely with temporary sexual companions,

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illegitimate children may well be the result. Such children are not loved by those who produced them. They are in line for a life of loneliness. The same is true when God's people play the harlot and commit whoredom through idolatry. The product of such unions are strangers to God. They will find themselves in enormous trouble unless they themselves leave the wayward tracks of their sinful companions.

The statement that "a month shall devour them" is a minor problem of interpretation. I shall assume that it means the punishment is not far ahead. It could also mean that their new moons would be a stench in the nostrils of Jehovah.

**Hosea 5:8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin.**

The warning from the Lord is to be loud and clear. The difference between the cornet and the trumpet is insignificant. The thing of importance is that throughout the land, the people are to understand the coming disaster. Such instruments were many times blown to announce the danger of invaders. Israel would be invaded and taken into captivity.

**Hosea 5:9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.**

Without the help of the Lord, any invader would have little resistance to overcome. Assyria was not a pleasant place for those who were to be taken there. But, it would be necessary for them to meet the punishment which God was about to apply.

He had most certainly not hidden His anger from them. More than adequate warning had been given, and would continue to be given.

**Hosea 5:10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.**

What boundaries is it that the princes of Judah were removing? A number of those commenting on this verse see this as encroachment on the territory of the northern kingdom while it was under stress from invasion by Assyria. I think it may well be more than territorial boundaries of men. It very well may be speaking of the boundaries which God sets in His laws for human behavior. As we have mentioned several times before, it is not in man to direct his own paths. When the spiritual boundaries of God are ignored men will pay for their indiscretion.

**Hosea 5:11 Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.**

The commandments which Ephraim walked after were the commandments of men rather than those of God. Therefore the people who had been guilty of trespassing God's boundaries would suffer the judgments of that God. It would turn out to be a most disastrous mistake to follow men rather than the Lord.

**Hosea 5:12 Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.**

Both Ephraim and Judah were guilty of breaking the laws of the Lord. In the end both of them would suffer for their folly. Moths work quietly and then when we discover the damage they have done, were shocked. Rottenness in woodwork leaves it unable to endure under the stress of burdens which are placed upon it. Both kingdoms were to be eaten away until they were horrified at the destruction wrought by their sins.

**Hosea 5:13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.**

Both of the kingdoms would someday realize they were sick unto death. Since they had unsulted the Lord of heaven and earth they had to look elsewhere for a physician. Going to the Assyrian king would be as unwise as one could get. He would take full advantage of the situation to overpower the north and remove the people to captivity in his own land.

**Hosea 5:14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him.**

When the Lord concluded his business with Ephraim it would be as if a lion had torn them to shreds and had then left him wounded. God would take away his prestige and would deliver him to bondservice which would continue until God saw fit to free him. No force on earth would be capable of rescuing him from the results of his sins.

The freedom would only come when the punishment had been replaced by the invitation to come to the Son of God who is able to make one free.

**Hosea 5:15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.**

This verse is not talking of a certain location when it says God will return to His place. It merely means that He would abandon the transgressors and they would see the time when they would see the urgency of His assistance, but that assistance would only come when the people turned from sin to righteousness.

## *Chapter 6*

There appears to be a momentary reflection on the part of Israel to the effect that a return to the way of the Lord would be advisable. God's attitude toward this half hearted intention was to dismiss it as hypocrisy which would disappear rapidly. They have deteriorated to the point that severe punishment will be necessary.

**Hosea 6:1 Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.**

This seems to be a consideration among the people of Israel that the present disregard for the will of the Lord is leading to serious problems. Perhaps a bit more respect would erase some of the dangers which apparently lie ahead. After all, if He can beat with stripes, He can also heal those stripes.

**Hosea 6:2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.**

Surely if penitence is shown for the sins of the past, after a short period of time God would rescue His chosen ones from any grief and all would soon be better.

Some have declared this to be a reference to the three days Jesus Christ spent in the grave, and the resurrection which followed. The reader may wish to follow this line of thought, but it is felt that the primary thrust of the verse is toward a hope for quick escape from any punishment which might be laid upon them.

**Hosea 6:3 Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the**

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morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

How wonderful! God will certainly forgive any rebellion of the past and quickly refresh them as the rain refreshes the vegetation of the land after a dry season.

This is strictly hopeful thinking. This will be made clear in the rest of the chapter. One does not dismiss sin so readily. There will be unpleasantness which will be far more lasting than these daydreams might indicate.

Hosea 6:4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

The Lord is speaking now. What could He possibly have done more than what had been done? He had poured out His blessings upon them day after day and year after year. All that there is to show for His loving kindness is a pretense that they will do better and in a short time all will be well! That was not to be.

Hosea 6:5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.

God had attempted to shape their lives by sending His prophets to instruct them concerning the way of life He expected. He had actually told them that death as a nation awaited them if there was a continuance of their wickedness.

Therefore they need not think that their punishment was to be light and of short duration. The word "light" here may be thought of as a flash of lightning. It strikes



and does it's damage without men being able to evade it. Nor can any hide from it.

Hosea 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

The point here is not that men must make a choice between sacrifice and true communion with God. He is not telling His people that He does not approve of sacrifices. He had commanded sacrifices from the earliest of times. What He did not want was sacrifice which was dissociated from a heartfelt determination to serve in loving obedience. Sacrifice without a close walk with God is useless.

Hosea 6:7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

Just as had Adam and Eve transgressed the commandments of God in the garden of Eden, and just as all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God, Israel had disregarded their responsibilities toward Jehovah. Their lives were bent on achieving lust and pride. This treachery was not to be overlooked.

Hosea 6:8 Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood.

Gilead was a city only in the sense that it consisted of many persons working together toward a common goal. The people were united, but their unity was not in serving the Lord. It was in seeking out self gratification. The result had been sin and violence. Death was altogether too common.

Hosea 6:9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.

Even the priests who were supposed to lead the people into paths of righteousness were sharing in the defiance of the Creator. They were like thieves who lie in wait to take advantage of those who pass their way. The lewdness which they committed could have been sin on a very low rung of the ladder. The present day newspapers are often scarred with the reports of priests of congregations who have molested children and women.

Hosea 6:10 I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled.

Ephraim is used along with the entire nation of Israel because it was a leading tribe. The whoredom was both physical and spiritual. Both the souls and the bodies of the partakers had been defiled. All of this was open to the eyes of Jehovah.

Hosea 6:11 Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

Was Israel alone in their wickedness? No, their neighboring kingdom of Judah had also been involved in like behavior. Though Judah had not been as aggressive in their insolent actions as had Israel, they were also to be included in the harvest. As one sows, so shall he reap. It was but little over a century after Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity that Judah found themselves in the land of Babylon as slaves.

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## Chapter 7

The student of the Bible may find the record of Hosea's prophecy to sound like a broken record. Over and over he comes back to the same sins being committed by the people of Israel. This has been the story of God's people throughout time. They sin. They are warned. They ignore the warnings. They then find themselves in hideous circumstances of anarchy or captivity.

**Hosea 7:1 When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.**

The sin of the nation was like a recurring sore. Every time the Lord was ready to heal the pain and suffering, more wickedness broke out. The term "discovered" here simply means revealed. One did not have to look intently to find it. The conditions were out in plain sight for all to see.

Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom. It was located in the territory of Ephraim. Ephraim was the ruling tribe. The corruption was found at every level. One was not safe inside where thieves could break in and steal. It was no better when one left his own house. Robbers roamed the countryside, taking things by force. This is just the type of life God predicts will arise when His regulations are forgotten.

**Hosea 7:2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.**

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They made the drastic mistake of thinking that no higher power knew of their thoughts and deeds. But God did know of them. If they had been hidden at any time in the past, they were out in the open as Hosea presented the word of the Lord.

Hosea 7:3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

Governmental executives should feel the need to bring about peace and security in a land. The kings of Israel did not operate on that plan. They encouraged the wickedness in order to gain power. They did not hesitate to lie that such might occur.

Hosea 7:4 They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

The adultery was unfaithfulness to both the Lord and the people over whom they reigned. They waited anxiously for their plans to take effect, just as a baker might prepare his dough for baking and then wait impatiently until the time came for the oven.

Hosea 7:5 In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.

The “day of the king” appears to have been some type of ceremony honoring the ruler. Those surrounding him did not hesitate to bring him alcoholic beverages until he became unable to make rational decisions. He went along with the desires of the princes as all of them mocked the word of Jehovah.

Hosea 7:6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.

After having set their evil purposes into motion, they could hardly sleep during the night while waiting the coming of the morning when their heart's desires could be fanned into a flame.

Hosea 7:7 They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.

Ruler after ruler had been replaced by assassination or force of some type. There were no good kings in the entire history of the northern kingdom. Each of them received the kind of treatment which they deserved. The entire nation was left in disarray.

Did such chaos bring a call toward the throne of the Lord? Not at all! Conditions only became worse because God was not called upon to intercede.

Hosea 7:8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

God had strictly commanded His people when they entered the land of Canaan, not to enter into mixed marriages with the people of the land. Those instructions had been forgotten. Those of the northern kingdom had mixed with the Canaanites and had adopted the idolatry and immorality of those whom they should have spurned.

They were like a cake of cornbread which has not been turned over when it was done on one side. It became

burned on one side and was still raw on the other side. Israel had become hot toward the sins of the Canaanites and was raw toward the Lord who had blessed them in the past.

Hosea 7:9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

Israel had wasted her strength like a wild teenager. Now the nation was developing symptoms of age. The pitiful part was that they did not even have the good judgment to realize their condition. They were in danger of dying and took no pains to turn from the cause of their disease. The cure was present but they were too proud to call upon the Great Physician.

Hosea 7:10 And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this.

The present commentator does not see this “pride of Israel” as being the Lord Jehovah. The context almost demands that it be the false pride of the people who refused to call upon God to extricate them from the consequences of their sin. They are ready to turn almost anywhere but to the divine hand for help. There is nearly a complete loss of memory with respect to the past blessings which had been made theirs.

Hosea 7:11 Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

The dove is a bird with a reputation for naivety. It can be easily trapped without realizing it is walking

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into danger. So it was with Ephraim. They knew they needed and wanted help, but they sought it in places where disaster awaited. First they would turn to the west and call upon Egypt for help. Then they would turn east and plead with the Assyrians for assistance. All they succeeded in doing was placing themselves in danger which would lead to captivity.

**Hosea 7:12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.**

In the course of their flitting around God would arrange for their sin to be punished. It would be as simple for God to do this as it would be for a hunter to bring down one of those silly doves. They had been adequately warned of the danger and still walked directly into the face of it.

**Hosea 7:13 Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.**

They were definitely headed in the opposite direction from that which would have brought relief from the horrors into which they had run. They should have been running to God for help. Instead, they were fleeing from Him. They were in the process of signing their own death warrant as a nation.

One cannot forget God and remain secure and happy. Again the reader is reminded that the wages of sin is death. This principle can be seen by any who will open their eyes to the annals of history or the scenes which lie on every side of them day by day.

**Hosea 7:14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.**

What a ridiculous situation these Israelites had gotten themselves into! If they cried out to the Lord at all, it was with a half hearted cry. They certainly were lying awake at night grieving over their pains. When they awoke they got together to plead for the necessities of life. Meanwhile they insulted the only One who could remedy their condition.

**Hosea 7:15 Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.**

God had sustained them in leaving bondage in Egypt. He had provided food and guidance as they traveled through the wilderness. He had continued to bless them in those early years in Canaan. What was their response? They devised mischief and disobedience toward His way of life.

**Hosea 7:16 They return, but not to the Most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.**

A deceitful bow is one which has been aimed in the right direction and then misses the mark. In the case of the Israelites, they had not only missed the mark of destroying the source of their grief and pain. They had found the arrows reversing direction and penetrating their own sinful heart. Even their rulers would find themselves mocked by the Egyptians when Assyria came and took them from the promised land.

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Chapter 8

There is a little greater specificity of the type of sins which God sees in Israel in this chapter. More warnings are to be given, but they will prove to be of no avail. His people will cry out that they do know Him, but He will deny that this superficial and half hearted knowledge is enough to save them from the upcoming troubles.

Hosea 8:1 Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.

The trumpet was well known as a means of warning concerning approaching danger. God commanded that the trumpet be sounded. An eagle was coming to swoop down upon Israel because of their wild and reckless determination to follow their own ways rather than those from above. They had transgressed the covenant which had been solemnly sworn to many years before. They had crossed the line of righteousness and wandered in sin without regarding the boundaries He had set for their actions.

The eagle was associated with the Assyrians. It was actually a vulture rather than an eagle, but either would feed upon it's victims until they were consumed. God has always had some form of law to guide His people. That which Israel had been defying was the extensive instructions given through Moses from Mount Sinai.

Hosea 8:2 Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.

When the discomfort of the punishment became serious enough, Israel would be heard to cry out that

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they knew God. This was a raw lie. They knew of His existence. They certainly did not know Him in the sense that they could be called “The friend of God.” If they had truly known Him their lives would have reflected respect for His will.

**Hosea 8:3 Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him.**

The thing that was good was God and the blessings He offered to those loyal to Him. Their intention to direct their own steps would leave them in peril. The enemies could attack them without Israel having their arm held high by the Almighty. Defeat was certain.

**Hosea 8:4 They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.**

When the one kingdom split into Israel in the north and Judah in the south, Jeroboam I proceeded to appoint a number of princes to support him in his rulership. The Lord had not approved of what was taking place. They had taken some of their precious metals and molded them into idols. God did not consider that to be an act of friendship to Him.

**Hosea 8:5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?**

The golden calves which had been set up to idolize were extremely offensive to the True God. He asks the question as to just how long it may take before they come

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to their senses and set Him up as the only entity worthy of worship. It is quite possible that since the word calf is in the singular number a calf had been set up in the capital of the northern kingdom as well as in both Dan and Bethel.

Hosea 8:6 For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

It was not God who had formed the calf. It was human workers. His wrath was such that He intended to see that their calf was crushed to dust. A golden calf had no chance whatsoever in a contest with the God who created all things.

Hosea 8:7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk; the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

When one sows wheat, he expects to reap wheat. He also expects several grains for every grain which was sown. Israel had sown the wind. They might well expect a far stronger wind to be the harvest. A whirlwind is sometimes called a tornado. That was the type of storm which was ahead for those who worshiped at the feet of a golden calf which they had made with their own hands.

Hosea 8:8 Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.

Here again we come across the prophetic present. Israel had not yet gone into captivity, but the certainty

of doing so was such that it could be spoken of as already having happened. When that took place they would find that they were as undesirable in those other lands as a water pitcher which no one wanted.

Hosea 8:9 For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.

Israel had gone to Assyria for help when they found themselves unable to provide safety, security and daily necessities. That was a mistake. Assyria was not the type to seek as a friend. A wild ass was known for surrounding himself with a number of females. Ephraim was placing herself in the position of offering herself to Assyria in an indecent relationship. This would lead to much grief later on.

Hosea 8:10 Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.

Although Ephraim had hired herself out to other nations rather than depending upon the Lord, He would still harvest them and they would then find themselves grieving over the burden which He would see fit to lay upon their back.

Hosea 8:11 Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.

Those many altars which Ephraim had erected for the purposes of worshiping idols would be the cause of severe punishment from the hand of the Lord. If he was so willing to worship sin let him pay the consequences of sin.

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**Hosea 8:12 I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.**

Of all the nations of the world, God had provided Israel with more opportunity to know what He expected of them. They did not appreciate that privilege. The commandments of the law were looked upon as something which they wanted nothing to do with.

**Hosea 8:13 They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.**

The sacrifices which should have been made for the purpose of glorifying Jehovah were being treated as if they were only occasions for personal feasting. If the sacrifices for sin had been acceptable to God, He would have looked over their sins. Since they were not acceptable, He had kept the sins in memory and they would find themselves in similar affliction to that which they had formerly seen in the land of Egypt.

They would not actually return to Egypt to be placed in bondage there. But they would find themselves in Assyrian captivity which would be very similar.

**Hosea 8:14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.**

God had approved of only one temple. That was the one built in the city of Jerusalem. The northern kingdom of Israel had sought to replace the required visit to

Jerusalem with other temples nearer their present homes. They had also thought to protect themselves with fenced cities. God was the proper defense. They had forgotten Him. The results was to be that the temples and fenced cities would be useless in defending themselves against enemies.

## *Chapter 9*

Hosea makes it crystal clear now that God is fed up with the northern kingdom of Israel. Yes, God is love. But Israel has departed from that love so drastically that His love has been replaced by hatred. The only hope they will have from this point on is that one day they will come to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Hosea 9:1 Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor.**

Joy is to depart from their midst. They are in even worse condition than those nations who had not been favored with all of the blessings which they had. The reason for this loss of joy is that they had become self-indulgent. Material goods and sensual satisfactions had risen above respect for Jehovah. They had gone after false gods and felt that the bountiful harvests which they were enjoying were the reward for serving those gods.

**Hosea 9:2 The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her.**

Because of their lack of gratitude toward the true source of their blessings, those blessings were to be cut off. The threshing floor would become bare. The winepress would go dry. Since they had despised God's spiritual food, they would find the material food becoming sparse.

**Hosea 9:3 They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria.**

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In one sense the entire globe is the Lord's land. But in a very special sense the land of Canaan was the Lord's land. Israel would be removed from that land.

Since there is far more emphasis placed upon the Assyrian captivity than upon any return to slavery in the land of Egypt, many of the writers feel that the use of the term "Egypt" here is figurative and that the Assyrian captivity was a return to a similar situation to that they suffered in Egypt in the past.

There are others who contend that some of the Israelites did flee to Egypt when the Assyrians came in upon them. The fact that later in the chapter it is said that they will be scattered among all nations leads me to think that both Assyria and Egypt took portions of the people into bondage, though Assyria seems to have been the recipient of a larger portion.

When they do arrive in Assyria they will find themselves deprived of the opportunity to follow the regulations of the Lord concerning clean and unclean food. They had disdained some of these commands as they worshiped the false gods. In Assyria they would not even have the chance to avoid unclean food.

Hosea 9:4 They shall not offer wine offerings to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the LORD.

The sacrifices and offerings which had accompanied joyous feasts when they were true to God would become occasions of sadness. Even if they had the opportunity to offer such sacrifices, God would not be pleased with them. The bread which fed the soul would be replaced

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by the food which was necessary to keep soul and body together.

**Hosea 9:5 What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?**

There would be no feast days, etc. where they were going. Such would disappear in the land which they left behind because of their absence. These feasts which were dedicated to the Lord would not be permissible in Assyria and Egypt.

**Hosea 9:6 For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles.**

Whether Egypt and Memphis only represent the bondage in Assyria, or whether some of the Israelites actually fled to Egypt, the change in their lives would be much the same. Where they might have worshiped the Lord, thorns and thistles would be growing up. The silver which had adorned the tabernacle would be replaced by thorns. Their previous home would become a wilderness. The new one would be most unpleasant.

**Hosea 9:7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.**

They had been so foolish as to believe they could turn the sacrificial feasts of the Lord into lascivious orgies in

honor of the false gods. They were to receive the proper punishment for those sins. Their prophets had led them away from the Lord and not toward Him. Those who should have been advising them through the Spirit of God had proven themselves to be madmen, not spiritual.

The “great hatred” may well be the hatred which God held for those who encouraged others in sin. The hatred could also have been the hatred they had for the law of the Lord. Either way the consequences of the hatred were to be in line with the foolishness they had displayed in turning from Jehovah to other so-called gods.

**Hosea 9:8 The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God.**

The watchman of Ephraim was with the True God and was sincerely trying to warn against the danger which was now upon them. The prophet spoken of here was the false prophet who claimed all was right when just the opposite was true. Such a false teacher was truly laying snares which would bring the hatred of Jehovah down upon all who listened to the lies.

**Hosea 9:9 They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.**

At Gibeah an event took place which began a war between the rest of the tribes of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin. A man and his concubine had received overnight lodging in the house of a citizen of the tribe of Benjamin. During the night some of the men of the tribe of Benjamin demanded that the guest be turned over to them for homosexual purposes. Instead, the one

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who had lodged the visitors offered his own daughter and the guest's concubine, both of which were abused throughout the night.

When the deed was discovered, other tribes of Israel commanded that the ones who had committed the atrocity be turned over to them for punishment. When the Benjaminites refused to deliver the sinners for punishment a terrible war was begun which resulted in the loss of thousands of lives. (See Judges 19.)

God saw that the men were punished. He would also see that Israel was punished for the worship of the false gods.

Hosea 9:10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baalpeor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved.

When God had first covenanted with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He would be their God, He had been as delighted with them as one might be who had been out in a wilderness and come upon fresh grapes or firstripe figs. Because of just such sins as those committed at Gibeah, He had changed his attitude toward them. Their adoration of the Baalim had brought shame upon their heads.

Hosea 9:11 As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.

God would not continue to add glory to a nation which had exhibited such wickedness. One of the prides

of Israel was in the multiplying of the people. The Lord had promised that the seed of Abraham would become as numerous as the sand of the sea. This rapid growth was a joy to them. Now that trend was to be reversed.

The women would have difficulty in conceiving. They would also find that when conception did occur, the fetus would often be lost. Giving birth would be another point of disaster. When these were added together, the number of living babes would be reduced to just a small fraction of what it had been before.

Hosea 9:12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!

Even if the children were born and brought up to manhood, God would abandon them in battles with their foes and the northern kingdom would be left without a new generation.

Hosea 9:13 Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer.

Tyrus had been a city located in a fertile area with the sea on one side and mountains acting as a line of defense on another. Tyrus had met disaster. Ephraim had been planted in a very favored part of the land of Canaan. Because of their infidelity to the Lord they would find that their children would be destroyed by invaders.

Hosea 9:14 Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

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What kind of a reward should people have for doing as Ephraim had done? He had given them every chance to feed upon His blessings in the past. Now they must pay for their immorality and idolatry. The wages would be inability to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

**Hosea 9:15 All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers.**

It was at Gilgal that Israel first crossed the Jordan into Canaan. In celebration they had set up memorials of thanksgiving. All of that changed over the years. It was at Gilgal that Israel demanded a king like the nations around them. God did allow them to appoint Saul as king, though He warned them that He was still the True Ruler of all men. The kings of Israel would ultimately prove to be a large part of their failures. These kings, or princes, had led in revolting against the will of the Lord.

**Hosea 9:16 Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.**

Because of their unwillingness to depend upon the guidance and nourishment of Jehovah, Ephraim would find that their life was shriveled. The title "Ephraim" means "double fruit." How sad then that they were to be punished by bearing "no fruit." Even those who came into the light of this world would be allowed to perish because of the lack of providential care by the Lord.

**Hosea 9:17 My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.**

There is great mystery even in this twenty-second century A.D. concerning the whereabouts of the descendants of those ten tribes of the northern kingdom. Hosea was right. They were cast away from God because of their dullness of hearing. They have since wandered in various parts of the world. They will only come back into God's graces by listening to the call of the Son of God whose blood can cleanse any person who commits himself to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself.

## Chapter 10

Through the prophet Hosea, God continues His message to those who are supposed to be His people. He is primarily interested in reaching the hearts of those in the northern kingdom of Israel. Nevertheless, He does not fail to include the southern kingdom of Judah with somewhat less urgency at the present.

If the reader finds the repetition of the warnings to be nearly unbearable it is wise to consider that this is due to the mercy of our Creator. He wishes to give every man a chance to turn from sin to righteousness. Still, there comes a time when the wages of sin must be collected. Israel was at that point.

**Hosea 10:1 Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.**

Israel was an empty vine as far as bringing forth fruit to the honor and glory of God. They had brought forth fruit, but that fruit was used to build altars for the worship of the false gods and idols that God hated. The altar God had stressed was the one in Jerusalem. These upon which the nation was spending it's time and possessions were forbidden.

Any nation that places it's priorities on either materialism or idolatry will find it's glory fading. It may momentarily thrive. Tomorrow will be different.

**Hosea 10:2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.**

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Israel had not completely forgotten that Jehovah existed. What they had done was to make an attempt to share their affections between Him and the golden calves. As a result of these divided loyalties God was ready to disown them and let them go their way to destruction. The altars and images would be destroyed or carried away.

Hosea 10:3 For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?

The kings which they had so desired had been allowed. The problem was that every king had been evil. There had not been a righteous one in the list. The people had no respect for their king. God had reached the point of forsaking them. The situation was even more serious than they realized.

Hosea 10:4 They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

Their kings and princes had lied to them and had tried to make covenants with Egypt and with Assyria. The use of lies to their own subjects and to the two powerful nations neighboring them had left them in the same condition as a farmer would be who had cultivated his ground and found that the crop produced was one with deadly poison, such as hemlock was known to be.

Hosea 10:5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.

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Those of the northern kingdom would be thrown into a panic when they found that their precious golden calves were reduced to powerless pieces of metal. The priests who officiated at the worship services of those idols would mourn, along with the people, when the glory had departed.

**Hosea 10:6 It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.**

Note that the singular is used here. “It” was to be carried into Assyria as a present to the warrior kings of that nation. There were two of these calves, but the one at Bethel was probably the one most prized. There were no doubt dozens or hundreds of smaller images which were modeled after the large ones.

The name Bethel means “house of God.” It later became known as Bethaven, which means “house of vanity or emptiness. Israel would come to the place where Israel would come to realize that what they thought had been wise guidance from their leaders had actually been a prelude to destruction of the nation.

**Hosea 10:7 As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.**

The human king which they had so fanatically desired would be as helpless as a piece of foam upon the waves. He would last but for a moment.

**Hosea 10:8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall**

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say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.

The high places were elevations where the site of empty vanities, such as golden calves, which would be replaced by thorns and thistles as the people were captured and removed to Assyria. Those who worshiped the false gods would be crying out for the mountains to fall on them. They were not the only ones who would make that cry. The book of Revelation tells us those who have fought against the Lord will utter those same thoughts and words when they face the wrath of Him whom they have despised.

Hosea 10:9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.

Was the wickedness of the nation something which had only recently been noticeable? Hardly! They had sinned in such manner from the time when the tribe of Benjamin was nearly extinguished as a result of homosexual desires resulting in a civil war among the tribes. This continuous disrespect for God and His laws over the years had placed them in an inexcusable position.

Hosea 10:10 It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.

The two furrows which were being plowed were the two terrible sins which had been embraced since the time of the war at Gibeah. One of the furrows was the demand



for a king other than Jehovah. The other was the practice of idolatry. Both the rulers and the people were guilty, but the people would despise the rulers when they found the fruit which came up from the two furrows which were being plowed.

Hosea 10:11 And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.

The people of the northern kingdom of Ephraim were just like ox which was used to tread out the kernels from the chaff on the threshing floor. They wished to eat the kernels as they moved along. God was ready to place a harness on their neck and let them plow in much greater labor.

Notice here that Judah is included in this warning. She had not progressed quite as rapidly as had Ephraim, but she was most definitely headed for the same end.

Hosea 10:12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

Do you wish to reap blessings from God? Then sow in righteous actions. Get busy and break up the ground which God has placed in your hands. But be extremely careful that what you sow in that ground is righteousness. Otherwise the crop will be as poisonous as hemlock.

Hosea 10:13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of

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**lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.**

Israel had failed to follow that advice. They had plowed and sown wickedness. As a result they were to reap misery. They had feasted on lies. They would harvest the fruit of lies, which are such things as violence and murder. This had come about because of their determination to trust in the might of men rather than in the wisdom and power of the Lord.

**Hosea 10:14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.**

There was to be complete confusion among the people. Their confidence in the works and wisdom of men would come tumbling down with the walls and gates of their fortresses. They were to be defeated by Shalmanazzer. In the process their mothers and children would be killed by dashing them against the rocks. This was a terrible thought, but some of the same kinds of hideous atrocities are used in warfare today.

**Hosea 10:15 So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.**

How was it that Bethel did this to Israel? It was because Bethel was the site of idolatry and of following the wisdom of human kings rather than that of the Most High God.

The idols would be carried away to Babylon, and the line of human kings would end.

## *Chapter 11*

The book of Hosea is not a happy one. It speaks of betrayal and resulting captivity. The lesson is just as apt today as it was when it was first penned. God had done everything possible to lead His people into happiness and prosperity, both material and spiritual. They have failed to respond properly to that great love. Assyria lies just ahead.

**Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.**

God first called His people when He selected Abraham and appointed him as “father of the faithful.” He called again when His people had been captivated in the land of Egypt. At those early times His people could be compared to a small child whose parents were needed to take them by the hand and guide them.

**Hosea 11:2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.**

As the representatives of Jehovah called for Israel to walk in the ways of righteousness, the people turned away from their advice and chose to place their lives under the nurture of the graven images of Baal. What a horrible choice this was!

**Hosea 11:3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.**

God offered to lead them gently by the arm just as a loving parent would hold to the arm of his child in

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crossing a busy street. This did not result in the honor which should have been given to the Lord. They failed to recognize the prosperity they enjoyed as having come from Him.

Hosea 11:4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

They were not treated as beasts of burden who were placed in a harness. They had been led like a child that is allowed a certain degree of freedom as it walks at the end of a tether cord which draws him along close to the parent.

The yoke they had borne before God began to lead them was harsh and bitter. God took that kind of yoke away and led them with manna and other blessings.

Hosea 11:5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt, and the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

This verse has been the center of a sizable disagreement among students of the Bible. There are those who contend that since verse eleven includes Egypt with Assyria as places in which men trembled before they were returned to their houses, this verse should be taken literally and tells of some who fled to Egypt when others were taken captive to Assyria. Others oppose this position by claiming that the use of the word "Egypt" was only figurative. Thus the bondage to be endured in Assyria was similar in nature to that which they suffered in Egypt.

We do know that the majority of the Israelites were taken to Assyria. Their kings in Canaan had been wicked.

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The Lord had turned from them and thus He was of little help. Now they would have a king such as they had demanded in the days of Jeroboam. However, that king would be Assyrian rather than Divine or Israeli.

**Hosea 11:6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.**

The sword which would abide on their cities was not to the “sword of the Lord.” It was to be the sword of their enemies. They would be consumed and devoured because of their insistence on directing their own steps by their own wisdom.

**Hosea 11:7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.**

The gentle cord of love with which the Lord had led His people failed to move them forward. They planted their feet and when the prophets advised them as to the will of God, they refused to accept His directions. They were far more ready to hear the call of the false prophets of Baal than the true prophets of God.

**Hosea 11:8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.**

What a pathetic question we have here! There appeared to be no way in which God could prevent the severe punishment of Israel. He wished to avoid

destroying them as the city of Admah and Zeboim had been destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah in the time of Lot.

**Hosea 11:9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.**

God determined that He would not utterly destroy every individual in Israel. The nation would be scattered and undefinable, but the remnant who were spiritually responsible would survive to serve again.

The “city” mentioned in this verse sets it up as being the centers of society. God would not leave the cities of Israel as devastated as he did in the cases of Sodom and Gomorrah. There WOULD BE a remnant who could return to His service.

**Hosea 11:10 They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.**

This remnant would some day walk after the will of the Father in heaven. When God roared for His people to come forth, there would be those who would hear and obey that call. They would hear Him from long distances.

**Hosea 11:11 They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD.**

Some would hear in Egypt. Others would hear in Assyria. From east, west, north and south they would come flying to Him to enjoy His blessings. The present

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writer believes this response was to take place in the Christian age as the gospel is preached to all nations.

Hosea 11:12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

The northern kingdom of Ephraim had exhausted God's mercy and were to suffer immediate punishment. The southern kingdom of Judah had not yet quite reached the point of no return. They were still walking with God to the degree that their punishment had not yet been determined. Some one hundred and thirty-five years later they would find a similar path, but it would be to Babylon rather than to Assyria.

Chapter 12

In this chapter Israel is shown the great difference in the effort their ancestor Jacob made to gain the blessings of the Lord and the sickly effort that Israel had made. Jacob had served fourteen years to obtain such blessings.

Hosea 12:1 Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

Feeding on wind is not very filling. This would have been particularly true with respect to the parching east wind that came off the Arabian desert in the area. Ephraim was heaping up lies and sure punishment for their future. They were playing Assyria and Egypt against one another. An agreement would be made with Assyria to be an ally. Then they would ship oil to Egypt, knowing all the time that neither of these nations would approve of Israel's arrangements with the other.

Hosea 12:2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

The southern kingdom of Judah has not been left out of the picture. Thus all of Ephraim and Judah were bent on following a way which God found hateful. They need not think that their independence from His commandments would be overlooked. They would be punished according to their waywardness. When the term "Jacob" was used it stood for Israel as a whole, including the northern and southern kingdoms.

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**Hosea 12:3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:**

Jacob had not been the most generous person in the world. At the time of his birth he had taken hold of the heel of Esau, supposedly in an effort to replace him as the firstborn. Later when Jacob was assigning the blessings to the various tribes, Jacob had used deception in gaining the blessings which would normally have been awarded to Esau.

Later he proved to be much more deserving as he sought a life of which Jehovah would approve.

**Hosea 12:4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us;**

On a later occasion Jacob wrestled with an angel to gain God's favor. He wept and begged for God's help, and finally received it. His persistence had impressed the Lord to such extent that his name was even changed to Israel, which means "prince of God."

**Hosea 12:5 Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial.**

God had not forgotten that faith which Jacob displayed. It stood as a means of reminding God through the years that Jacob, or Israel, wished to serve him.

**Hosea 12:6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment and wait on thy God continually.**

It was time for Jacob's descendants, the Israel of Hosea's day, to turn from their despicable worship of idols to serve the Lord. They could depend upon mercy and judgment being dispersed properly, and in line with the holy character of the Lord if they would but serve Him with a true heart.

**Hosea 12:7 He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.**

Ephraim's attitude at the time Hosea was preaching was in dire need of correction. The word "merchant" was not complimentary. That nation had tried to take advantage of others through deception. It was like a merchant who has his scales rigged such that he can collect more than the price per item which he has advertised.

**Hosea 12:8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.**

Ephraim was ready with an answer. After all had he not prospered? That must certainly be proof he was not a sinner. He had worked hard, and clearly he deserved everything he had received. Surely the Lord must have been in approval.

**Hosea 12:9 And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.**

Now God returns his own reply to the position Israel had taken. He had been with them from the time at which

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they had been led out of Egyptian bondage. As a reminder of the tabernacles which they had lived in during the wilderness wanderings, God had commanded them to observe the feast of tabernacles. The severity of life which had been theirs in those days could well be repeated. Just as their fathers were dwellers in tabernacles, they might find themselves wanderers and separated from their homes in Canaan.

Hosea 12:10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.

It was not as if God had left them without instruction as to His will. He had spoken to them through more than half a dozen prophets, warning them of what could happen. He had caused some to see visions declaring His power. Types and shadows had been presented again and again. They had no valid excuse for setting their affections on graven images made by the hands of men.

Hosea 12:11 Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

Gilead was a land east of the Jordan river and was known for the balm it produced as a healing agent. Ephraim was in a similar situation as Gilead would have been if they had producing poison and offering it as the balm of Gilead.

God's people were sacrificing calves at the very location where they should have remembered His own loving care on their behalf. Their altars were no more than piles of rock in the way of cultivating the fields which belonged to their Lord.

Hosea 12:12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.

Their ancestor Jacob had diligently served for those fourteen long years to get his wife Rachel. He had kept sheep which was not the most prestigious occupation for one with his abilities. He was remembered by his Lord.

Hosea 12:13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.

By the prophet Moses, Israel was led out of Egypt. It is likely that Joshua is the prophet by which they were settled in the land.

Hosea 12:14 Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

Even after these precious blessings, Ephraim had demanded a king like the nations around them; and they had worshiped Baal through the golden calves. God did not find it pleasant to leave his guilt upon his soul. The reproach which he had shown for Jehovah was now to be returned to fall upon himself. He would be taken into captivity.

Chapter 13

At one time the tribe of Ephraim had been highly exalted. That had changed. And with that change came God's condemnation. There was to be punishment, but God would ultimately claim a victory over sin through the resurrection of fleshly Israel in a new spiritual kingdom.

Hosea 13:1 When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.

There was a time in which Ephraim held a high position in the sight and hearing of the rest of the tribes. When Ephraim spoke others listened! That was when Ephraim had humbled itself before the voice of the Lord. When man humbles himself God will exalt him. When man exalts himself, God will humble him. The situation with Ephraim was so serious that it could be spoken of the oncoming death of the tribe.

Hosea 13:2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

It would seem that lack of appreciation for the blessings of Jehovah would be about as low as one could get in the eyes of the Lord. However, Ephraim had not only deserted the Lord; they had called for human kings and had practiced idolatry, worshiping false gods in His place.

The kissing of the calves refers to their displays of affection for the golden calves which had been set up for their adoration. Some were going so far as to walk up and

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kiss the calves, or perhaps blow kisses in the direction of the calves to gain their aid.

These images were merely the outcome of men's craftsmanship. They had no power whatsoever to bless those who kissed them. There is strong reason to believe that smaller images were being distributed among the people and were being used as some do today when they carry crosses which they kiss. It is the Son in heaven who is to receive our affection. Kissing a metal cross is useless.

**Hosea 13:3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.**

Fleshly Israel was destined to disappear. The Lord used several metaphors to describe the change which was to take place.

1. They would be like a morning cloud which disappears when the sun becomes bright.

2. They would be like the dew which lasts only for a short time and then evaporates.

3. They would be like the chaff which the wind blows away from the threshing floor.

4. They would be like the smoke which comes from a chimney and then is seen no more.

How many figures would God have to give to make His intentions any clearer than this?

**Hosea 13:4 Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.**

There was good reason for Ephraim to remember that it was Jehovah who had been with them from the time

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they were delivered from bondage in Egypt. On Mount Sinai He had instructed them with no uncertainty that they were to worship Him and Him only. They were to honor no other so-called gods.

Hosea 13:5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

God had not just known them in the release from Egypt, He had known them through the wilderness wandering when there was drastic need for food, water and guidance. He had faithfully supported them through those difficult years. He could still care for them if they would place their love and trust on Him. This however had not be true.

Hosea 13:6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.

After having been led to the promised land and established in that truly excellent pasture, where they could feed on the fat of a rich and productive feast of blessings, they had allowed themselves to become exalted. They had forgotten the providential care which He had so lovingly given them. A lesson was not far ahead.

Hosea 13:7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them:

The prophet Daniel had a vision in which he saw the people of Israel dominated by one nation after another. Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome would treat them as would wild beasts.

Hosea 13:8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

The lion tears it's prey into pieces. The leopard waits quietly until it can spring suddenly upon it's victim. The bear who has seen it's cub in danger is apt to become very violent. God will take on these characteristics as He has reached the limit of His patience.

Hosea 13:9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.

There was really no need for the upcoming death of the northern kingdom. If it had remained loyal to God all would have been well. Since it had been ungrateful and had turned to human solutions and the worship of idols it could be accused of suicide. The only remedy was to turn to Jehovah. He could help. None other could do so.

Hosea 13:10 I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

Those judges of the people who cried out for God to provide a human king such as other nations had were now unable to provide an answer to the coming chastisement. Their cities were going to be taken by the Assyrian army. Their kings would prove impotent. The only one who could help had been blasphemed. Did they expect Him now to protect them from their fate?

Hosea 13:11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.

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This verse is not just talking about Jeroboam I whom God allowed to become their first king, nor Hoshea, who was the king when Assyria conquered them. It is the monarchy ruled by human kings which God allowed them and then removed. Human government can not solve the eternal problems of mankind. Only the Lord in heaven can see from beginning to end.

**Hosea 13:12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.**

The meaning of this verse is not that the sin of Ephraim had been hidden from the sight and memory of Jehovah. The meaning is that God had recorded those sins. They would be judged at the proper time. Although Ephraim had forgotten the righteousness of their God, He had not forgotten the sins they had committed against Him.

**Hosea 13:13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.**

Ephraim was given that name because He was expected to be doubly fruitful. Instead, he had proven to be fruitless. When a woman with child enters into the labor of childbirth, she expects to soon see the infant which she has carried for those nine months. God expected Ephraim to bring forth fruit to Him. He had not.

The figure changes and Ephraim becomes the son who is about to be born. He is unwise in that he did not desire to leave the womb and live for God.

**Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O**

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death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Here is a note of glad joy. Though Ephraim must die, God is to provide a ransom from the power of the grave. That ransom will overcome death. There can be but one explanation of these words. Jesus Christ, the Son of God paid the ransom. It was through His death that a sinner may live again. Ephraim might die, but God had the power to bring Ephraim back to Him in the spiritual kingdom of God's Son.

This one hopeful note in an entire chapter of condemnation comes as a shock. Yet that is the style of many warnings within the Holy Word. All is doom if God is forgotten. If God is loved and obeyed, joy replaces the horror of punishment.

Hosea 13:15 Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

The east wind which will come from the wilderness to dry up and land is the coming attack of Assyria which lies to the east of the northern kingdom. When that wind moves through the land, the desolation will be abominable. The pleasures and the treasures of which Ephraim has been so proud, will be ruined or stolen.

Hosea 13:16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

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That proud people who had forgotten all which God had done for them would find their self exaltation to become shame. War would take her able men with the blade of the sword. Those who were not killed might be taken to serve as slaves in Assyria. Women would be butchered to kill both themselves and the babes in the womb. Those young children who were unable to work as productive slaves would be killed by dashing them against the rocky cliffs.

All of this is a part of the labor pains was the death of the old fleshly seed of Abraham was to give way to the new spiritual nation whose King was to enthroned in heaven at the right hand of Jehovah.

## Chapter 14

This last chapter of the book of Hosea is a ray of sunshine in a very dismal picture. Israel had betrayed the Lord after having received an abundance of blessings. She had demanded a human king like the surrounding nations. She had turned her affections to Baal and his images and was worshiping that false god in immorality of the lowest form.

This final chapter speaks of repentance on the part of Israel and forgiveness on the part of God of love. If only such a change of heart could be seen worldwide in these latter days! Let each of us do our part, and pray that our influence may reach out to others in order that His will might be done on earth as it is in heaven.

**Hosea 14:1 O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.**

Hosea speaks for Jehovah. Israel has shamefully departed from the Word of God. She is to be punished for her disloyalty. For the time being the forces of Satan have caused her to stumble and fall. There is but one remedy. That is to pick herself up from the filth into which she has descended and turn back from idolatry to praise and magnify the Lord.

**Hosea 14:2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.**

She must approach God with words of penitence. There must be a confession of sinfulness and a request for cleansing and approval. Israel must be ready to cease

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kissing the calves of Baal and start honoring God with the fruit of their lips. A new day was ahead if God was allowed to lead and Israel was delighted to hear Him and obey from the heart.

Hosea 14:3 Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

Asshur is identical to Assyria. They are about to go into captivity in that land. That will certainly not save them from their iniquity. Egypt was known for her war horses. God would not save them through the accumulation of military might. They were beginning to learn that idols which had been carved out by their own hands had no power whatsoever.

It was only through the Lord that the wayward children of Israel could find the help of a true Father. The implications of this verse reach much farther than the Israel of that day. Both the Jewish and the Gentile world are invited to become the children of God in this Christian age. The divine blessings are there for all who are willing to place their lives in His hand. Even though the sins of Israel had been unbelievable, they could be forgiven through the mercy of the Heavenly Father.

Hosea 14:4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

Israel had been deathly sick of soul. God's anger had been built up to the point where His wrath was ready to be poured out upon them. But, it was still possible that His anger could be turned away and His love allowed to shine through.

Hosea 14:5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

“If” Israel would repent of her sins the promise was that God would bless her as in times of old. The lily is a beautiful and proud flower. When the dew of God’s favor fell upon His people, it would be as refreshing as the morning dew as the sun causes it to sparkle.

The roots of Lebanon were planted deep in the earth. A plant with that type of roots could withstand much abuse and still flourish.

Hosea 14:6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

The spreading of the branches tells us the influence of the nation would reach out in all directions. The world would be made both beautiful and aromatic as Jehovah’s truth spread throughout all the nations of the entire globe.

Hosea 14:7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

If Israel returned to dwell under the protective shadow of the Almighty, it would return to health. It would grow luxuriously. It’s fragrance would make those who came into contact with it a blessing to the nations.

Hosea 14:8 Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and

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**observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.**

Ephraim, which had been so deathly sick with idolatry would grow strong and sturdy like a fir tree. It would return to the condition which caused it to have a name which meant “fruitful.” It would bring forth the fruit of righteousness as persons of all nations followed it’s spiritual example.

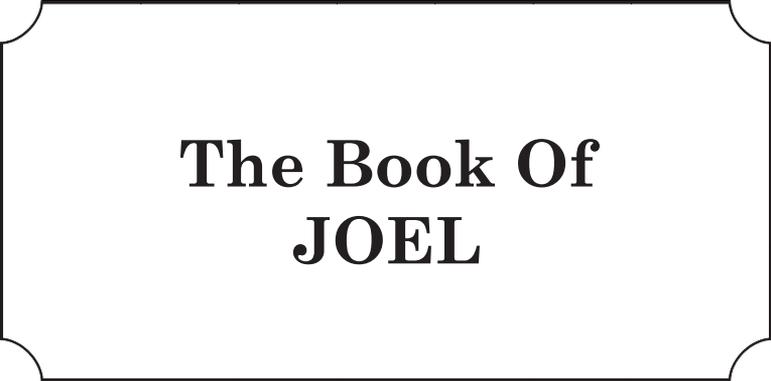
**Hosea 14:9 Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.**

Solomon declared that the beginning of wisdom is in the fear of the Lord. Ephraim had not shown such fear. She had been foolish. The need was to hear and obey. His ways are right. Those who walk in those ways will reach fulfilment. Those who refuse and find pride and lust more attractive than the promises of God will fall into the snare of Satan and be destroyed. **CHOOSE YE THIS DAY WHOM YE WILL SERVE!!**

A Final Note:

It is the new spiritual Israel which is seen in this picture of hope. There is no distinction between fleshly Jew nor Gentile in the present day Israel of God. Those who hear and obey become one in Christ Jesus. He is the husband and the church is His bride. “Give Him your broken life, so marred by sin. He will create anew, make whole again.”





**The Book Of  
JOEL**



# *Introduction To Joel*

## **The Author:**

Verse 1 tells us that Joel was the son of Pethuel. He concentrated his efforts in the southern part of Israel, in Judah and Jerusalem. He was plain spoken and through the Holy Spirit of Jehovah He predicted precious rewards for the faithful, and inescapable punishment for the wicked and rebellious.

He is quoted by Peter in the second chapter of Acts. In that passage He points to hope and joy ahead for those who love the Lord and keep His commandments. He seems to have been a person who appreciated the wonders of nature, and who did not hesitate to make use of such knowledge in his preaching.

## **The Date of Writing:**

It is somewhat difficult to determine a precise date for the writing of the book of Joel. It is probable that although it follows Hosea in the Bible, it very likely preceded that book in historical time. We are not far off if we suggest a date of B.C. 770.

There were a number of dangers facing the people of the Lord. Some were from surrounding nations. Others were difficulties which the people had brought upon themselves by their disregard for the law of Jehovah.

## **Hope in the Midst of Difficulties:**

A locust plague had fallen upon the land. This had

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resulted in a food shortage. This was magnified by a drought which affected not only the food supplies, but sacrifices of meat and drink offerings. Even the drunkards were unable to find the desired quantities of alcoholic beverages. Joel called out for the people to repent of their sinful thoughts and deeds in the hope that the Lord would remove some of the hardships which they were suffering.

Chapter 1

Joel 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

The words written in this book are not those of the prophet. They came to him from the Lord of heaven and earth. He is the son of Pethuel, but far more important is his allegiance to God.

Joel 1:2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

A call is issued for those who are older in years to search their memories to see if they can recall any situation which matched the seriousness of the conditions they were now suffering. It goes even farther. Could they even recall their parents or grandparents tell of such horrors.

Joel 1:3 Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

The present generation is commanded to tell their children about it, and then see that the grandchildren and great grandchildren are informed. The lesson being taught by the Lord was one which needed to pass down through centuries. It has done just that as we read the book of Joel.

Joel 1:4 That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the

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**locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.**

There are differences of opinion as to whether these are stages in development of the same species of locusts, or whether they refer to four different species. Whichever, the main point is that these pests have left the land barren and people are starving. Poverty and pain are seen in every direction.

**Joel 1:5 Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.**

A drunkard that has been deprived of his liquor is most pathetic. He begs for help and in some instances will steal or do injury to others in order to secure that which he needs to continue his habit.

The drunkard consumes liquids that have fermented and produced alcohol. The drinkers of wine are those who were using the juice while it was still sweet. The vineyards were an important part of the supply for the tables of the Israelites. The conditions were extremely serious.

**Joel 1:6 For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion.**

Is this nation which is under consideration one made up of insects, or of bordering nations? The description appears to focus upon the terrible devastation which the invaders are able to bring about. Lions are meat eaters. These invaders have teeth which allow them to



consume both vegetables and animals, including men. A locust plague seems to fit the entire picture better than a human invasion.

**Joel 1:7 He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.**

Figs and raisins were also a major source of food for the Israelites. The picture in this verse fits the locust plague better than it does a human invasion. The fig trees have been left without leaves, or even bark. They glisten in the sunlight.

**Joel 1:8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.**

The word which has been translated as “virgin” in this verse can refer to a young woman who is engaged to be married, or who has just been married. The loss of her chosen mate leaves her weeping bitter tears. Israel was doing that.

**Joel 1:9 The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD’S ministers, mourn.**

The word “meat” here can refer to any solid food, while the drink offering is the new wine. The priests, who would normally eat from the choicest of the harvest, find that the people have nothing to offer. They mourn for both the people and for themselves.

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

There have been many days of the Lord. Sometimes they are beautiful days. Many times they are judgments man has brought upon himself as a result of ignoring the will of their Maker. The one spoken of here is obviously not going to be pleasant. What a wonderful world man might enjoy if he had never tasted of the apple of sin!

Those of the readers who have taught school are well aware of the fact that children cannot be allowed to get away with matters like shooting paperwads. The next step may well be pouring ink on the dress of the young lady sitting in front of them, etc.

**Joel 1:16 Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God?**

The “meat” of course was the solid food. With the disappearance of the food supplies happiness and joy followed in it’s footsteps. Israel was in a state of shock. How could Jehovah treat them like this? They had great difficulty in realizing that the miseries were for the purpose of turning them around, away from wickedness and toward righteousness.

The temple of God was the last place Israel would have expected to find shortages. It was hard to believe that God would allow the harvests to be so thin that it was impossible to allow sacrifices to be made.

**Joel 1:17 The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.**

The groaning continues to increase. The seed does not germinate before it decays. The motivation for repairing barns is just not there. Even if the barns were repaired, there would be nothing to place in them.



**Joel 1:18 How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.**

Even the dumb animals mourn along with the hungry humans. Sheep do not require the amount of grass cattle need, but even then they can not find enough to remain alive.

**Joel 1:19 O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.**

The most self centered of men can be observed to call for the Lord to hear when they find food and clothing disappearing with no hope of replacements.

Those who have experienced severe drought have some beginning understanding of what the humans and their livestock were suffering. This, however, sounds more serious than which most of the humans in developed countries in the twenty-first century have seen. It would be a new sight for most who read the words I am writing to observe. The Lord intended for these proud Israelites to make a connection between righteous living and physical welfare.

**Joel 1:20 The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.**

We can almost hear the groaning of the domestic livestock, and also the wild animals of the fields and forests as they cry out for something to eat and something to drink. This set of conditions should have eventually brought men to their senses such that they would depend

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upon the strength and wisdom of God to provide for their needs. Unfortunately there are many humans who are unbelievably conceited and are persuaded they would rather die than pray!

Chapter 2

Joel 2:1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;

Blowing the trumpet was a means of getting attention. At times it announced a triumph. Other times it called for an assembly of the people. This time it was for the purpose of sounding an alarm.

An army was prepared to invade from the North. Jehovah was very unhappy with the behavior of Israel and was about to send this enemy for the purpose of bringing the Israelites to repentance. There would be great trembling as the people began to see God's wrath poured out upon them.

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

Darkness is often used to speak of condition which will lead to fear and confusion. In the present case, the chaos would be caused by a force coming upon Israel from the north. It would be stronger than any such force in the past, and for generations afterward there would be no other as disastrous.

We now have come to a basic problem of understanding in the book of Joel. Is this invading army a plague of locusts? Is it an army from Assyria? Is it an army from Babylonia. Some say that there were two armies involved

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here; that one was an army of locusts, and the other was an army of Assyrians.

If the last of these suggestions is correct, the locust plague was symbolic of the invasion by the Assyrian army.

Your present commentator believes there was a real locust plague, which pointed toward not only an invasion by the Assyrians, but also later by the Babylonians, and finally by the army of Satan at the time of the final judgment day.

**Joel 2:3 A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.**

This first part of the description appears to be primarily related to the actual locust plague. Before the locusts invaded the land was fruitful and beautiful, and could be compared to the Garden of Eden. After the plague had passed the land was barren and desolate

**Joel 2:4 The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.**

This verse leaves the impression that the invaders look like horses, and also move like horses. This verse is used by some to say the locust army is only symbolic in an attempt to present the horror of what was to happen when a real army invaded.

**Joel 2:5 Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a**

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flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

As this invading army moves across the countryside the noise produced would be like that of horses hooves and chariot wheels rumbling across the land.

Joel 2:6 Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.

The locusts would swarm over the land like military battalions. The result of their appearance would leave the Israelites grieving and very frightened.

Joel 2:7 They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks:

Note that this army runs “like” mighty men. They climb the walls “like” men of war. They march forward in unison like a well disciplined army would move. They will be extremely difficult to hinder in their progress.

Joel 2:8 Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

This is an army sent by God to chastise the nation of Israel for their rebellion and lack of faith. Until God’s purposes in using them is completed, they will be impossible to stop. They will not fight with one another. The worst thing that can happen to an army is to begin infighting. This locust army will not fall victim to that deadly error.

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**Joel 2:9 They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.**

The invaders would move through the city of Jerusalem at their will. They would scale the walls of the city and enter the houses through the doors and windows.

**Joel 2:10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:**

Can the present reader sense a change in the nature of God's army at this point in the chapter? It is certainly true that a plague of locusts could dim the light of the sun, moon and stars, but we can feel that God is waiting for His people to repent in the face of the invaders.

**Joel 2:11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?**

Now the Lord seems to stand in the forefront of the army and challenge Israel to match His power. He is obviously capable of punishing His people until they come to their senses and repent of their folly. If they think they can challenge Him the consequence will be catastrophic for them.

**Joel 2:12 Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:**

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God now reveals that the agony which they have brought upon themselves can be lessened if they will truly repent of their sins. This will require fasting, weeping and deep felt sorrow.

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

The tearing of their clothing was a recognized way of showing grief. However, God declared that this was insufficient. Unless the repentance went deeper than the rending of their clothing, they could expect a continuation of their chastisement. If, on the other hand, they truly repented of their disobedience, they would find God ready to turn their punishment away.

God does not need to repent of sins which He has committed. He is sinless. But, His repentance is a change in the manner in which He deals with Israel. If the nation decides to align themselves on His side, they will find that He is anxious to change His own plan of action. He likes to be merciful and gracious.

Joel 2:14 Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

The agricultural situation had become so serious that the people were starving and there was nothing for them to offer as meat and drink offerings. If they would reverse their independent attitudes and accept His will, He, being gracious might well allow them enough blessings to satisfy their hunger and also offer the meat and drink offerings.

Joel 2:15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

There was a need to call the people together and make it clear to them that their blessings were dependent upon their willingness to love and obey their Creator and Sustainer.

Joel 2:16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

Some have used this information as support for the view that this was after the exile in Babylon, and the congregation was depleted to the point that they could all assemble in the area of the temple. That is not a necessary conclusion. The news of gathering of as many as could congregate in the city of Jerusalem would be rapidly spread throughout the entire society.

It is important that the gathering could include old men and young, infant children, newly married couples, etc. Everyone was welcome to participate.

Joel 2:17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

The area spoken of here was very special to the Israelites. The porch was the porch of the temple. This area between the temple and the altar was felt to be very

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sacred. The priests and ministers of the Lord viewed this as a most solemn occasion. Even the prayer which they were to offer was worded for them. They were to cry out for help that they not be ruled by heathen who did not respect Jehovah and who would mock them, asking them why their God was not taking care of them.

**Joel 2:18 Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.**

The logic here is that if Israel would love and obey the Lord, He would respond by defending them and protecting both His people and the land upon which they dwelt.

**Joel 2:19 Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:**

If the people would show their affection for Him, He would do the same for them. He would see that the land produced sufficient harvest that all might be satisfied and happy. Then the nations surrounding them would give them the respect which should be earned and would be offered by those who mocked them.

**Joel 2:20 But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.**

Repentance on the part of His people would result in the defeat of the invading northern army. The things

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mentioned here could have applied to both the human armies and the locust hordes. The east sea would have been the Dead Sea, and the utmost sea would have been the Mediterranean. The stink from the decaying insects or human bodies would have differed very little.

The point is that the miseries caused by the invasion of the enemies would be relieved. The great things which the enemies had done would not have been great from the point of view of Israel. They would have been the plunder of the land and the massacre of the Israelites.

Joel 2:21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.

When all was said and done, the great things would not be those done by the invaders. They would be those done by the Lord in freeing His people from the persecution. Both the land and the people would have an occasion for happiness and rejoicing.

The reader will note the tremendous change in the condition of the people of God. They are freed from persecution by the enemies and are blessed bountifully with the productivity of the land.

Joel 2:22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

Even the animals, both domestic and wild, would find all they needed to eat. The fig trees and the grape vines would be loaded with fruit.

You see, dear friends, God provides for man in ways not fully comprehended. The only way the people could make the connection between their repentance and the



productivity of the land was through the use of fallible logic. They might have guessed that it was the finger of God which had changed their conditions, but when God declared plainly that this would take place, the guessing was not needed.

Joel 2:23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

God is able to control the amount of rainfall. There could be too much and the land could be flooded. There could be too little and drought would occur. When the people came to realize the importance of pleasing God, He would show His love for them by controlling the amount of rain which fell.

Joel 2:24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

The floors were those where the grain was beaten out of the husks. Those floors would become loaded with grain. The vats where the grape juice and the figs were kept would be running over.

Does all of this not remind the reader of the statement in the Lord's prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread?" It is from Him that all blessing flow.

Joe 2:25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

Remember now dear reader, our Lord is capable of both blessings and cursings. When we love and obey Him blessings are promised. When we ignore Him and place our affections on the world, curses follow. This may not be apparent immediately. It will definitely be apparent when the sheep and the goats are separated at the end.

Joel 2:26 And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

There is no reason for God's faithful to be ashamed at any time. Even the martyrs of the first centuries of Christianity were often able to go to their deaths praising the God of heaven. This life is not the end. There is endlessness ahead. When the sheep and the goats have been counted and separated, those who have praised Jehovah to the last breath will be proud they did so.

Joel 2:27 And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

It should have seemed clear to Israel at the time of their greatest persecution that their shame was due to their neglect of God. He would care for them, even to the point of death. There might well be pain, but there should be no shame.

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

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We have now come to one of the most well known passages in the entire Word of God. The emphasis changes from the invasion of locusts and heathen, to the long range blessing which God was ready to promise for the latter days.

A time was to come when there would be a very special outpouring of God's grace upon man. That time would be introduced by miracles which could only have been made possible by the Spirit of the Lord. The power of the Holy Spirit would come upon both young and old. It would come upon both men and women. There would be dreams and visions which proved the presence of God in a new age.

**Joel 2:29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.**

Take note of the word "afterward." Then that word is followed in this verse by "in those days." When the time of which these things came to pass, even the lowest of the servants would be included in the wonders which were to be manifested.

**Joel 2:30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.**

There would be sufficient evidence in both the heavens and the earth to prove that what was taking place was not the everyday happenings of the world of nature. These signs were the forerunners of revelation and of judgment. The Lord expected to be heard, and He expected to be obeyed.

**Joel 2:31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come.**

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At the time of Christ's death upon the cross, we find just such events as those pictured in this thirty-first verse. In the midst of the day, darkness covered the earth. We can understand that the moon would also have been turned red during the process.

Joel 2:32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

In the judgment, much would depend upon the reception the individual had given to the evidence which God made available. Those who responded positively to God's offers would be delivered from His wrath. Those who responded negatively would be condemned. The Word would go forth from Mount Zion in the city of Jerusalem unto all the world. This was all beginning to take place when Christ offered His teaching and His life that men might be saved from hell.

It seems wise now to place Peter's quote from these last few verse of present chapter where easy comparison can be made. Peter said Joel's predictions were beginning to be fulfilled when he preached the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost.

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

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## *Chapter 3*

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

Peter has informed us that what the people were seeing on the day of Pentecost after the death of Jesus Christ was “that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, and then had quoted from this second chapter.

Obviously the events which were happening at the time of Peter’s sermon were predicted by Joel. The signs and wonders which were being done at the time Peter spoke were directly associated with the freeing of Judah and Jerusalem from bondage. The freeing from Assyrian and Babylonian captivity had occurred long before Peter spoke these words. The gathering which Joel was predicting here was far more extensive than the return from Babylon. It seems that once again we have a prophecy with a double application. The return from Babylonian captivity was but a type of that which Peter was discussing.

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

The apostles were given the charge to go unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. It is true that the Jews had been scattered into many nations and God intended to invite them to the freedom from sin which was made possible by the sacrifice of the Son of God. It is also true that the fleshly descendants

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of Abraham were not the only persons to be gathered to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which means “Jehovah’s judgment.”

Joel 3:3 And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.

God’s chosen people (Christians) in these latter days have been objects of scorn in the eyes of infidelic people. They have been evaluated as fools. They have been fiercely abused. The selling of a girl for wine and the trading of a boy for the services of a prostitute are intended to show what the world thinks of the family of God.

Joel 3:4 Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompense? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head;

Was there any way that Tyre and Sidon, or Sodom and Gomorrah, or a host of other cities could ever repay the Lord for the damage they had done to those He loved? The question answers itself. No!! If such an attempt to repay God for the abuses had been made, He would have scorned it.

Joe 3:5 Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things:

Time after time God’s chosen, both fleshly Israel and spiritual Israel, have be devalued. The unbelievers have stolen the possessions of God’s people. At one time they

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were taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Later they were taken from the spiritual temple which is the Church of Christ. The camera swings back and forth from the Mosaic age to the Christian.

**Joel 3:6 The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border.**

In the days of Roman and Grecian power, God's people were actually sold as slaves. In the Christian age His children have been scattered and killed as a result of their loyalty to Jehovah.

**Joel 3:7 Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head:**

As the nations are gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, justice will be administered. God is the perfect Judge. He will see that the wicked are punished and that the righteous are rewarded.

**Joel 3:8 And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it.**

The queen of Sheba, who came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, was from this land of the Sabeans in Arabia. Very frankly, I do not understand this verse. On the surface it sounds as if God was approving the selling of the children of the nations who had sold Israel's children into slavery in Arabia. This does not seem to fit the way

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in which God normally operates. However, the fact that I have difficulty in understanding the verse does not mean it is uninspired. Perhaps the reader can discover the spiritual application of the words.

One thing is most certain. Those who had made slaves of the children of the Israelites would reap as they had sown!

Joel 3:9 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up:

A tremendously important announcement is now to be made. A battle is in the future. God's faithful would be found on one side. The Gentiles (those not of spiritual Israel) would be the enemy. If the enemies of God's faithful were determined to do battle, let them come!

Joel 3:10 Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

This command is quite the opposite of that given in Isaiah 2:4.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Jesus disciples are expected to follow in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace. Their purpose is to turn swords into plowshares rather than to turn plowshares into swords. We must therefore understand these present words

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to tell of the gigantic spiritual battle which is ongoing through much of the Christian dispensation. The heathen unbelievers are to be challenged to do what they will in their determination to defeat the purposes of God, Christ and the soldiers of the army of God.

**Joel 3:11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD.**

The wicked are to enlist the most powerful they have and face up to the saints who have put on the gospel armor. They will find they are faced with an impossible task. They cannot win.

**Joel 3:12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.**

These are the words of Jehovah Himself, as He speaks through the pen of Joel. The valley of Jehoshaphat is the "valley of judgment." It will not be a very pleasant place for the wicked in that final battle.

**Joel 3:13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.**

In this great battle the angels of God will reap the harvest. The chaff will be separated from the wheat and will be cast into the fire. The wheat which God prizes so highly will be gathered up and protected eternally by the power of the Almighty.

**Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.**

Oh yes, there will be multitudes colliding in that valley of judgment. The day of the Lord will determine their destiny.

Does this verse imply that the end of the world was in the immediate future when Joel wrote this book. No! It means that during this Christian age every person of the age of accountability is fighting the good fight of faith and is being observed by the Judge of all the earth. There are multitudes involved in that battle. May the BEST win.

**Joel 3:15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.**

There was a time of abnormal darkness when Jesus Christ died on the cross. For the moment it seemed that the kingdom of Satan had won the day. That was as far from the truth as one can get. It was through His death on the cross that Jesus became the Saviour of those who will follow Him into the battle in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

**Joel 3:16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.**

When the Son of God died on the cross of Calvary and later commanded his apostle to preach the gospel to the entire world, beginning in Jerusalem, the words of Joel were galvanized into action. Satan is still not utterly defeated, but the battle is still unfinished.

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Joel 3:17 So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

The earthly Jerusalem in which the Lord was pinned to the cross was but a type of the Jerusalem spoken of here. This is the New Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven when the last battle is closed out. When that happens the New Jerusalem will not be plagued with evil men and women ever again.

Joel 3:18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

This is God's way of explaining to finite man just how wonderful that new age will be. The blessings will be unimaginable. Since men will be righteous, every desire will be attended to. Does the reader not understand. That is to be expected. But, if he or she is faithful unto death, the understanding will come.

Joel 3:19 Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

Egypt was a long time enemy of Israel from the west. Edom was the same from the east. They represent the foes of Israel in that decisive war of the ages. They will pass into obscurity. The violence they caused will be turned

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back upon their own heads as they are turned back in the valley of decision.

**Joel 3:20 But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.**

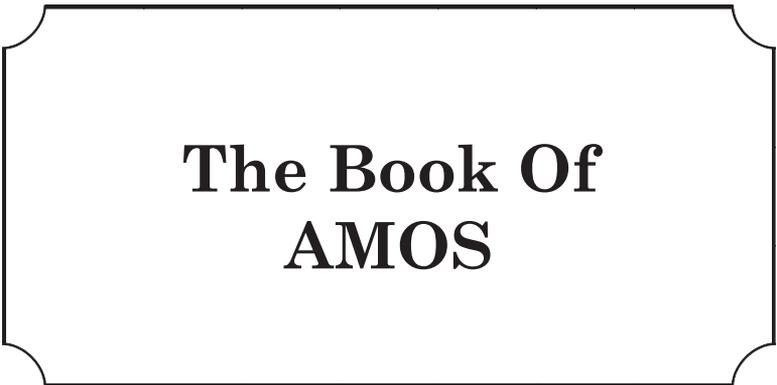
While the enemies of God's people reap the harvest of the seed which they have sown, God's faithful in spiritual Israel will shine as the stars of the heavens from generation to generation. God knows His own.

**Joel 3:21 For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.**

God's chosen nation of spiritual Israel will have repented of their sins. They will have glorified Him and entered into the New Jerusalem. That is the site of the New Mount Zion where God rules eternally.

But let the reader not deceive himself. There is a battle. Jesus fought it. His followers must fight it. Only when they have won will the gates of the New Jerusalem swing open for them to enter.





**The Book Of  
AMOS**



# *Introduction To Amos*

## **The Author:**

Amos was from the town of Tekoa, located in the southern kingdom of Judah. Tekoa was about six miles south of Bethlehem. This was amidst some of the less desirable land in the entire promised land. Much of it was grown up in thickets and underbrush.

Amos described himself as neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. He labeled himself a herdsman who fed upon sycamore fruit. There is some disagreement as to his possessions. He is seen by some as owning a flock of sheep and cultivating fruit of the sycamore tree. Others see him as having been raised in semi poverty and wandering with a small number of sheep, while feeding on wild sycamore fruit similar to figs.

He possessed a bold and very outspoken manner of speech. After being commanded to go from Tekoa to the northern kingdom city of Bethel, he did not hesitate to point out vividly the sins of the elite society which surrounded the king.

## **The Date:**

Amos tells us that he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jereboam II of Israel. Uzziah ruled from 792 to 740 B.C. Jereboam II ruled from 790 to 749 B.C. This would limit the time to between 790 and 749 B.C. He states another fact which does not help

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us much. It was two years before the earthquake. Since earthquakes are not uncommon in the area this could have occurred over a number of years within the above range. Many of the commentators feel that it was fairly late in this suggested range, perhaps around 760 to 755 B.C.

The Background:

The prophecy was written in a time of relative prosperity in Israel. In the past the land had been dominated by the Syrians. Then the Assyrians conquered the Syrians. They were not as demanding as the Syrians. Israel gained control of some of the trade routes. This allowed them to establish financial security, plus the material luxuries which would accompany such wealth.

Wealth often leads to independence of thought, along with a degradation of moral values. The rich become richer and the gap between the rich and the poor becomes larger. If one has a surplus of the better side of life, why depend upon God in heaven to give more? Greed, sexual pleasures and impiety of other sorts became prevalent. Religious ceremonies were divorced from true spirituality. Idolatry became more attractive than worship of Jehovah. Baal worship and the worship of golden calves promised more licentious satisfactions than did the keeping of the law of Jehovah.

The Targets of the Prophecy:

The book begins with a description of the kinds of sins being practiced by the neighboring nations, including Syria, Philistia, Edom, Moab and Ammon. It then goes on to list those of both Israel in the north and Judah in the south of the promised land.

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When Amos finished his pronouncements of the voice of the Lord, there would be no excuse for misunderstanding the need for repentance. However, that does not mean such repentance was to follow. Just as Amos predicted, the nation was taken into captivity and reduced to bondservant status. This prepared the way for Amos to predict the coming of one from the line of David who would replace the older rule by the establishment of a new spiritual kingdom, overruled by the Son of God.

Outline of the Book of Amos:

- I. Sins of Israel's neighboring nations.
- II. Sins of northern Israel and southern Judah.
- III. Consequences of Israel's sins.
  - A. Guilt in the sight of the Lord.
  - B. Increasing moral depravity.
  - C. Captivity and misery.
- IV. Five figures of speech.
  - A. A locust plague.
  - B. Consuming fire.
  - C. A plumbline.
  - D. A basket of ripe fruit.
  - E. Destruction of the altar at Bethel.
- V. A promise of restoration through the Messiah.

**A Reminder:**

The same cycle which can be seen in the accusations of Amos concerning God's chosen people can be seen in the lives of individuals and nations throughout recorded history. God blesses. Man becomes impious and independent. God chastises. Man repents, etc. Some day the cycle will end as the Lord rewards the faithful in the city foursquare, and punishes the rebellious in the torments of hell.



## *Chapter 1*

**Amos 1:1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.**

Yes, it is true that this first verse says these are the words of Amos. But if the reader will take note, they came through Amos lips from the Lord of hosts. Over and over we find, as in verse three, "Thus saith the Lord." He saw these words through the inspiration of Jehovah.

Amos declares that he was from among the herdsmen of Tekoa. Perhaps more is made of this occupation than should be. A herdsman can be a man of very limited means, or he can be one of plenteous possessions. The fact that later on he says he was a picker of sycamore fruit may or may not point to a poor man who found it necessary to forage around for food to keep himself alive. The style of language used in this document indicates a person who has some degree of culture.

Tekoa is thought to have been a small village located a few miles south of Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah.

He dates his prophecy as being two years before the earthquake. Since there are numerous earthquakes in that portion of the globe, this does not pin the date down precisely. Josephus speaks of an impressive earthquake in the general time period during which Amos lived. This may be the one referred to. At the time Uzziah was king in Judah, and Jereboam II was king in Israel. Micah and Isaiah prophesied in the same general time period.

**Amos 1:2 And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the**

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habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

The roar of a lion was a petrifying sound in the land with which Amos was familiar. Hearts nearly stopped when such was heard. When the voice of the Lord roared forth from Jerusalem, those who heard would give full attention. There were dangers which could not be ignored. Mount Carmel was a luxurious and very beautiful site at the time. When other areas were barren, Mount Carmel still retained its splendor. If Carmel withered the situation must be drastic indeed. God had something of great importance to impart.

Amos 1:3 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:

This statement about three transgressions and four will be mentioned repeatedly through both chapter one and two of this book. The point is that the nations spoken of had gone beyond the point where God was willing to refrain from punishing them for their sins. They had pushed the Lord to the point of action.

Damascus of Syria is the first nation to be discussed. The city clearly stands for the nation as a whole. The Syrians had made life extremely difficult for the part of the Jews who has remained on the east side of the Jordan river. It is quite possible that the words used are not figurative, but that some of those in Gilead had been crushed under the iron prongs of devices used for separating the chaff from the wheat at threshing time.

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**Amos 1:4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.**

Often an invading nation would set fire to any portion of a conquered city which would burn. The palaces of Syria. Those to whom Amos was relating this material, being Jews, were probably rejoicing in this account of just how displeased God was with their pagan neighbors! It is always much easier to listen to the weaknesses of others than to have our own pointed out.

**Amos 1:5 I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD.**

The cities of that time were often protected by walls with barred doors. Such was the case with Damascus. That would not prevent the conquest of Syria by the Assyrians. Damascus would be taken and the people would be removed to Assyria.

**Amos 1:6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom:**

The Philistines were the next nation who would feel the sting of divine wrath. Just as Damascus, Gaza had repeatedly offended the God of heaven until the time was come for punishment. God would no longer turn back from punishing the Philistines. They had taken God's

people captive and delivered them to the Edomites for slave labor.

**Amos 1:7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:**

The protective walls and gates of the Philistines would be no more successful in preventing the fire of God's wrath from devouring their cities than had those of Damascus. Gaza was but one of the prominent cities of Philistia. All would be included in the defeat.

**Amos 1:8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.**

Ashdod, Gaza, Ekron and Ashkelon were all to meet destruction. They had exceeded the patience and grace of God. The fire of destruction would come.

We can almost read the glee on the faces of the Israelites when these predictions were made. Surely those neighboring nations has earned severe punishment for their sins. This was exactly what they might have expected as a result of disobedience to the Lord.

**Amos 1:9 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:**

Next in line to have punishment predicted was the important port city of Tyre. King Hiram of Tyre had made



an agreement with Israel that the two would support one another. Tyre had ignored the agreement and had caused the deportation of many Israelites into the land of Edom.

Edomites were descendants of Esau. Israelites were descendants of Jacob. Jacob and Esau were twin brothers. This did not prevent friction between the two groups. Tyre would agree to send Israelites to Edom as captives.

**Amos 1:10 But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.**

Fire, fire, fire and more fire. Like Damascus and Gaza, Tyre would face the burning of her royal palaces. No doubt this would cause them to realize that one cannot mistreat God's chosen people. In the minds of the Jews these sinful nations and cities were reaping as they had sown.

**Amos 1:11 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:**

The antagonism between Edom and Israel harkened back to the time when Jacob supplanted his brother Esau in the inheritance. Thousands of years later we see the same hatred existing between the descendants of these two brothers. It would seem that such anger would ease sooner or later. It does not seem to have done that.

**Amos 1:12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.**

Again an important city stands for the entire nation. Teman was representative of the whole nation of the Edomites. The Edomites had used the sword upon their kinsmen. They had shown no pity. Now God would send destruction upon their princely palaces.

**Amos 1:13 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:**

Ammon also lay on the east side of the Jordan river. The Ammonites were the descendants of Lot. Sexual sins had been prevalent in their history. Respect for womanhood was at a very low level. The Ammonites had committed the most abominable sins against the women of Gilead in order that they might take over the territory of the Gileadites.

**Amos 1:14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:**

A storm of God's wrath would swirl around the heads of the Ammonites. There would be shouts of battle. The results would be most unpleasant for the city of Rabbah, and also for the rest of the land of the Ammonites.

**Amos 1:15 And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.**

The rulers of the Ammonites would find themselves taken captive and their city turned to ruins. We note

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that the predictions of punishment are coming closer to home as Amos continues with the Word of the Lord. The first nations discussed were not kinsmen. Now we are getting to close relatives of the Israelites. One wonders if Israel and Judah were beginning to wonder about their own situation with God. Were they immune to the punishments which God was predicting would fall upon their neighboring nations, and kinsmen such as the Edomites and Moabites?

Chapter 2

In the first chapter Amos dealt with the sins and judgment of several of the nations surrounding Israel. This second chapter will continue that pattern, but will come closer home and will finally describe the sins and judgment of both the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. This will prove to be pleasant to neither Amos, nor those two divisions of God's people.

Amos 2:1 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

Moab lay on the east side of the Jordan River. Just as the nations discussed in the first chapter of the book, Moab had committed repeated offenses against the will of Jehovah. He might have been willing to use grace and patience with a slip here and there, but the matter had defiance written all over it. God would no longer cease to take action.

It was not sufficient for them to kill the king of Edom. They went so far as to burn his bones into lime. This probably means that they used them for mortar in construction. It presents a horrible picture of the disrespect they had for their fellowman.

Amos 2:2 But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:

Over and over again we find the warning that fire would be sent to devour the sinful nations. In this case

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the fire would leave the palaces of the land of Moab in shambles. An enemy would invade with accompanying sounds of battle. Their insensitivity toward others would be heaped back upon their own heads.

**Amos 2:3 And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.**

The judicial system of Moab would be torn to shreds. Both the royalty and the court would meet destruction. They were useless for the tasks they would be expected to handle. There was no need to allow their continuance in these offices.

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

Now the prophecy leaves the surrounding nations and concentrates upon Judah and Israel. Judah is discussed first. The same disgusting words are used of Judah as were applied to the pagan nations. They had sinned repeatedly. It was not a matter of carelessness. It was deliberate defiance of the will of the Lord.

The reader should notice the change from sins against their fellowmen, to sins against Jehovah Himself. The people have ignored the commandments of God and have believed lies. These lies could be of several different types. They could be that idols should be worshipped. They could be that the Lord is infinitely gracious and will not ever call His own people to account for their folly.

**Amos 2:5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.**

The fires God sent upon the surrounding nations would also devour the palaces of those who governed Judah. If God's people act in the same manner as the pagan nations, they will receive similar punishment. When Nebuchadnezzar and others invaded Jerusalem they left it leveled to the ground.

**Amos 2:6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;**

Do not overlook the fact that the prophecy of Amos was that of the Lord. This is stressed as each of the nations is dealt with.

Israel would face the same judgments which Judah and the other rebellious nations had suffered. God only picked out one major sin to emphasize the reasons for His punishments. There were no doubt many others, but the one listed here is most grievous. They sold righteous persons as slaves. They had no pity on the poor. These unfortunate persons would be enslaved in order to obtain shoes for their feet. One who has not walked barefoot over the rocky terrain of those lands will not fully appreciate the need for shoes there.

**Amos 2:7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:**

It is not known whether panting after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor means willingness to grind the head of the poor into the dust, or whether it means the oppressors desired to see the poor pour dust and ashes upon their heads in grief over their impoverished condition.

The meek were pushed around by those who cared for nothing but their own power. All societies must resist this tendency. The rich get richer while the poor become poorer. This falls directly in line with the dogma that teaches the evolutionary survival of the fittest. Woe be unto the one who cannot keep up!

Who is the maid into which both the father and the son go? If it is the son having sexual intercourse with his own mother, this is incest. If both are guilty of going to the prostitutes who served the idol temples, this is spiritual adultery. In any case, the degradation of all three, the two men and the woman, is abominable. How could one who claimed to be associated with Jehovah participate in this kind of sin?

**Amos 2:8 And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.**

Clothing was at times used as a pledge that a debt would be paid. The clothing would be kept until the debt was paid. However, God had said that such pledges must be returned by nightfall. These persons were not returning the pledge, but were sleeping upon it beside the altars of false gods.

They were also guilty of drunkenness as they fellowshipped with those who worshipped false gods. The wine of the condemned was that which those who worshipped

idols drank as they lived in complete abandonment of self control.

**Amos 2:9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.**

The Amorites were recognized as fierce warriors with large stature. If the battle had been strictly between the Jews and these foes, the Amorites would have prevailed. Since God stepped in, the Amorites were utterly defeated.

**Amos 2:10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.**

The truth of the matter is that Israel would never have survived the rigors of the desert if Jehovah had not been with them throughout that journey. For forty years they were provided with food and water. Then when they arrived at the promised land, they were permitted to overcome the inhabitants of that land, and claim it for their own.

The title of “Amorite” seems to have been one of a general nature, including more than one people.

**Amos 2:11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD.**

God had even encouraged men to become prophets and Nazarites. The prophets proclaimed the will of God



to the people. The Nazarites were examples of sincere dedication to the Lord. God challenged His people to deny that such persons had been provided for their instruction and their leadership. There was no way Israel could deny the facts.

**Amos 2:12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.**

When then was the people's response to such gracious action on the part of God? They tempted the Nazarites to break their vows, and insisted that the prophets hold their tongues when such prophecy would make men uncomfortable in their sins.

**Amos 2:13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.**

It is thought by some that this verse has been mistranslated. They feel that it is the one who has committed sin who is to be pressed like sheaves which are subjected to the weight of cart wheels. This is not a necessary conclusion. God is grieved when men do such things as have been listed. He rejoices in righteousness, and grieves over men's sins. These sins are a burden to Him, just as the misbehavior of sons and daughters of men leave a weight upon their hearts.

**Amos 2:14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:**

Those who had persecuted others and felt that they could escape any punishment for their lack of feeling

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were to find that they would answer for their cruelty. The strong and mighty who had previously been able to get away with this kind of behavior were to find that God would punish them and they would not be able to evade that punishment. Their supposed strength would be useless in the face of God's power.

Amos 2:15 Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.

Archers riding upon horses had great confidence that they could attack others and retreat with no successful retaliation. When the Lord declared that it was time for them to be repaid for their cruelty, they would find that horses and weapons of men were useless.

Amos 2:16 And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

It is relatively easy to be courageous when the opponent has no way of defending himself. However; those who had proudly abused others just because they held the upper hand would find themselves with no horses and no weapons which would protect them from the wrath of God.

Chapter 3

The material dealt with in this chapter has reference to both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Israel. It is not a pretty picture. God had chosen the descendants of Abraham as a channel for blessing all the nations of the world; whosoever would love Him, hear Him and obey Him. Their behavior had caused Him to be ashamed of them. There would be a remnant who were willing. The majority would see severe punishment.

Amos 3:1 Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

This would certainly have been a heavy burden for Amos to bear. It was his responsibility as a prophet of Jehovah, to mince no words as he declared the sad future of the children of Israel. God had spoken against them. He was the one chosen to deliver God's word.

He began by reminding them of the horrible conditions experienced in the Egyptian bondage. After all those difficult years, He had rescued them from the hand of Pharaoh. He had followed that by leading them through the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula, giving them food, water and guidance until they reached the borders of Canaan. Then He had been with them as the contests with the wicked inhabitants of that land fought viciously to retain their territories.

Thus it was time for Israel to listen to the warnings He was about to lay before them through the tongue of His prophet Amos.

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**Amos 3:2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.**

God's patience and grace had been strained to the limit. In spite of all the blessings which He had bestowed upon His chosen nation, they had turned to immorality and idolatry. This could not be tolerated. It was necessary that they be punished in order that those who would hear could be corrected.

**Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?**

It is a great truth of human relationships that unless there is a harmony of goals and means of achieving those goals, progress will be drastically reduced, if not ended.

When a young couple agree to marry and walk together through life they normally have agreed on certain responsibilities that each will fulfill in achieving the happiness which is anticipated. If either of them fails to live up to those responsibilities the marriage is headed for severe difficulties.

It is the same with the relationship between God and those who have agreed to walk with Him. This is true of both individuals and of the entire nation of Israel. It was true in fleshly Israel. It is just as true in the spiritual Israel of the present day church. Israel had not met their part of the agreement to walk with God.

**Amos 3:4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?**

Several examples are now given to show the false assumptions which His people had made. They were

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acting like a lion who has roared when he has not taken prey. The lion is known for capturing his victim, and then roaring loudly to announce his success to all who are able to hear him.

Amos 3:5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

One who has laid a snare for a bird has failed to make the proper preparations for baiting the trap ought not to take up the trap as if it contained a bird. Israel had not made the preparations that should have been made in order to receive God's blessings.

Amos 3:6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

How foolish it would be for a watchman to blow an alarm on a trumpet and then find that the citizens of the city paid no attention to the warning! God had caused His prophets to continually warn Israel of the need to avoid dangers which lay everywhere about them. There was evil among His people. God had not failed in His part of the agreement. Israel had failed to do their part.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

God had determined to attack the evil which had invaded Israel. Before He did so, He had blown the trumpet warning that they might chose whom they would serve.

Would it be Jehovah, or would it be Satan? They would have no excuse for failing to walk in righteousness.

Amos 3:8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

If a lion has made it known that he is in the jungle those who hear his roar would tremble and make every attempt to separate themselves from the danger. Amos declared that God had roared. He would therefore speak the warning. He really had no choice.

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

Two very important witnesses were called to see what was about to happen. The two were Egypt and Assyria. Of course the scene is figurative in nature. Israel was about to be punished. Those nations that had been punished for abusing His children would now be given the opportunity to see that He is a God of justice. He will punish Israel just as He punished those who were not especially chosen. They had no more right to sin than did others.

Amos 3:10 For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

Who are “they that know not to do right?” Are they not any who deliberately choose sin over righteousness? Neither Israel nor those who had abused her were

innocent. Israel's foes had not had as much instruction as had Israel. But God was calling everyone to attention. A lesson was about to be made which would apply to all.

Amos 3:11 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.

The present verse warns those who were living in luxurious surroundings while others suffered, that this would come to an end. The ivory covered palaces would be laid flat. The powerful would be made weak. The lion was roaring!

Amos 3:12 Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch.

Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom. Damascus was a major city among the pagan nations. When God was through with all of those who fought Him, there would be but a remnant left. This was particularly true of Israel. If they had chosen to accept the idolatry and immorality of the heathen nations, they would find themselves reduced to but a remnant of what had been there previously.

Amos 3:13 Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,

Amos 3:14 That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit

the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

Yes, both Egypt and Assyria would be able to see that God does punish those who fight against Him and also those who fail to be grateful for the many blessings which have been laid at their door.

Amos 3:15 And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

There were apparently some so wealthy that they had both summer and winter houses. They could move from one to the other as it suited their pleasure. Those who live in sin while they ignore the word of the Lord would come to see the end of the highway they had chosen to travel. The self centered pleasures would be removed. The palaces and summer houses would come to destruction.

Chapter 4

There is much sarcasm and irony in these next few verses. God is telling His people that they are about to take a thrashing which they have not anticipated. They have been living in luxury and taking advantage of the poor. This will come to an abrupt halt.

Amos 4:1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.

Kine are cattle. The word is feminine in the original language and thus the Lord is telling the women of the northern kingdom that they are acting like cows, lolling around in a lush pasture. Bashan was in the territory east of the Jordan where the two and one half tribes had settled. They knew how a fat cow acted. God was certainly not being gentle in letting them know what He thought about their way of life.

These women encouraged their masters (husbands) to take from the poor in order that they might continue their own idle lifestyle. They looked forward to eating, drinking and making merry.

Amos 4:2 The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.

Amos 4:3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD.

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God is holy. He can swear by nothing greater than Himself. He promised that these lazy women would be taken from their idle ways as a farmer leads a cow with a ring in it's nose. The walls of their cities would be broken through and they would be led through the gaps in the walls. They would be neither able to turn to the right or left. All of their pleasure sources would be left behind in the palaces they had previously inhabited.

**Amos 4:4 Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:**

Bethel and Gilgal were centers of idolatrous worship. God is not really commanding the people to bring sacrifices to those places of wickedness. He is actually shaming them for doing just what He had mentioned. Their tithes and sacrifices were not offered when, or as, He had commanded. He had said nothing about sacrifices being offered every three years. They were replacing sincere worship with frivolous ceremony. God desires that worship be offered in sincerity and truth.

**Amos 4:5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.**

They were making a big show of the sacrifices and making certain that everyone knew how much they were doing. In addition, they were doing what they were doing because "they" liked it, not because God would be pleased with it.

**Amos 4:6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.**

The Lord had used several methods of attempted correction. He had made certain that the want of bread and other food would be scarce enough to leave their teeth clean. That did not put things right. They still went their own way.

**Amos 4:7 And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.**

Secondly, He had caused a shortage of rain for the three months previous to the harvest. This would mean an extremely short harvest. He had scattered what rain did fall so that some cities would have a sufficiency while others suffered from shortage.

**Amos 4:8 So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.**

The outcome of this was that the people who had no water were forced to go to the cities which did have in order to stay alive. It would seem that this would wake up their consciences and cause them to realize the need to honor the will of the Lord. It did not!

**Amos 4:9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.**

The trees upon which they depended so much were attacked by pests of several different kinds. When one removed the fruit of the fig and olive trees, plus the grapes and the garden produce, there would be little left. How stubborn the people were! Even then they would not accept the divine will.

**Amos 4:10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.**

Frogs, flies and lice had made life miserable for the Egyptians when Jehovah was persuading them to let His people leave that land. Now He was allowing some of the same pests to annoy the Israelites. The scent from that which was rotting was filling their nostrils on every side. Their horses had been stolen. Their men had been killed by enemies.

After having to go through the list of horrors given above, it would seem the height of folly to turn one's ear away when the Lord gave advice. That was not their reaction. They still refused to retreat from their willful ways.

**Amos 4:11 I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were**

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as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Any real Bible student knows that the punishment which was laid upon Sodom and Gomorrah was unbearable. They were burned to ashes. Apparently some invader had come into the northern kingdom and burned houses and land without Israel relenting and repenting.

Amos 4:12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

God was not through with Israel yet. If they were determined to fight with Him, they had better make the proper preparations.

Every human on earth should take this warning to heart. We WILL be called to meet Him in judgment. God's grace is for those who are penitent of their sins. It is not for those who fight Him until the end. The reader will meet Him. This present writer will meet Him. As brash as some are, none will be bold enough to defy Him when called to the last accounting.

Amos 4:13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.

Our fourth chapter closes with a majestic description of the Judge whom all men will face. He is the Creator and Ruler of both heaven and earth. He knows every thought of every man, woman and child. He has hosts of

men and of angels at His command. Any man who places his own will ahead of such a personality as Jehovah will wish he had not!

Chapter 5

At this point the northern kingdom of Israel has proven unwilling to walk with their Lord. Since that is the case, the Lord will accept her decision and prepare the way for her departure. She will be conquered and removed to Assyrian captivity beyond Damascus. She was given every chance to change her ways and turn from idolatry and hypocrisy. She turned a deaf ear to every divine offer of mercy.

Amos 5:1 Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel.

When God speaks against you there is no defense. God is not pleased that it has become necessary to abandon the ten tribes. It is done with sorrow. God Himself is saddened. Israel will soon feel that same sorrow as she pays the penalty in a land far from the one she should have cherished.

Amos 5:2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.

It is common for the Lord to speak of His people in the feminine gender. A virgin is one who has great promise for a beautiful relationship with He who loves her. We can almost see a tear in the eye of God as He declares that she has destroyed that opportunity. She has abandoned God. He will not abandon her to the sinful way of life which she has chosen. None will be able to rescue her.

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

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She will be drastically reduced in numbers. This is pictured by listing 1,000 who become 100 and then are further reduced to 10. Ninety nine percent are seen as unworthy of favorable recognition by the One who loved them so dearly.

We are not told what will happen to this one percent who meet God's approval. They may have been scattered over much of the globe. We do recognize Jews today in nations far from Canaan. Some of them may well be descendants of that one percent.

**Amos 5:4 For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:**

The Lord was not ready to forsake that minor portion of His people who were determined not to give themselves to Satan and his allies. He calls out for them to lift their eyes unto the heavens and if that is done, they will find life rather than death.

**Amos 5:5 But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought.**

The name "Bethel" means "abode of God." Gilgal was the city which was celebrated when Israel first crossed the Jordan river and moved into Canaan. All three of these locations were upright in the past. That had changed. Israel was warned that choosing the company of the people of those three cities in this present time would mean disaster. They were centers of idolatry. Seeking them would mean death.

**Amos 5:6 Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.**

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That small fraction who still held true to God were to let their loyalty be known. They were to “Choose this day, whom ye will serve.” The ten tribes were associated with Ephraim and Joseph. If those who loved God and were willing to obey Him would let their choice be known, they would avoid the horrifying future which was ahead for the unbelievers. Running to Bethel would not put out the fire of God’s wrath which would consume those who made themselves His enemies.

Amos 5:7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

Judgment is the determination of righteous and unrighteous conduct. A judges’ duty is to pass sentence upon the wicked and justify the innocent. The majority of the ten tribes had been guilty of giving preference to sinners and condemning the remnant who loved and obeyed God. This would cause many bitter tears. Righteous conduct was becoming outdated.

Amos 5:8 Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:

Only the God of heaven fits the description of the One acting in this verse. It was Jehovah who created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. It is He who governs the rotation of the earth and the resulting light of day and darkness of night. It is He who regulates the water cycle which lifts the water from the various bodies on earth and drops that water upon the fields to refresh the vegetation.

It is possible that this is a reference to the great flood of Noah's time, however this does not fit the general tone of the rest of the verse. It would be the only destructive force, while the other actions are beneficial to man. It is rational to seek the One who creates our blessings.

Amos 5:9 That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

The "spoiled" does not refer to spoiled in this instance are those who have been abused by those who are stronger than themselves. God is the Helper of the persecuted. One day the spoiled shall be made strong through the God who loves the downtrodden.

Amos 5:10 They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

Those who rebuke in the gate are the ones who take a stand for righteousness. The unrighteous hate him who praises justice.

Those who have such godless attitudes that they would rebuke the righteous have not passed from the earth. They still cherish their control over the godly. Nevertheless, God knows His own. They will be honored by the One who truly counts.

Amos 5:11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.

Those who take advantage of others who have little way of avoiding such mistreatment must bear in mind that they are demonstrating to God the type of behavior He is expected to use in dealing with them. Those who had the power to do so were taking food from the mouths of those who could not defend themselves. The rich and powerful thought nothing of taking wheat from the poor who needed that wheat to feed themselves and their families. The rich already had more than enough for their own welfare, yet they cared nothing for those who were left in a starving condition by their selfishness.

The houses of the rich were constructed of stone which was carefully hewn into shape that the walls of the homes might be attractive. At the same time the poor lived in huts with dirt floors. The rich had gardens and vineyards around their houses. The poor had neither. God warned that this condition was about to change. The selfish rich would be taken from the land and those who conquered them would eat the fruit of the vineyards.

Amos 5:12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

The offenders were not dealing with a Lord who was limited in His ability to observe every sin. The bribes that were taken in afflicting the poor were used as a means of influencing the judges at the gates of the city in order that the outcries of the poor would be useless. Justice was becoming more and more twisted.

Amos 5:13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

The prudent are those who know when to speak up and when to remain silent. In the cases at hand, it would be of no use whatsoever to speak up for the poor. Any attempt to defend them would be considered ridiculous. There are no doubt many in this world today who would like to help others who are in misery, yet any effort to give this help could be looked upon as a waste of effort.

Amos 5:14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

Evil leads to death. Righteousness leads to life. These are truths which hold true on both the eternal level as well as this earthly existence. Those who seek evil companions endanger their physical lives. On a far more serious level they risk eternal death which is separation from all that is good for ever and ever.

Amos 5:15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

It is strange that although we strive to love the good, we sometimes find ourselves attracted to that which would send us straight to the fires of hell. Those who will listen are urged to love that which is good and promote righteous judgment at every opportunity. If that is done, we may be assured that God will be aware of our efforts and will protect and care for His own.

Amos 5:16 Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways,

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**Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.**

When men fail to follow paths of righteousness, they will find that life becomes a miserable experience. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth on every side. Those who depend upon either business ventures or upon agricultural pursuits will have reason to shed many bitter tears.

**Amos 5:17 And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD.**

No matter where one goes in such a society, he or she will find that sin costs a high price. Every day will bring more sadness, whereas if men would seek the right and avoid the wrong there would be no reason for God to bring sorrow into their existence here and hereafter.

**Amos 5:18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.**

Some who cry out for the day of the Lord to come will find that they would have been far better off if it had not come! That day should be a day of great happiness and escape from the suffering of this present world. Instead, those who have loved that which is evil in this life will have plunged themselves into everlasting punishment, along with the Devil and his angels. The day of the Lord will be a day of exquisite joy for the faithful few. It will be a day of darkness for the one who has proven that the darkness is his choice.

**Amos 5:19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.**

There will be no escape for the wicked. For him it will be as if he had met a ferocious lion and had fled from the lion only to find himself facing another foe just as dangerous or perhaps more so. As he thinks he has found safety in running to his house, he sighs exhausted and leans against the wall of his house only to find himself bitten by a poisonous snake.

**Amos 5:20 Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?**

For that man who has opposed God, every day can be darker than the one just before it. Even in the brightness of mid day that man will find that all has turned to misery and confusion. The false judgments which the evil man has passed out to others will come back to haunt him everlastingly.

**Amos 5:21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.**

Israel was celebrating numerous feast days, but they were not of the nature which God could commend. They had been turned into passionate feasts on sin and revelry. Any incense which was burned in such surroundings was not only not desired by the Lord; it was hated and despised. These feast days were anything but true worship of the Lord.

**Amos 5:22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them:**

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neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

It is true that Jehovah had commanded all three of these types of offering. They were intended to bring Israel closer to Him and demonstrate their devotion to Him and desire to fellowship with Him. Instead, they were causing Him to see them as offenders rather than companions.

Amos 5:23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

The present writer does not agree that God approves of instrumental music in the worship services of Christians. It does not follow that He despised such accompaniments in the pre Christian era. He seems to have approved of King David's use of the harp and the many psalms which were accompanied by the harp. Since there is not a word said about such instrumental accompaniment in the Christian worship, it is evil to use it.

The point of the verse before us, however, is that the lives of these sinful person in Israel were disgusting God to the point that their worship was nauseating to Him.

Amos 5:24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

If they wished for divine approval of their life and their worship they needed to do a complete about face. Greed and injustice must be replaced by love and concern for both God and man. There must be a mighty river of righteousness and justice in the gates if God's displeasure was to be turned away.

Amos 5:25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

This is put in the form of a question by the Lord. The answer is obvious. They had turned their faces away from the blessings God had offered them. Any sacrifices and offerings they had made were shallow and mixed with adoration for false gods which could not save.

Amos 5:26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

Sadly, the tabernacle which was supposed to have been dedicated to the Creator of all things, had been used to worship those which were no gods. Molech and Chiun were worse than useless. They were agents of the Devil who was seeking their souls. These false gods were but images which they had carved out with their own hands. The Lord is a jealous God. He will not share His throne with pieces of wood, metal, or stone. He is a Spirit and those who serve Him must worship in spirit and in truth.

Amos 5:27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.

The sentence which God passed upon those of Israel who had disdained His Lordship would find themselves far from the land of Canaan. Damascus was in the land of Syria to the north of Canaan. Beyond this was the Euphrates River, and beyond that lay the land of Assyria to which they were to be sent.

Chapter 6

Amos is used as a mouthpiece for the anger of Jehovah at the misbehavior of both Israel and Judah. Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, and Zion, the capital of the southern kingdom are both condemned for their immorality and their contamination of His plan of worship. An enemy nation will be brought against them. The punishment will be most unpleasant.

Amos 6:1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

Zion is Jerusalem. It was the city chosen by the Lord as the seat of government for all of His people before the division of the two kingdoms. Those who were supposed to be serving Him and living in obedience to His commandments had turned to a life of luxury. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom. Zion and Samaria were the central points to which God's people looked for leadership. They were instead becoming centers of debauchery. This irresponsibility would not be overlooked!

Amos 6:2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

The Israelites are invited to make a comparison between their own position and that of those cities which had been foes for many years. Just who was in the safer

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condition? Was it Jerusalem and Samaria, or was it these sinful cities which had opposed the Israelites in the past? The fact was that Israel was lowering itself to the same state of spiritual degradation as Calneh, Hamath and Gath.

**Amos 6:3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;**

Those of Israel and Judah were only deceiving themselves by thinking punishment for their rebellion would be far into the future, if at all. They felt that violence could be invited, while punishment was out of the question.

This is the pattern of thought of the present day, just as it was those many centuries ago.

**Amos 6:4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;**

How angry the Lord became when those who supposed themselves to be His servants devoted themselves to luxury, laziness and gluttony! True spirituality was the farthest thing from their minds.

The emphasis was completely upon personal comfort and revelry, not upon influencing others to follow the commandments of the Father in heaven.

**Amos 6:5 That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;**

**Amos 6:6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.**

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There is good reason not to include instruments of music in the worship of God during the Christian dispensation. There is no command for it, no example nor necessary inference for it in the New Testament. The book of Revelation speaks of such instruments in heaven, but that is not our present Christian age. If it was not commanded, and there are no approved examples of the use of instrumental music in the worship services of the first century Christians, let us not use them today.

At the same time, we should realize that worship is not in question in the verses before us. David's sin was not in the use of musical instruments in worship. It was in using these instruments to inflame the passions during their partying. God actually condoned David's use of the harp in worship. (See 2 Chron. 29:25-26.)

2Chron 29:25 And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.

2Chron 29:26 And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

Adam Clarke points out that the Syriac and Arabic versions of this passage allow a different interpretation than does the King James. The interested student should examine these comments personally.

Amos 6:7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

Those who were so bent on pleasure and revelry were to be among the first to enter into captivity. It would

be well for Christians of the present day to note God's anger at the use of music as a means of stimulating sinful passion.

Amos 6:8 The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

Since there is nothing more authoritative than Himself, God swore by Himself that He would deliver such cities as practiced such abominations to their enemies. He hated their self indulgence and determined that it would be punished severely. The reason He hated the "excellency of Jacob" was that the excelling was in the direction of sin and not in loyalty to divine patterns.

Amos 6:9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

The violence which would come upon those who had turned against God would leave all but a small fraction dead. The wages of sin is death.

Amos 6:10 And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD.

Burial was the common procedure for bidding goodbye to one's loved ones. There would not be time for such actions. Some loved one would find it necessary to burn

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the remains of the dead. It would then prove wise for those who did remain not to make mention of the name of the Lord. They might very well join those who had already met death.

**Amos 6:11 For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.**

No matter how great or how small the house of the Israelite, it would be left in ruins. The damage would be unimaginable. Both humans and their property would meet a drastic fate.

**Amos 6:12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:**

The man who would cause his horses to run upon rocks was foolish. The man who would attempt to plow rock with oxen was equally stupid. One cannot defy common sense without reaping the consequences. Israel had twisted judgment to such an extent that great bitterness had emerged. While they should have been encouraging righteousness they had produced poison for the soul.

**Amos 6:13 Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?**

The people had the false conception that the luxuries and security they were enjoying came about as a result of their own power. This attitude would lead to disaster. God had already suffered grief at their way of life. This

was not to be allowed to continue. They were to find out just how dependent they actually were when God intervened.

**Amos 6:14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.**

The nation which was to rise up against the northern kingdom was Assyria. The ten tribes would be removed from Canaan and made bondservants to that nation which lay to the east of them. At this time He was primarily speaking to those of the northern kingdom of Israel. Over a century later He would send the southern kingdom of Judah into Babylonian captivity.

## *Chapter 7*

We come now to a series of visions seen by Amos the prophet of God. It was not a pleasant task which the prophet was assigned. He had not chosen to do it. He had been called by the Lord and dared not to refuse the divine will. He prophesies the complete downfall of the northern kingdom. It is certainly not as depressing to the reader today as it was to Amos, but it does break our heart to meditate on it.

**Amos 7:1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.**

It is well to remember that these are not actual events. They are visions which contain lessons which should have been taken to heart by Israel. Sadly, they were not!

The first vision was that of grasshoppers, or locusts, which were ready to feast upon the vegetation which would have produced food for both man and beast. It was apparently the practice to give the best and first of the crop to the king. Now the grass was springing up and ready for the people to harvest for their own use. In the vision, the insects were ready to devour that which was vital to the health of the people.

**Amos 7:2 And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.**

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Amos was devastated. He cried out to the Lord to forgive His people in order that they might survive. The implication is that the people were too helpless to rescue themselves from the divine punishment. Jacob was but another name for Israel.

Amos 7:3 The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.

God does hear and respond to prayer. Amos' prayer made a difference. The Lord did not send the insects upon the land.

Amos 7:4 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.

The next vision which Amos saw was that of a tremendous fire. It was so devastating that it dried up the water supply. There are two lines of thought as to the identity of the "great deep." One is that it was the Mediterranean Sea. This was a body of water which was vital to the lives of the people. The second line of thought is that it referred to the underground water supplies which provided a source of drinking water. I consider the second the preferable explanation, though the great deep does sometimes mean the sea.

Amos 7:5 Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

Again Amos pleaded to God for mercy upon the people. He made the same point as he had made before.



The nation was unable to survive such a punishment. It would mean the destruction of Israel if this vision were to become reality.

Amos 7:6 The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.

Again God responded positively to the plea of the prophet. He repented of this action. This does not mean God had sinned and there was a need for his soul to be cleansed. It only means that. He had a change of heart which was followed by a change of purpose. Israel would be given another chance for survival.

Amos 7:7 Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

In this third vision, Amos saw the Lord standing upon a wall with a plumbline in His hand. The plumbline is a device for finding out whether a wall is vertically straight, or for determining if a foundation is crooked. God was about to reveal the crookedness or sinfulness of the people He had nurtured so carefully.

Amos 7:8 And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:

Amos was asked what he saw. He answered correctly that he saw a plumbline. God then proceeded to explain the reason for the plumbline. It would be used to measure the spiritual condition of the nation. If the measuring

line proved that the nation was ungrateful to the extent that it did not care about His commandments, it must be punished. He would not pass by them this time. He would pass “through” them.

Amos 7:9 And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

The high places and sanctuaries were locations used for worship. All too often the worship had been directed toward golden calves and other false gods. God informed Amos that this time the prophecy would stand. He would not relent. The royal household would be opposed by the divine hand. Jeroboam, the king would be required to face an enemy sword. Obviously the intent was to say Jeroboam would be murdered by that sword.

Amos 7:10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

The priest Amaziah was ready to call a halt to these threats which Amos was declaring against Israel and her human ruler. He went to Amaziah and accused Amos of conspiring to have Amaziah killed. Surely the king would not allow such rebellion to continue. The king was supposed to rule. If Amos was allowed to go on with this kind of talk, the land would be ruined.

Amos 7:11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

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Amaziah reported to Jeroboam that Amos had predicted the king's death by the sword, plus defeat and captivity for the people.

One wonders why the king did not take immediate action. Is it possible that he had much more respect for the words of the Lord through the prophet than did his priest Amaziah? It would seem so. It is possible that the king did not take the prophecy seriously and therefore dismissed the urgency of the situation.

**Amos 7:12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:**

Amaziah seems to have taken things into his own hands. He went back to Amos and spoke some very harsh words. First he addressed Amos as a "seer." This was not a mark of acceptance of Amos' claims. It was sarcasm. He seems to have felt that Amos was as hypocritical as he himself was. He told the prophet to go back to his home in the southern kingdom of Judah and earn his bread and keep somewhere else than in the capital of the northern kingdom.

We are left with the impression that he was accusing Amos of prophesying only for what he could get out of it, and not for the spiritual guidance of his fellowman.

**Amos 7:13 But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.**

Does it not appear that the words of Amaziah in this verse imply that such a country bumpkin as Amos had no place in the area of the king's court and chapel? He demanded that the prophet hold his tongue. In the

estimation of Amaziah, Amos was in “way over his head.”

**Amos 7:14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:**

Amos was not about to take this without a bold reply. He told his accuser that he had not chosen to deliver this prophecy which he had given. His life was not that of a professional prophet. He had spent his life as a herdsman and one who gathered sycamore fruit.

We must ask ourselves what he meant by this. Was he the owner of a large herd of sheep or cattle? Was he a plantation owner with many sycamore trees? Or was Amos saying that he was a poor man with no training in the schools of the prophets? The latter seems to fit the purpose of Amos' reply more suitably. At any rate, he had not asked for the task.

**Amos 7:15 And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.**

God has a way of making His will known to those whom He desires to serve Him. Amos had been told in no uncertain terms to speak the word of God to His people in Israel. Amos had realized that he would be supported in that work if he accepted the assignment. He had accepted it.

**Amos 7:16 Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.**

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If Amaziah thought that his threats would intimidate the prophet of God, he was completely mistaken. Amaziah had commanded that he not do that which Jehovah had said to do. He would obey God rather than man.

Some believe the use of the word “drop” in this verse means that Amos had continued his prophesies so long that they were as irritating as the continual dripping of the eave of a house. That does not follow. One can drop something gradually, or can drop it all at once. Amos was dropping quite a load on Amaziah at one time.

Amos 7:17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

Amaziah would have been well advised to refrain from threatening a prophet of God. The result was that he brought upon himself a greater burden than would have been the case if he had left Amos free to express the will of the Lord.

The priest’s wife would become a harlot in the land. This does not say whether this was of her own choice, or if it was necessary to avoid death. Amaziah’s sons and daughters would fall in military action. The land which he had said could not bear the words of God’s prophet would be divided among it’s conquerors. The people of the land would be taken from the land as captives. The latter came to pass when the Assyrians took the northern kingdom into Assyria as bondservants.

A passing note. The one who sets out to preach the Word of the Lord has mixed experiences. Sometimes the

work brings joy as great as can be had on this earth. Sometimes it requires the kind of courage which Amos displayed here. God–Hath–Spoken. Let us obey.

Chapter 8

This entire chapter is devoted to Amos vision of a basket of summer fruit. God compares the spiritual condition of the northern kingdom to a harvest at the end of a season in which the gardener has given special care to his orchard and then finds that the yield is disappointing. Israel has been ungrateful and has turned to idolatry rather than bringing forth that for which it was brought into being. At the time when both Israel and their God should have been rejoicing in the results, the end product had proven to be fit only to cast to the winds.

Amos 8:1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.

The basket of fruit is proof that the harvest time had arrived. Amos was allowed, in his vision, to see what was to be picked. Would it be worthy of pride, or would it be rotten and fit for nothing but garbage?

Amos 8:2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

Amos was asked what he saw. He answered that he saw the basket of summer fruit. God explained the meaning of the vision. He had reached the end of His patience with Israel. He had listened to the pleas of Amos in the previous visions. He had spared His wrath. This was not going to be repeated. This time He would pass “through” them rather than “by” them. The results of His passing through would be horrible.

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**Amos 8:3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.**

The temple of God should have been a place of great joy. Praises to Jehovah should have filled the air. All should have been joy and gladness in the thanksgiving for all the blessings of the past. It was to be just the opposite.

Rather than songs of joy and happiness, there would be wailing and howling. Tears were to flow like a river. Dead bodies would be lying everywhere. Silence would cover the land as the bodies of loved ones were cleared away. There would perhaps not even be time to bury the dead.

**Amos 8:4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,**

Why was such a sentence to be passed on those who had been God's very special people in the past centuries? He was ready to give His reasons for the horrors.

First, they had cared absolutely nothing for the poor and needy. What they had done was to take every advantage they could, leaving the poor in worse shape than ever. God loves the poor. He is angered by those who abuse them in order to gain profit for themselves. If He were to act in similar manner with mankind, all would be lost! He gave His cherished Son that men might avoid hell and share in the joys of heaven. He expects men to act in accordance with His example.

**Amos 8:5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that**

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we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

Secondly, the hearts and minds of the merchants were continually on the accumulation of wealth. They could hardly wait for the days set aside for worship to be over in order that they might return to their business affairs and pile up more earthly treasures.

They spent their time when worship was in order to decide how they could cheat on the quantity of their products, and then overcharge those who had need of what they sold.

Amos 8:6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

They were actually putting the poor in such a position that it was necessary for them to become the property of the rich in order to have clothing to protect their bodies. When the choice part of the crops were sold, the sweepings from the threshing floor were sold to those who could not afford food for their tables.

Amos 8:7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

God has an excellent memory. In the day of accounting He will remember both the righteousness and the unrighteousness of every man. The righteous will be rewarded. The wicked will be punished. Sometimes a day of accounting comes while the individual is still alive on earth. Other times that day will arrive when Jesus Christ returns and the dead rise.

Amos 8:8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

It is difficult to determine just how much of this verse is figurative and how much is literal. Some see the trembling of the land as being an actual earthquake. Others see it as great fear and trembling on the part of those who dwell on the land.

The same is true with respect to the flood. Are we talking about an actual flood, or are we to see this as a flood of misery which rises as a river overflows it's banks?

Either way, the picture is one of indescribable terror. Oh how much better it would have been for Israel to have thanked the Lord through praises and righteous action than to have brought such punishment upon themselves. Those of us who read and ponder the situation of Israel should be inspired to avoid the very appearance of idolatry and cling tightly to the hand of the Almighty.

Amos 8:9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:

“That day” is the day of reckoning, whether it be the dimming of Israel's glory in the Lord, or whether it be the final judgment day for all men who have ever breathed.

It is certainly true that when Jesus, the Son of the Living God died upon the cross just such things as are pictured here did literally take place. They may be repeated when He returns in judgment.

Amos 8:10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation;

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**and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.**

The contrast in the next verses is tremendous. What should have been joy would be replaced by wailing. Instead of fine clothing they would find themselves wearing the sackcloth of grief. Shaving the head was, for the Jew of that day, a sign of great sorrow. Most of us have not had the experience of losing an only son to death. Israel would suffer that depth of sorrow. The entire scene is one of bitterness.

**Amos 8:11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:**

Israel had shown disgust for the spiritual food which God had supplied them. Since that was their attitude, the Lord would remove it from their table. There would be an absence of the bread of life and the living water. They did not realize it, but this type of shortage can be more devastating than a famine of loaf bread and well water.

**Amos 8:12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.**

They would finally wander from one end of the earth to the other searching for that which had been removed from them. Dear reader, that is just what has taken place with the Jews. They have rejected the Christ. They

are wandering from one end of the earth to the other searching for a Messiah who has already come.

The United States of America is in much the same position today. Vast numbers of persons are hungry for that which has been available for over twenty centuries. They play music so loud the windows shake, but sing no praise to their Maker. They pile up thousands of dollars in bank accounts, but lay up nothing in the bank of heaven.

**Amos 8:13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.**

The virgins and the young men are those in whom one expects to find an abundance of vitality. Israel's young were to find themselves fainting from having not eaten the bread of life, as Jehovah had first offered it, and then removed it from them.

**Amos 8:14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.**

The sin of Samaria was the worship of the golden calves. Dan and Beersheba were both the site of such idolatrous worship. This nearly brings tears to our eyes when we recall that Beersheba was the town from which Abraham, the father of the faithful came. Who is it that shall fall and never rise again? It is they who turn their backs on the blessings of the True God and give themselves to the worship of mammon.

How often in our studies of the Bible we come back to the words of Joshua, "Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

## Chapter 9

This last chapter of the book of Amos contains a mixture of sorrow and hope; sorrow for those who are determined to turn a deaf ear to the voice of God and His prophets, and hope for those who respect His instructions and try diligently to walk in the light of His Word.

**Amos 9:1 I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.**

Amos is presented with the last of the five visions he sees in this record. This time the Lord is standing upon the altar and has found such serious transgression by people of Israel that He calls for destruction of the fleshly nation. There are two positions with respect to the identity of the altar which He has just measured and found wanting. Some see it as an altar in Bethel where idolatrous worship took place. Others contend that it is the altar in the temple at Jerusalem. The fact of the matter is that neither of these places was approved by Jehovah. Over and over He had pronounced His disapproval of the idolatrous worship which occurred at Bethel. But, He also had voiced disapproval of the temple at Jerusalem.

May we suggest that His words here may well apply to either of these sites. False and hypocritical worship was to be shaken to the foundations. His people are to find the superficial worship crashing down around their heads. There was to be no escape from the punishment which would come upon them.

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Amos 9:2 Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:

Hell is translated from the word “sheol” in this verse. Sheol is the place of the dead. Though one might dig into the depths of the earth the penetrating eye of the Lord would seek them out.

It would be the same if they made an attempt to climb to the highest of the mountains, they would be located and punished for their sins. God’s arm is not shortened, nor is His eye dimmed.

Amos 9:3 And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them:

Mount Carmel is well known for having hundreds of limestone caves where fugitives sometimes tried to hide from authorities. God’s all searching eye would seek them out in such places. Even if they were to attempt to evade Him in the deepest parts of the sea the punishments of the Lord would catch up with them. The point is that nowhere under the earth, on the earth or above the earth would the sinners evade the wrath of their God.

Amos 9:4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

Some might either willingly, or unwilling go into captivity in Assyria or elsewhere. This would not assure

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their safety. The sword of the Lord would be dedicated to their destruction. God would be their foe and not their friend. None of us should consider for a moment any attempt to escape God's punishment by joining His enemies.

**Amos 9:5 And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.**

Jehovah has only to reach out His finger in the chastisement of either His people, or the land upon which they dwell. He can cause the water to rise and cover the land as in the time of Noah. He can roll the waters of the Nile to overflow it's banks with devastating results. Peter tells us that in the end, the elements will melt with fervent heat. God is in complete control of the laws of nature. He instituted them and He is capable of controlling them.

**Amos 9:6 It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.**

There are layers upon layers of heavenly bodies. It is likely that man has only scratched the surface of the entire creation of the Lord as it was brought into being at the beginning.

**Amos 9:7 Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have**

**not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?  
and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians  
from Kir?**

The Israelites have proven themselves to be no more worthy of His blessings than the Ethiopians, the Philistines or the Syrians. The truth is that Israel is even more subject to punishment because that nation had walked in their own ways. They had even gone so far as to pay as great or greater honor to their false gods than they paid to the Lord.

**Amos 9:8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.**

It had been determined that the fleshly kingdom of Israel would be eliminated from the earth. This did not mean that the promise to Abraham that all nations of the earth would be blessed through his seed. There would still be a remnant of the Jews through which the sins of the world might be erased. But, that would come about through the establishment of a new spiritual kingdom made up of those who were found to be faithful.

**Amos 9:9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.**

God does not throw away that which is valuable. At His command the fleshly nation of Israel would be scattered among the various nations of the earth. There

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they would be sifted carefully in order that the chaff might be separated from the true kernels of grain. The process would be so effective that no chaff would be rewarded, and no kernels would be cast out.

It is the present writer's belief that this sifting process is taking place during the Christian age. God is gathering His pearls. They will in no wise be offered to the swine.

Amos 9:10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

Any who are so obstinate and pleasure seeking that they convince themselves they can defy Jehovah and escape any serious consequences are very much mistaken. Their sins will find them out. May we add that it is not always the sinners who die by the sword. Sometimes good persons lose their lives simply by living in the midst of those sinners. The great difference is that the sinners will meet a second death. The righteous will rise to eternal life with others of like faith.

Amos 9:11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

The day is ahead when tables will be turned. The tabernacle of David which has fallen will be replaced by the glory of the Church of Jesus Christ. Christ Himself will be the King of kings.

Amos 9:12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

The reader should consider the fact that Amos does not say “all” of Edom will be possessed by the faithful. The remnant is that which will be possessed. We may add to this remnant of Edom, the remnant of every heathen nation which choose to love and obey the will of Jehovah and His Son. These are the ones who find the strait and narrow way that leads to life. They are the ones who take great pride in wearing the name of the Lord.

Amos 9:13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

There are some things about these last three verses which we can state with confidence. There are other things which may have to wait until they have come to pass before we can fully understand. Whichever it true, it is worth the effort to love the Lord and keep His commandments. Ultimately, either in this world or the next, the faithful will find an existence in which all will be well with his or her soul.

Amos 9:14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

To bring again the captivity of God's people is to release them from the bondage which Satan loves to cause their suffering. Fleshly Israel was not completely dismissed. Salvation began to be preached from Jerusalem, and from there it is to pass through all nations of the earth.



Those who accept God's plan for the remission of sins will be builders of a New Jerusalem. They will never regret their choice, even when the new heaven and earth has replaced this present one. Let each of us determine that we will be among the builders rather than joining the "wrecking crew."

Amos 9:15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

I close this chapter by making a comparison between the words found in these last verses and those found in Romans 8:35-39.

Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Rom 8:36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Rom 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Rom 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**The Book Of
OBADIAH**

Introduction To Obadiah

The Author:

This book is not the only mention of the name Obadiah. The Old Testament includes it in the books of 1 Kings and several places in 1 Chronicles. The work before us was probably produced about B.C. 586 when Nebuchadnezzar took the city of Jerusalem.

The Occasion for Writing:

There had been animosity between the descendants of Jacob and those of Esau from the time that Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a meal of pottage. When Israel requested permission to pass through the territory of Edom in order that they might enter into the land of Canaan, Edom refused that permission. The territory is rugged. There are sandstone cliffs which rise as much as 700 feet about the passes below through which Israel would have passed if given permission. Mount Seir is located in such a location.

When Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army attacked the city of Jerusalem, the Edomites cried out for them to level it to the ground. In the time of Herod they gained some degree of power over the Israelites during the four hundred years which elapsed between the testaments. It is very clear in this book of Obadiah that the hatred between the Edomites and the Israelites

was at a high level. Note particularly the fifteenth verse of the single chapter of the book.

Obad 1:15 For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

How sad it is that two groups of people who had descended from brothers became the bitterest of enemies!

Chapter 1

Obad 1:1 The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.

The Lord had caused Obadiah to understand that He knew of a plot to get an agreement among the heathen nations to band together and fight against Israel. It may be that Edom herself had initiated this movement. If not, she was most certainly in sympathy with it.

Obad 1:2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

God has a message for Edom. She had not been one of the major nations of the world. There was a time in which she had been looked upon with disdain by both Israel and by the heathen nations of that portion of the world.

Obad 1:3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

Edom had not remained insignificant, at least in her own mind she had not. She thought of herself as being so secure in her mountainous cave filled land that no one could possible cause her to suffer. Her geographical location, as well as her power and wisdom cause her false sense of pride.

The city of Petra was in Edom. It was hewn out of the sides of rocky clefts in the mountains. The Edomites felt no one had the means to defeat her.

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**Obad 1:4 Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.**

God's prophet, Obadiah, had a word from the Lord for this profane people. There was no place high enough to challenge His authority. It was true that Edom had built homes where eagles nested. But, that was not high enough to evade what was about to take place. Even if she had been able to build those homes in the midst of the stars of heaven, Edom would be made answerable for her haughty attitude.

**Obad 1:5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?**

If thieves or robbers come against a home, they do not remove every possession. They feel it is a waste of time to seek out every cubby hole where something of value might be hidden.

If those who harvest grapes or other fruits of the field came and took possession of that for which one had labored, they would not take the time to glean every grape of grain of wheat. They would consider this to be a thing not worth while.

**Obad 1:6 How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!**

It was quite different with respect to what lay ahead for the proud descendants of Esau. Every nook and cranny would be exposed to sight. It would be emptied of everything of value.

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Obad 1:7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.

Edom had deceived herself if she thought those nations who had allied themselves with her would be willing to defend her in the time of her punishment. She would find that those upon whom she had relied would take advantage of her when they saw her struggling. They would have no concern for her woes.

Obad 1:8 Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?

Her men of earthly wisdom would be rendered helpless in the face of God's wrath. They would become confused and make foolish decisions.

Obad 1:9 And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

Edom's men who were known for their ability as military leaders would be as helpless as babes when their power was pitted against that of the God of heaven. There would be disastrous military defeats.

Obad 1:10 For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

She had thought that her abuse of the descendants of Jacob would stand before any plan to repay her for her lack of pity. Instead, she would find that she was the one who would suffer from violence in the end. Even more, she would not recover from the punishment she would endure at the hand of God. She had chosen to defy Him. He would see that she reaped as she had sown.

Obad 1:11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.

The “other side” could mean the other side of the Jordan from Israel, or it could mean the army which was fighting against Israel. We are not left with any doubt as to the sins of which Edom was guilty. She had acted as one of the enemy when they invaded Israel and her capitol city of Jerusalem.

Obad 1:12 But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

There were several things which “thou shouldest not have done.”

1. She should not have looked on nonchalantly as Israel’s enemies attacked.
2. She should not have rejoiced over such destruction.



3. She should not have boasted when Israel was distressed.

Obad 1:13 Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity;

4. She should not have invaded the land of Israel when they were being robbed of their possessions.
5. They should not have shared in the looting of the possessions of the Israelites.

Obad 1:14 Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.

Not only had the Edomites sympathized with the enemies of Israel, they aided in the persecution of God's own. How ridiculous for the Israelites to be persecuted by those who were related to them as close as were their cousins of the flesh.

Obad 1:15 For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

Evil persecutors of the people of God will find themselves on the receiving end of such miseries as they have poured out upon those people. They will get something in return for their efforts, however what they

receive will be very much like what they have poured out on the faithful.

Obad 1:16 For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

As a result of allying themselves with the heathen of the land the Edomites would be removed from prominence on the face of the earth. The enemies of Israel would find themselves devouring one another.

Obad 1:17 But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

The Lord would see to it that the Israelites would be delivered from the distress which had been visited upon them. Matters would be completely reversed, with the descendants of Jacob coming into possession of the territory of the Edomites.

Obad 1:18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it.

Those nations which had banded together to make life miserable for Israel would find themselves dispossessed by those they had persecuted. Jehovah had spoken! The power of the Edomites would be erased as if they had never existed.

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**Obad 1:19 And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines; and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.**

How completely matters were to be reversed. Whereas the heathen had attempted to swallow up the descendants of Jacob, now the shoe would be worn on the other foot. God's faithful would become the possessors of the land which had been in the hands of the Philistines and others who made life miserable for Israel.

**Obad 1:20 And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.**

Conditions would be quite the reverse of what they had been in the past. Those who had been governed by the foes of God's children would become the possessors rather than being the oppressed.

**Obad 1:21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.**

This last verse predicts a time to come when the people of God will have overcome the resistance of the oppressors and will have seen the Kingdom of God as victorious over every foe. The "saviours" are to be those who preach and teach the Word of the Lord. Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. His subjects will claim the final victory.





**The Book Of  
JONAH**



# *Introduction To Jonah*

There is perhaps more controversy over the book of Jonah than is true of any other book in the Bible. Bible critics have leveled many accusations at this short four chapter book. For the most part, these arrows have been aimed at the supernatural events which are recorded in the book. It is claimed that the record is tradition, parable, legend or even fairy tale.

The writer of this present commentary believes that the events discussed are actual history. There is a God in heaven. He created heaven and earth. He not only created the universe; He is involved in it's development. At times this has been demonstrated through miracles. At other times His supervision takes the form of providential action which causes all things to work together for the good of those who love and obey Him. This book is viewed as a combination of miracles and providence.

## **The Author:**

Jonah was a Hebrew. He was proud of being a descend-ant of Abraham. He believed Israel was a carefully selected and chosen people. He was a son of Amittai and was raised in the town of Gath-Hepher which was located just a few miles northeast of Nazareth. Later Gath-Hepher came to be known as Cana of Galilee.

Regardless of the objections of the critics, Jesus stated that Jonah was an authentic historical character. (See Matthew 12:45).

*Matt 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:*

*Matt 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

The author of 2 Kings specifically pointed to Jonah as the author of the events of the book.

*2Kings 14:25 He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher.*

Other than the two references quoted above, the book of Jonah is the only source we have detailing the life and character of the man.

One objection to Jonah as the author is that the material is written in the third person. It is about Jonah rather than by Jonah. This however is not the only case in which the third person is used. Moses wrote about himself in the book of Exodus. Solomon did so, and Paul wrote of his conversion in the same manner.

### **The Date of the Book:**

We cannot precisely date the time of writing. Since it falls either shortly before the reign of Jereboam II, or in the early years of that reign, and since that King ruled around 800 B.C. to 760 B.C. we may

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place the date somewhere in the early part of the eighth century B.C.

The Theme of the Book:

Though God made it clear to His people that there was a special relationship between Himself and the nation of Israel, He had a love for the Gentiles also. The Lord was moving from a relationship between Himself and families such as Adam and Eve, as well as Abraham, to nations such as Israel, and finally to one involving the entire globe. Israel was special in His plans as a step in that continuing process. Jonah was to learn of God's concern for the Gentile world in his commission to preach to Ninevah. Later, Peter objected to taking the message of salvation to the Gentile household of Cornelius. God cares about all men! His directions to Israel not to mix with the Gentiles in those early days was due to the fact that He was using Israel as His servant to bring about the introduction of His Son to all of mankind.

The book of Jonah is also emphatic in declaring that God is in control of His creation. He is capable of performing supernatural acts such as those recounted in the case of Jonah's experiences. If one is to object to the authenticity of the book of Jonah on the basis of the miracles included, he might as well disregard the validity of the entire Biblical record.

A Brief Outline of the Book:

- I. Jonah is commanded to preach to Ninevah.
- II. Jonah flees from God.
- III. God intervenes and Jonah is punished.
- IV. Jonah is rescued from the deep.
- V. Jonah is again commanded to preach.

- VI. This time Jonah obeys.
- VII. Ninevah repents.
- VIII. Jonah grieves over this result.
- IX. God gives Jonah explanation and advice.
- X. God's blessings reach out to all who will obey.

Chapter 1

Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

God has a plan for every man. The plan for Jonah was made clear. We are not informed as to just how the command came to him, but Jonah was a dedicated servant of God and God likes to give important tasks to that type of person. Jonah should have been overjoyed that he was chosen for a God given responsibility.

Jonah 1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

Jonah's assignment was to go to the great city of Nineveh and cry out to them that their wickedness was noted by the Lord. The city of Ninevah was the capitol of Assyria. It was truly a city reputed by men to be great. It was thought to have as many as 600,000 citizens. It was surrounded by high walls upon which chariots could actually pass one another. It was so powerful that when it's warriors swarmed over another smaller city to take it captive, large numbers of men would commit suicide rather than be tortured as was often the case with Assyrian captives.

God knew the time had come for these wicked people to be told of His displeasure at their actions. Jonah had a momentous challenge before him.

Jonah 1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to

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**go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.**

Jonah made a decision not to do as God had commanded. He went into action, but his actions took him hundreds of miles in the opposite direction from Nineveh. He went to the seaport of Joppa and paid the fare for a ship going to Tarshish, on the southern coast of Spain. He was fleeing from God.

One cannot flee from a God who is omnipresent. As a prophet, Jonah should have understood that truth. Why would he make such a ridiculous decision? There are several possible reasons. Possibly two stand out. First, he feared that Nineveh would refuse to repent, which would leave him as a prophet whose word was not kept. Second, he had been impressed with God's previous commands about communing with the Gentile nations around Israel.

The fare which men pay when they board a ship sailing in the opposite direction from that which God commands is far more expensive than they realize. The principle is just as valid today as it was in the time of Jonah.

**Jonah 1:4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.**

God has numerous ways in which he can stop men and turn them around. This time He chose to do it by causing a tempestuous wind. This was obviously an unexpected event. Experienced sailors would not have ventured out on the open sea during seasons in which such storms might be expected. This was no ordinary storm. It was powerful enough that the seamen knew the ship was in danger of being broken to pieces.

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Some see this storm as a miracle. Others see it as providential management of nature. Miracles are events which God causes that are so contrary to the normal natural processes that they could not have come about except through the intervention of God. They are deliberately used to teach lessons God desires men to learn. A tempestuous storm might, or might not be a miracle. The seamen thought it might be. Jonah was quite positive that it was.

Jonah 1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

The sailors began to call upon those which they believed to be gods. Each man prayed to one in whom he felt there could be help. This indicates that the sailors had various religious backgrounds. We can well believe that each of them felt the god to whom he prayed was one who could control the storm if he so desired. In addition to their prayers, the sailors began throwing the contents of the ship overboard. This would make it lighter and it would reduce the chances of it being submerged.

Meanwhile Jonah had gone down into the hold of the ship. He had actually laid down and gone to sleep while the storm was tossing the ship about. How could this be? One suggested reason is that he was exhausted from his long and disobedient trip from Joppa toward Tarshish.

Jonah 1:6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

The captain of the ship found Jonah sleeping and was shocked. He called upon Jonah to get up and pray to his God as the rest were praying to theirs. Maybe Jonah's God would respond to his prayer and all could avoid perishing in the midst of the sea.

Is this not an interesting turn of events? Here is a heathen who does not worship Jehovah pleading with a prophet of God to pray. One would expect just the opposite. The prophet would be expected to call upon the unbeliever to pray to the True God.

The reader may remember that Jesus was once asleep under somewhat the same conditions. He was asked to intervene that the entire ship might not perish.

Jonah 1:7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

Then the fearful mariners decided upon another way of trying to solve their concerns. Maybe if they cast lots the gods would allow the lot to fall upon the one who was responsible for their plight. This would not have been a form of gambling. It was an invitation to a mind greater than that of humans to make His desires clear. This was not the only time in the scriptures that lots were cast. It was also done when a replacement was needed for Judas.

The lot these sailors cast fell upon Jonah. He and the sailors all felt that it was a true manifestation of the finger of guilt having been pointed to him as the reason for the terrors.

Jonah 1:8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon

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**us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?**

The sailors then poured out a series of questions upon the prophet.

1. Why had the storm struck?
2. What was Jonah's occupation?
3. From what country had he come?
4. Who were his people?

**Jonah 1:9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.**

Jonah very surprisingly and very honestly answered their questions. He was a Hebrew. The Hebrews were recognized by other people as serving One God whose name was Jehovah. Jonah added that he feared that One God who had created both the sea and the land. The God he served had the power to control the sea.

**Jonah 1:10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him. Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.**

The sailors were beginning to have greater respect for Jehovah than they had before. Knowing Jonah was in the process of fleeing from Jehovah, they wished to know why he had been so foolish. We, of course, wonder the same thing. However, if we had been in the position Jonah had found himself can we claim we would have done better than he?

**Jonah 1:11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.**

They then wondered what could be done to appease the Lord that their lives might be saved. The storm had not abated. Could Jonah himself make any suggestion which would help?

**Jonah 1:12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.**

Jonah's reply shows that he was no coward. He was willing to sacrifice his own life in order that the lives of the rest of those on the ship might be saved.

We can see strong similarities here between the attitude of Jonah and that of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave His life that many others might find salvation. There was a strong contrast though. Jonah knew he was guilty. Jesus knew he was guiltless.

**Jonah 1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.**

The sailors seem to have been touched by Jonah's offer. They did not wish to see Jonah drowned any more than they wanted to lose their own lives. They tried as hard as they could to row the ship to the seashore, but could not. The wind was too great.

**Jonah 1:14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech**

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thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

The sailors pleaded earnestly with Jehovah that no life might be lost. They did not wish to die because Jonah had sinned. Nor did they wish to cast Jonah overboard and bring guilt upon themselves for bringing about his death. It did seem that God had indicated Jonah was to be dropped into the raging sea. They would do as God had made evident.

Jonah 1:15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

Jonah was cast overboard and into the foaming water. As soon as this was done, the storm ceased. Here we have another of the miracles versus providence questions. Was the calming of the sea deliberate on God's part, to teach a lesson, or was it just a happenstance of nature that the storm ceased just as Jonah was cast overboard.

Jonah 1:16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

The sailors were absolutely convinced that it was action on the part of Jonah's God that brought about the easing of the storm. They offered a sacrifice of gratitude and vowed to honor Jehovah.

Jonah 1:17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

It is unfortunate that the word which is translated as “great fish” in this verse was been translated as “whale.” The word literally means “sea monster.” Whales are known to have small throats. The critics use this as ammunition against the truth of the entire book of Jonah. There are other sea monsters which are capable of swallowing a man.

A second bone of contention is whether a man such as Jonah might survive for three days and three nights in the belly of such a sea creature. Since Jesus referred to this event as a sign pointing to his own death burial and resurrection, it just might be that Jonah did not survive, but was brought back to life when he was vomited up by the creature. One must be cautious when attempting to limit the power of the Almighty!

Chapter 2

There is a drastic change of attitude on the part of Jonah during the course of the events recorded in this second chapter. As the chapter begins he has just been cast out of the ship by the sailors. He did not seem too worried about advising the men to throw him overboard. Death did not seem to bother him seriously.

By the time we reach the end of the chapter we find him promising to sacrifice and make vows to the Lord. He was apparently quite willing to go and preach to the Gentiles in the city of Ninevah by that time.

Jonah 2:1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

Shortly after being swallowed by the sea monster, Jonah became aware of the necessity of communication with God. The belly of the fish was not a very elaborate sanctuary, but he was ready to make use of it regardless of what must have been disgusting conditions.

How like many persons Jonah was! As long as conditions were reasonably bearable he summoned the courage to disobey the commandments of the Lord. Now, in the belly of the fish, he could see death just around the corner. Prayer seemed much more valuable than was the case when all was less threatening.

Jonah 2:2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

Affliction is not always bad. We are told that we will not be tempted above that we are able to bear, but that

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with the temptation there will be a way of escape. After the affliction has passed, very often we find that we are stronger spiritually than we were before the distress.

Jonah cried out to the Lord as a result of his horrible conditions. Would he not have had serious questions as to whether or not God would lend an ear to his prayer after he had turned a deaf ear to God's command to preach to Gentiles? But God is gracious. He heard the prayer and Jonah was grateful.

Jonah declared that he had cried out of the belly of hell. The word translated "hell" here is "sheol." The word means, "abode of the dead." In the New Testament the word "hades" means the same. Conservative students of the Bible differ on whether Jonah actually died during those days and nights in the belly of the fish. Since Jesus referred to this account as a type of His own resurrection from the dead, some contend that Jonah did truly die, and was brought back to life when he was vomited up on the land. Others are just as fully convinced that he remained alive. It is pointed out that it is not a matter of whether or not God could have kept him alive. It is a matter of whether He did keep him alive.

The fact that Jonah prayed while in the belly of the fish has no bearing on the issue. He could have prayed shortly after being swallowed, and then died afterward. This present commentator is inclined to believe Jonah did die and was resurrected from the dead. This would be a more impressive miracle than to have only caused him to survive for the time period.

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

In his prayer Jonah states that it was Jehovah who had cast him into the sea. We had read earlier that the sailors were the ones who had done that. A comprehensive look at the matter tells us that if God had not brought the storm, Jonah would not have been cast overboard. Thus God did it.

We do not know just how long it was between the time Jonah entered the water and when he was swallowed by the fish. The verse above could mean that before he was swallowed up, he went down to the very depths of the sea and that the waves raged far above his body.

**Jonah 2:4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.**

This is interesting. He may already have gained some confidence that he would be brought back into the favor of God and be permitted to worship as he had done before. One's mind might well waver between fear of certain death and the possibility of divine intervention to cause survival.

It is doubtful that this statement has anything to do with the dating of the book before the destruction of the temple, or afterward. It is more apt to mean God's heavenly abode.

**Jonah 2:5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.**

The soul is the inner man. As the water surrounded him on every side, he was more concerned about his soul than about his physical life.

The description here is thought by some to imply that Jonah was intertwined among the seaweed in the belly

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of the fish. I think this refers to the time before he was swallowed and was tossed around in the sea.

Jonah 2:6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

Mountains at the edge of the sea do not stop at sea level. They continue downward, sometimes for a great distance. Jonah was submerged to the very depths of the sea. The bars of the earth would have been that which caused him to feel that he might never again see the surface of the earth. Yet this account must have been written after his life was restored. His destiny was not for his body to rot and fall into the debris at the bottom of the ocean.

The statement here may mean that he was actually dead, but that corruption did not take place.

Jonah 2:7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

As his life faded away he remembered Who had bestowed that life and Who had maintained it. He had convinced himself that he could successfully run away from God. Now he knew the reality of things. He prayed with every fibre of his being that God would help. And He did.

Jonah 2:8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

What is the reason for this statement at this particular point in the series of events? The reason is that Jonah

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had believed briefly in empty lies. In doing this he had discarded the only hope that man has for the mercy which God wishes to offer. Only when such empty lies have been replaced by faith in God's wisdom and loving care, can such a one place himself in a position to take advantage of God's mercy.

**Jonah 2:9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.**

Jonah made up his mind that if he were to be given the opportunity he would offer sacrifices of thanksgiving to the Lord. He would also pay that which he had vowed. Does this mean he had vowed to go to Nineveh as God had commanded.

Yes, salvation is of the Lord. This is true not only with Jonah, but with every person who ever lived. Although the Bible tells us to work out our own salvation, it will only come about when one is ready to love and obey with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. And it will only come about because God made it possible.

**Jonah 2:10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.**

All kinds of questions have been posed by enemies of the Word of God with respect to supposed problems in the book of Jonah. One such question is how a fish the size of the one which swallowed Jonah could get close enough to the dry land to vomit Jonah out upon it. Just how far can a large fish vomit? I do not know. Do you? The answer may well depend upon just how far God wants it to!

## *Chapter 3*

When the Word of God comes into contact with the heart of persons who have learned what it means to fear God and keep His commandments the results can be quite amazing. This chapter tells us of just such responses, first on the part of Jonah, then on the part of the Ninevites to whom he preached.

**Jonah 3:1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,**

God was aware of the effect His disciplinary action had produced in the heart of His prophet. Jonah was now ready to hear and obey, whereas before he had heard but had refused to obey. Why is it that some must suffer such misery as Jonah endured to learn the lesson which he learned?

Is it not a wondrous thing that God offers a second chance to those who have refused His first one? If we average humans were to be insulted to the degree that Jonah and many of us insult God, we would deny the offender any second opportunity.

**Jonah 3:2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.**

This verse implies that Jonah had settled down and forgotten his assignment to go to Nineveh. That was not to last long. God commanded that He go to Nineveh and finish the task which had previously been given to him.

Nineveh is called "that great city." There were three ways in which it was great. It was great in size. It was great in population, and it was great in sin. The city most certainly needed to hear the Word of God from the mouth of one who sincerely believed it.

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Jonah was not to preach his own wisdom. He was to preach the preaching which God bid him to preach. Preachers are not intended to be in the entertainment business. Great preaching is not based on what the people want. It is based on that which God knows they need!

Jonah 3:3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

Jonah's reaction this time was quite the opposite as it had been when he first received this same assignment. This time he went toward Nineveh instead of away from it. We can be certain that Jonah had no more love for the Ninevites than he had possessed before. But in view of what had happened when he refused God, he had a completely different attitude.

It is very difficult to determine just how big the city was. Cities in that part of the world at that time often had a central area which was walled for security reasons. Upon being attacked, the people could move inside the walls and defend themselves much easier. There is reason to believe that Nineveh was this type of city. It had a sizable portion inside the protective walls, and was surrounded by a much larger area of populated territory outside the walls.

Nor do we know precisely just how far a three day journey would have been. A person can walk about three miles an hour. If he were to walk for ten hours, he would cover a distance of about thirty miles. This would mean that a three day journey could be as much as ninety miles. Some are of the opinion that this could well have been the distance around the entire populated area inside and outside the walls. One thing is certain. God intended for us to envision a large city with a large population.

Jonah 3:4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

As Jonah entered the city, he began to cry out to the people that in forty days the city would be overthrown. What would those of New York City in the United States, or any other of the major cities of the world, reply if a preacher were to cry out these same words? Would they say the preacher was insane? Such a reaction would not be a great surprise.

We do not know just how Jonah proceeded. He may have cried out his message and then moved forward a short distance and repeated it to those who had not heard it previously. To have gone one days journey means that he had not yet covered the entire city before he got a strong reaction.

Jonah 3:5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

The people of the city did not arrest him and place him in custody. They believed his message was from the Lord. One wonders why the message was taken seriously. There are several possibilities suggested. One is that he may not have been the only one telling this news. The sailors may very well have spread the word of what had happened in the sea.

It has also been suggested that the stay of three days and nights in the belly of the fish would have had it's effects upon the body of the prophet. The digestive juices of the fish could have left changes in his appearance which would give support to his warning. If he had been punished for disobedience, Nineveh might well suffer the same fate.

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Fasting and sitting in ashes, dressed in sackcloth, were actions which everyone recognized as mourning and desire for a change. Sometimes it was grief over death of a loved one. Other times it was sorrow for sin which had been committed. The latter was the case this time. The people of the city did know the difference between right and wrong. There was a mass change of attitude. From the least of the people, up to the king himself, there was a recognition of the need for turning from sin and adopting a new and purer life style.

**Jonah 3:6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.**

Kings are not known for their great humility. Yet this one saw the need to provide an example for those whom he ruled. He did not hesitate to discard his royal garments and replace them with the same sackcloth and ashes which the lower classes were using.

**Jonah 3:7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:**

Though sitting in ashes and clothed in sackcloth, the king still had the authority to issue a decree. No man or beast was to either eat food nor drink water until the forty days was completed, or new word was heard from God.

**Jon 3:8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them**

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turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

The king was calling for everyone in the city to repent. Repentance is a change of mind which leads to a change of actions. The people must cease their sinful ways and cry out to God that they were willing to honor Him. They had been immoral, greedy and unmerciful toward others. This must stop. If it did stop, the warned overthrow might be avoided.

Jonah 3:9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

We probably did not hear the complete sermon preached by Jonah. If the only thing the people heard was the simple statement that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days, they might not have attributed it to their sins, but decided some stronger people would come upon them. Jonah either said some things which we are not told of, or the sailors may have added their witness to his.

Jonah 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Is God a man, that He should repent of sin? By no means! This is only a way to informing us that God changed His mind about the destruction when He observed the penitent attitude of the people of the city. We must remind the reader of the words of Jeremiah 18:7-10.

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*Jer 18:7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;*

*Jer 18:8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*

*Jer 18:9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;*

*Jer 18:10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.*

God's warnings and promises are conditional. On more than one occasion He has altered His actions to conform to the obedience or disobedience of nations and also individuals. Many who have been headed directly toward the fire of hell, have seen their hideous end and have turned to righteousness. When that happens, God repents of that which would have been their eternal agony and exchange it for an unending blessing.

## Chapter 4

This chapter almost seems to give the reason for it's inclusion in the book of Jonah. Jonah's anger at the Lord for sparing the city after the prophet had so forcefully cried out that "Within forty days Ninevah will be overthrown" is proof that God's love is extended to all men, both Jew and Gentile. It is true that this book gives us only a foretaste of God's concern for those not of the chosen nation, but no messenger of God in any age should feel disappointment over the conversion of anyone of any land or color who genuinely repents of sin.

**Jonah 4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.**

Jonah was not just displeased, he was exceedingly displeased. His displeasure was so great that it was more accurately seen as anger. In an attempt to justify his feelings he lifted his voice to God in prayer.

**Jonah 4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.**

He proceeded to lecture the Lord about the position in which he had been placed. He pointed out that he had objected to going to preach to the Ninevites even before he left Galilee. Even then he felt that if he preached to that wicked city about it's sin and declared that they would be punished for it, God would take pity on them and fail to punish them as Jonah was to tell them they would be.

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He explained that this was the reason he headed to Tarshish instead of going to Nineveh at that time. He discredited God for being gracious, merciful, kind and longsuffering. It was turning out just as he thought it would. He had told them the city would be destroyed in forty days. Now God had not caused the overthrow of the city and Jonah was branded as a false prophet.

Jonah 4:3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

Has the reader ever heard someone say, “I wish I was dead.” Jonah is not so desperate that he is ready to commit suicide, but he is praying that God will spare him the anguish and kill him in His way. Does the reader think the Lord was angry at Jonah, or was He just disappointed?

Jonah 4:4 Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

Jonah was asked one of those very penetrating questions for which the Lord is well known. Jonah, do you feel that it is right that you should be angry as a result of the survival of Nineveh? He probably did not really expect to get confession that Jonah felt any guilt over his feelings.

Jonah 4:5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

The only answer Jonah seems to have given was to go out to the east side of the city where he could get a good

view of it and watch to see if God might still cause its destruction. He even built himself a booth where he could sit in the shadows to wait for the hoped for event.

Jonah 4:6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

Previously God had prepared a great fish. Now he prepared a gourd. The gourd grew up over Jonah and provided even more comfort than the booth which he had built. Where he had been exceedingly displeased, he was now exceedingly glad. Perhaps his warnings to the city would be followed by that which he had foretold. He would then be in position to see it take place.

Jonah 4:7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

God had prepared the gourd as part of a serious lesson. He wished to teach the disappointed prophet. The next morning God had prepared a third object. This time it was a worm which feasted upon the gourd and caused it to wither. The shade had been partially removed.

Jonah 4:8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

Then when the sun came up, God prepared yet one more thing. It was a blasting hot wind. Between the sun



and the wind Jonah became faint and again wished that he might die.

Jonah 4:9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

God questioned him again. Did he think it was right for him to be angry over the loss of the gourd vine? His reply was absolute. He had a right to be so angry he wished to die.

Jonah 4:10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

This is the point that the Lord wished to reach with Jonah from the very first. There were lost souls in Nineveh who needed to be instructed in the need for repentance. Jonah hated the Ninevites so intensely that he was glad to think that they might perish. After all of the experiences Jonah had gone through it was time to underline the point which God wished to make.

Here was Jonah who had expressed great grief over the destruction of a gourd which he had not even planted or cared for. It had come up quickly and had been cut off quickly. Why should he accuse God of being too gracious toward the Ninevites when he had been so terribly disappointed at the loss of his gourd vine?

Jonah 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

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When the value of the gourd vine was compared with the value of some 120,000 persons in the city of Nineveh Jonah should be ashamed of himself. God had spent far more time in the development of those thousands of persons than Jonah had spent on his gourd vine. Why did he not rejoice at the salvation of their souls, and even of their cattle and possessions? Both were far more valuable to God than the gourd vine was to Jonah.

I would like to encourage the reader to examine the excellent discussion of Jonah which is given by Burton Coffman, as a type of both Jesus Christ and of the nation of Israel. There are many points of similarity and contrast.

**The Book Of  
MICAH**



# *Introduction To Micah*

## **The Author:**

The prophet Micah lived in Moresheth-gath which was located some twenty miles southwest of the city of Jerusalem. The village was surrounded by fertile fields in the relatively level land on the western plains of Canaan. This led to a concern on the part of the prophet for the common man whereas Isaiah, who prophesied in the same time period, was more concerned with national politics and was acquainted with royalty.

Micah was a man of plain words. He was very courageous, condemning sin in terms which everyone could understand. There was no excuse for ignorance of such sin when Micah expressed the Word of God to men with such clarity. He was a man who knew the power of God. He explained his bold approach in the eighth verse of chapter three.

**Mic 3:8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.**

Some of the higher critics have tried to find quotations by Micah from the work of Isaiah, and vice versa. There are some very similar statements in the writings of the two men, but this might well be expected from two who were inspired by Jehovah and who observed many of the same sins of the people.

**The Date:**

It is generally believed that Micah did his writing in the latter portion of the eighth century B.C. He began to prophesy before the fall of Samaria, the capitol of the northern kingdom. He was still doing so in the time of King Hezekiah. (See Micah 1:5 and Jeremiah 26:18-19.)

**Mic 1:5 For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?**

*Jer 26:18 Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.*

*Jer 26:19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.*

This would place his prophecy somewhere in the period of 740 to 700 B.C.

**Background Conditions:**

Good King Uzziah had brought about a certain amount of prosperity in the areas of agriculture and commerce. As often happens when people prosper, they begin to



convince themselves they are able to conduct their own lives without dependence upon the Lord. If it had not been for kings like Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah, it is likely that the southern kingdom of Judah would have fallen into captivity much sooner than it did.

It was not difficult to predict that there would be a threat from the Assyrian empire. The Assyrians were looking greedily at Egypt, and both Israel and Judah lay between the two powers.

Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria was making his move toward Israel when Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria had formed an alliance to protect themselves from Assyria. They expected that Ahaz, king of Judah would join them. He did not. Instead, Ahaz requested help from Tiglath-pileser. That was a most serious mistake.

Sargon II followed Tiglath-pileser. Sennacherib followed Sargon II. Sargon II invaded Judah and Sennacherib succeeded in pinning Hezekiah up in the city of Jerusalem. If it had not been for the intervention of the Lord through destroying 185,000 Assyrian troops in a single night, Judah would have fallen. As it was, the Assyrians retreated and Judah retained it's independence for nearly a century and a half after Samaria, the capitol of the northern kingdom surrendered.

King Hezekiah made a valiant attempt to strengthen the spiritual conditions in Judah. Altars dedicated to false gods were destroyed. The temple was cleaned up. The feasts and sacrifices were carefully observed. The various outward evidences of spirituality were apparently in harmony with the will of the Lord. But outward appearances and heart felt sincerity in religious matters are two very different things.

Micah expressed the abhorrence of God for this hypocrisy. There was danger of the most serious nature ahead if this pattern continued. Those of every age have

faced similar temptations. If the weekly observances of the church are attended with regularity, the life which is lived the rest of the week is often corrupt. The Lord is supposed not to take note of the sins of the other days, as long as the people are punctual and correct in their actions that one day of the week. Micah pronounced the anger of the Lord with respect to the abuses of the rich and powerful toward the poor and weak. We find the following instructions in Micah 6:8.

**Mic 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?**

### **A Messiah is Coming:**

Micah foresaw a glorious future for God's faithful. It was to come through one who would be born in Bethlehem and would rule forever. Under His rule the Kingdom of God would be the most brilliant of all the governmental mountains of the earth. Under that rule there would be mercy, justice and peace.

### **An Outline of the Book:**

- I. Both Samaria and Judah would fall.
- II. After the fall, a restoration would take place.
- III. The need for repentance and dedication.
- IV. A Messiah will lead the faithful to victory.

## *Chapter 1*

Although living in the southern kingdom of Judah, Micah speaks of the judgment of the Lord on the capitals of both Israel and Judah. The sins of both are apparently reaching the incurable stage.

**Mic 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.**

It is not the word of Micah. It is the word of the Lord being presented by Micah. Preachers of the Word of God must be extremely careful to distinguish between their own opinions and the declarations of the Almighty.

Micah was from the village of Morasthite about twenty miles from Jerusalem on the southwestern border of Palestine. Being near the northern part of the land of Egypt, it was considered a target by the Assyrian forces which were beginning to invade.

This first verse helps us with the dates during which Micah presented his prophecy. It could have been no earlier than the reign of Jotham, and no later than that of Hezekiah. The reader should take note that he placed emphasis upon both Samaria which was the capital of Israel, and Jerusalem which was the capital of Judah.

**Mic 1:2 Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.**

The prophecy reached even farther than Israel and Judah. The entire earth was expected to hear the witness of the Lord God against these two cities. That same

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witness is valuable to the rulers and the people of every land in every age. God is ready to make a proclamation from His holy temple in heaven. Let the earth listen!

Mic 1:3 For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

The reason that the Lord must come down from out of His place to tread upon the high places of the earth is that His own high place is infinitely higher than the highest and most powerful places on earth. The earth is His footstool. Heaven is His throne. To say that He will come down to tread the earth simply states that He is about to give special attention to His footstool.

Mic 1:4 And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.

When He does come down to tread the high places of the earth it will be a memorable event. The mountains will melt like hot wax. The valleys will crack open to reveal inner portions of the earth. God's judgments are more than once compared to volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Sometimes these descriptions are figurative and other times they are literal. In either case they will not fail to command the attention of those who observe them.

Mic 1:5 For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?

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Why is all this to happen? It is because of the sins of the descendants of Jacob. The focus of the northern kingdom was the city of Samaria. The focus of the southern kingdom was Jerusalem. These are the high places upon which the Lord will tread when He moves across the land in judgment. These are the cities from which the sins of the people infect the entire portion of the world.

**Mic 1:6 Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.**

Samaria was far from being a quaint little village tucked off in a corner. It had impressive buildings. There were images of false gods. These images were produced by talented artists and were objects of great pride. There were treasures which had been built up through gifts given by the people in honor of Baal and other supposed gods.

When God is finished treading down Samaria it will be no more than a heap of ruins out in a field. The plantings of a vineyard could possibly be either the emptiness of the vineyard just after the young plants began to grow, or it might be the condition after the vineyard was discarded and a few seedlings came up.

The finest buildings of the city were made of stone. These stones would be separated from one another and caused to roll down into the valleys surrounding the city. All that would be left was the very foundation upon which those stones had been laid. Visitors in these latter days verify that this prophecy was fulfilled. The proud city has been made no more than a heap of ruins on a hill.

**Mic 1:7 And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.**

The graven images which served as a rival to the Lord for the peoples' affections would be beaten into unrecognizable pieces. The treasures which had been collected through gifts given for the services of the prostitutes during the corrupted religious sexual orgies would be destroyed by burning. These treasures had been gathered through religious harlotry. They would be returned to the invaders who would then put them to the same use.

**Mic 1:8 Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.**

Those of that part of the world are known for their wailing when grief strikes. Micah will strip off his outer garments and wear only a loin cloth as do the slaves of that day. He will be dressed like the captives who are to be taken from the land. The sounds which he makes will resemble those of hyenas or ostriches. The precise identity of the animals making these weird sounds is translated differently by various translators, but the meaning can hardly be misunderstood.

**Mic 1:9 For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.**

Micah has good reason to grieve. Assyria will come down through the northern kingdom and will not be halted until it reaches the very gates of Jerusalem in the south. It was at Jerusalem that the Assyrians were turned back for the time being.

**Mic 1:10 Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.**

Now there is a play on words. A number of smaller villages and cities are mentioned as having come under the heavy sole of the Lord's treading foot. Although there are a variety of translations concerning the destiny of these places, the main point of the prophecy is that each will suffer for the sins which have infested their inhabitants.

Gath must hold back the tears. Aphrah will be brought down to roll in the dust.

**Mic 1:11 Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Bethazel; he shall receive of you his standing.**

Saphir will no longer be able to dress in fine clothing. Those of Zaanan were accustomed to marching. They would cease their marching.

**Mic 1:12 For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.**

Maroth would wait anxiously for good things to come down as blessings. Only distress will be received.

**Mic 1:13 O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.**

Lachish was to prepare for harnessing the swift horses to the chariots that she might escape the suffering. This city had been particularly guilty in the spread of sin throughout the area around Jerusalem.

**Mic 1:14 Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moreshethgath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel.**

These presents were very likely not free will gifts. They were more likely tribute which the citizens of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah were forced to pay to the Assyrians who overran them.

Achzib is thought to have been a lie to the kings of Israel in that it pretended to offer support against the invaders until the time came, and then failed to give that support.

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

David once hid in the cave of Adullam while he was being hunted as a fugitive. This is where Saul spared his life. The area is known for a number of caves.

An heir is one who inherits from an older family member. Some see the heir of this verse as the Lord Jesus Christ, and pronounce this as a hint of the coming of Christ to lead Israel to glory. Others are just as convinced that the heir is an Assyrian or Babylonian ruler who

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will take over the land. I am not able to draw definite conclusions. It does seem a bit unusual that in the midst of the pronouncement of sorrows this type of hope would be presented, and then the prophecy would immediately turn back to gloom in the last verse of the chapter.

Mic 1:16 Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

Israelite men were commanded not to cut their hair nor crop their beard. They were a matter of pride. On this occasion the instructions are reversed. They are to cut off their hair in sorrow over the removal of their precious children into captivity in another land. The Assyrians were reputed to take captives from conquered lands and place them in their own land, and then to take undesirables from their own land and deposit them in the conquered land.

Chapter 2

In chapter one the prophet had spoken to the nation of Israel as a whole. He had condemned both Samaria and Jerusalem for spiritual adultery against the Lord. He had left no doubt that God was highly displeased with the attitude of the people toward Him. The focus will now turn to behavior toward their brethren. The picture will be just as dismal in this respect as it was in the earlier view.

Mic 2:1 Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

There is a difference in being overtaken in a fault and deliberately seeking out sins twenty-four hours a day. In the case of some of God's chosen nation, the sins were being deliberately sought out. At night when thoughts should have been turning to gratitude for the blessings of the day, these sinners were lying in their beds devising sinful plans for the future.

Then, the next morning they were ready to put into action those imaginations of their evil hearts. Thoughts precede actions. Good thoughts lead to righteous actions. Evil thoughts produce wicked actions.

One of the reasons for these lines of thought was the fact that those who followed them were powerful enough to do as they had planned. That is not the wisest plan of action. There are some things men are able to do which should be avoided like a plague.

Mic 2:2 And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they

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**oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.**

The persons who were guilty of the sins specified here were those in positions of power. They acted as they did because they were able to take advantage of others who were not able to defend themselves. Land and personal property were targets of their covetousness. They were breaking the commandment which said “Thou shalt not covet.” This proves that sins of the mind are just as evil as sins of the hand. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

The land had been divided between the various tribes and families by lot when they conquered the Canaan. Those possessions were to be kept within that family as a heritage. Every jubilee year mortgages and debts were to be cancelled, with the heritage reclaimed. Now the rich and powerful had managed to wrestle property from the poor. The jubilee year had been forgotten. There are two ways in which the rich can take advantage of the poor. One is by outwitting them. The other is by overpowering them. It seemed that they were getting away with these sins. But, God was watching.

**Mic 2:3 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil.**

God’s reaction was to punish the covetous with the loss of their own freedom. Since they had placed a burden on the necks of the less fortunate, God would place a burden upon theirs. If they laid awake at night devising their evil schemes, He was more than capable of devising a punishment which would fit the sin.

They would find that there was no route of escape. They had been walking haughtily before others as a result of their greed. The time would come when that haughtiness would be replaced by a bowing of their neck under the burden which was ahead.

**Mic 2:4 In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me! turning away he hath divided our fields.**

When that inescapable day arrived, those who had coveted and taken the property of others would cry out in grief that God had taken away the land that He had promised to His chosen people. How could he possibly cause misery to those whom He had promised good things? They would, however, have no one to blame but themselves.

**Mic 2:5 Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD.**

Since they had ignored the division of the land by lot and had hungrily gobbled up as much of the territory as they could gain, God would see that the property they had gotten by wickedness would be taken from them and strangers would possess it. They would then be unable to cast a lot as He had once commanded.

**Mic 2:6 Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophecy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame.**

Those like Micah, who were pointing out the sins of the people, and also the punishments which lay ahead, would rise up in anger. They would say to God's prophets, "Do not prophesy these terrible things." They would be wrought up over anyone, including God, telling them the truth.

This has been a failing of men of all nations, in every age. It is the one who speaks smooth things that becomes popular. The preacher who is both honest and fearless, is persecuted. Even some of those who heard the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Take this man away."

**Mic 2:7 O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?**

The word strait is used in the scriptures to indicate confinement. The way which is strait is a narrow way. If one thinks he can constrain God, that person is mistaken. The spirit of the Lord is not confined. Those who were claiming that the prophet had no right to accuse them of sins would find that the words of accusation were not pointed at the innocent. Those who walked uprightly would find that God was pleased with their godly actions. They would be properly rewarded.

**Mic 2:8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.**

Too many of the people had been acting like enemies of God. They were willing to take everything they could get from the less powerful. This did not stop with taking

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land. It went so far as to leave men in need of food and clothing. The robe was a garment which Jews wore on the outside, over a tighter fitting garment under it.

The ones who were being persecuted were not at war with them. They were those who had been going about minding their own business. Little did that matter to the greedy.

Mic 2:9 The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.

Even helpless women and children were being cheated out of their possessions. Does this not speak of widows and orphans? God was angry. Behavior like this would be a reflection upon Him. His glory would be dimmed as His people followed the way of Satan.

Mic 2:10 Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.

God had promised those whom He had taken from Egyptian bondage a rest in the land of Canaan. What He was now seeing was not the rest which He had promised. It was far from it. Tears were being shed by the helpless. The nation was in a state of turmoil. Such pollution would lead to their ruin.

Mic 2:11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

An honest prophet would not be heard. The one who would gain favor would be the one who approved of

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drunkenness. All too often the most popular preachers are those who promote parties. According to them there is no reproach in social drinking or a white lie here and there. If the building is full God must be pleased. No so!

**Mic 2:12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.**

Does this twelfth verse teach that one day, after the sins of fleshly Israel have been adequately punished, all of the Jews will be gathered back to Canaan? No. It is a much higher and beautiful view which is being presented. This speaks of a remnant, and at the same time says all. It is not a contradiction. The remnant is spiritual Israel. All of those who are faithful to God, whether Jew or Gentile, will be gathered as sheep in the pasture of the Great Shepherd. Bozrah was known for its fine pasture land and flocks of sheep.

This is a picture of the day when the vast multitude of the saved will find themselves gathered in the heavenly fold of the Lord. The rejoicing will be beyond our present ability to imagine.

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

The breaker was the one who went ahead to clear the way for those who followed in his path. Jesus is the King of kings. He is the Breaker who prepared the Way

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for those who are ready to pass through the gate from the bondage of Satan to the freedom of God. He will lead if you will follow!

Chapter 3

Again Micah returns to those who have abused influential positions among God's people. This includes princes, prophets, priests and any others who profited by "skinning" others. No people can survive when the leaders are blind and greedy.

Mic 3:1 And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

Micah uses this word "hear" more than once. Those to whom these remarks were pointed were spiritually dull of hearing. There was a need to penetrate those ears and make a plea to the hearts of these wicked leaders.

They had been chosen as leaders because they supposedly had the degree of judgmental talent needed to bring justice to play in matters of contention. This assumption had proven to be wrong. They did not seem to know the meaning of justice.

Mic 3:2 Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;

The reason for hating the good and loving the evil was that by loving evil they were able to "eat up" the common people. The illustration of cannibalism is probably figurative. When one takes away the food from the mouths of the poor they might as well pluck the flesh off their bones. These princes had no sense of compassion. Their own mouths were far more important than those of the people they were supposed to be leading.

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**Mic 3:3 Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.**

How could any more scathing accusation be made than is made here? If this is a literal picture, hell is an appropriate destiny for such sinners.

**Mic 3:4 Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.**

Micah predicted that the time would come when those same persons would cry out for help from the Lord, but would find that He had turned a deaf ear to their cries. In other words, they would reap as they had sown. You cannot sow thistles and harvest wheat. This principle was one which our Lord Jesus made clear and plain.

**Mic 3:5 Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.**

Attention is now turned to the prophets, who were expected to present the word of the Lord to others. In place of leading the people in paths of righteousness, they were causing the people to walk in darkness. Their main objective was to line their own pockets, even if it meant taking a bite out of the mouths of others.

All the while they were crying out that all would be well. If anyone objected that their methods were sinful,

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they turned against them and attempted to destroy the objectors.

Mic 3:6 Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

When all was well, these prophets received dreams and visions from the Lord. This gave them the opportunity to light the way to pleasing Jehovah. Since these prophets had disregarded the truth they received from God, He would see that the light of divine truth was kept from them. Darkness would settle over the land because of their wicked choice of darkness over light.

Mic 3:7 Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

A seer and a prophet were involved in the same duties. They were expected to receive truth from God and then reveal that truth to the people. As the darkness settled over them, they would find themselves humiliated because they received no visions. They were unable to “SEE.”

Mic 3:8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

Micah contends that he has not joined the false prophets in their deceptions. He has made every effort

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to convey the truth concerning the present sins, and the consequences of those sins. He did not prophesy for his own advantage. He attempted to let men know what was wrong, and what was needed to make things right.

It takes much courage to face powerful persons who have the influence to embarrass a true speaker of the Word of the Lord. Micah and Isaiah proved they had just such courage.

**Mic 3:9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.**

The two titles mentioned in this verse are synonymous. Heads of the house of Jacob and princes of the house of Israel had shown their unwillingness to administer justice. They were using their positions of power to twist judgment to their own ends.

**Mic 3:10 They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.**

Zion was the small mountain upon which Jerusalem had been built. It was supposedly a place where the will of the Lord was praised and glorified. Instead, violence had been used to gain power. Sinful thoughts and deeds had been made use of to create a situation in which the rich and powerful could become constantly more rich and powerful.

**Mic 3:11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.**

Princes, priests and prophets were to be servants of the people, not slavemasters. Were these men meeting their obligations to God and their fellowmen? Hardly! They had reversed things and used their opportunities to amass money and property.

Then while fleeing the people they consoled them by saying that the Lord was in their midst. If they did not believe it, just take a look at the temple sitting majestically on Mount Zion.

**Mic 3:12 Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.**

Because of the horrible sins which the leaders initiated, and the people followed, all of the grandeur of Mount Zion and the beautiful temple would be turned into a heap of ruins. The mountain itself would be plowed like a wheat field. Visitors are sometimes assured that the present temple which is shown to them in Jerusalem is not even located in the same place as the temple of Micah's time. It is said that the place where that earlier temple stood is actually cultivated for crops today.

How sad it is that some men will abuse their riches and influence to become richer and more powerful. And that those who are led by these blind leaders do not see they are headed straight for the ditch.

## Chapter 4

This chapter contains one of the most famous of all those found in the old testament. The church of the Lord would be established on earth and the effect it would have on the nations of the world would be magnificent. A multitude of souls would be drawn to the blessings which it offered. God would teach, and men would respond by coming to that mountain of the Lord. Let us rejoice in the positive note of this section of the book of Micah. It is like a sparkling gem in the midst of a bucket of mud.

**Mic 4:1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.**

The “last days” are those of the Christian dispensation. Previous days were those of the patriarchs and those of Moses. The mountains spoken of here are not literal mountains. They are the governmental organizations of the world. Jesus Christ, as the living Word of God, had come to prepare the way for this new mountain. It was the church of Christ, or church of God.

When the people of the world saw the power and wisdom found in this new mountain of the Lord, they would be drawn to it. It would become supreme among all the social structures of all the ages. Joel made a similar prophecy in his day. The apostle Peter declared in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in the second chapter of Acts, that the at least some of his listeners would see the fulfilment in the establishment of the church for which the Saviour died.

Those who live in these latter days have seen

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multiplied millions drawn to this mountain of God. We have not yet seen the end!

Mic 4:2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

This new mountain of the Lord's house is not limited to those of any one nation. It is true that the promise was to come through the seed of Abraham and of David, yet the Word of the Lord would provide a path upon which men of all nations would follow the teachings of the Son of God. It would be most interesting to know at the time I write these words, just what percentage of persons who have reached the age of accountability have not heard the name of Jesus Christ. It may not yet have been preached to every man, but I have great confidence that it has been preached in every nation.

Mic 4:3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

The teachings of Christ do not advocate the use of physical arms to expand the influence of His kingdom. The sword of the Spirit and the helmet of salvation are far more potent than biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. Christ insisted that He was the Prince of Peace. Under His rule the physical weapons were to be replaced by those of a spiritual nature.

Yes, at the time I write these words there are still wars and rumors of wars, but this is not to be the philosophy of the soldiers of the cross.

Mic 4:4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.

It is not wrong in the teachings of the Son of God for men to own personal property. Every person has the right to such possessions. However, it is the teaching of the Christ that he who has abundance is to share that with others who have need. That is the example that the Saviour of the world set for us when He left heaven to teach mortal men.

Mic 4:5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

This is a basic truth. Men have a natural hunger for the security which is available through powers greater than themselves. If men conjure up a false god in their mind, they will march under the name of that god. When the god is only a figment of their own imagination, they will march straight to spiritual destruction. Micah states that those who believe in the name of Jehovah will walk by His authority while living on this globe. Then they will be owned by Him in the forever after.

Mic 4:6 In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;

Micah declared that in place of a hunger for fleshly power, God's believers would lift up the fallen and feed the hungry, etc. It is also God's desire that those who have been afflicted and cast out through the withdrawal of fellowship will be gathered back into His grace by way of repentance.

Mic 4:7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

Those who had been chastised by being taken into captivity in distant lands would have the opportunity to return to God's mountain and serve under Him forever.

Mic 4:8 And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

Towers were used in the time of Micah to insure safety against enemy forces. The faithful of God will attend to that task. There were no Christians at the time of Micah, but there were still a remnant of faithful. That faithful remnant would be the point of gathering for those who wished to become a part of the church.

Mic 4:9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.

Why were the Israelites complaining of the need for a king? Their counsellor was Jehovah. The pains they were enduring were not fatal. They were the pains of

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one who labors to bring God's kingdom to men. The labor would be followed by great joy. Children of God were to be the outcome.

**Mic 4:10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.**

Israel was destined to be captivated and taken from their beloved city of Jerusalem. They would be taken to the land of Babylon and made servants for many years. After that time they would be redeemed from the Babylonians, but there was an even greater salvation ahead. These were the birth pains of spiritual Israel. They would be most unpleasant, but they were necessary for the coming Kingdom.

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

At present Micah offered God's advice. Many nations were gathered in an attempt to humble His servants. They were rejoicing in the suffering under which Israel was laboring. This would not last. They might look upon Zion with proud faces while the scales were tipped against God's people. That would come to an end.

**Mic 4:12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.**

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How little these mockers knew of the wisdom and omnipotence of Jehovah! Those nations who took such glee in the punishment of Israel were being gathered in order that they might be punished for their rebellion against His supreme authority. Before the face of the God of Israel, these nations were as small children who think their parents are not looking. In addition, these nations were not even God's children.

Mic 4:13 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

Israel might appear to be weak and powerless when they found themselves serving the Babylonians. This was far from the truth. They were but in preparation for a great victory over every nation fighting against the purposes of Jehovah. The time would come when the power of the people of God would have horns of iron and hooves of brass. Every enemy of God would face His wrath. Every true servant would inherit everlasting joy and peace.

Chapter 5

Micah looks further at the coming tribulation of Israel. The nations will gather their forces to enforce the captivity, but they do not understand what the Lord is doing in allowing the bondage. After the corrective methods have been taken there will be a release, and Israel will become a blessing to the very nations who have persecuted them. This pattern is used to teach of the coming of the Saviour. The Son of God will make use of the remnant of Israel that passes through the Assyrian and Babylonian attacks to bring a blessing to all who will receive Him.

Mic 5:1 Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

A battle is ahead. The contestants must gather their forces. There will be a siege against the Israelites and this will result in the smiting of her Judge upon the cheek with a rod. There is a difference among Bible students as to the identity of the Judge. Some hold that this was Hezekiah the king, who was taken and caused to endure terrible insults against his prestige. Others are convinced that it leads directly into the next verse which is one of the most important prophecies of the atrocities visited upon the Son of God. I believe one is a type of the other. Hezekiah did suffer many insults, but they were only an introduction to the horrors endured by the Saviour.

Mic 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to

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**be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.**

This Judge who shall come out of Bethlehem-Ephratah shall emerge from one of the less impressive villages of the many located in Judah. Even so, He would rise to become Ruler. This prestige would not be the beginning of His importance in the universe. He had been going forth in one way or another from before the foundations of the earth were laid. He who was one of the three persons of the Godhead was to humble Himself and take on the form of a man that He might lead the upcoming spiritual battle.

He did not have to make His appearance in Jerusalem, in Cairo or some other center of population. He would come as a frail babe, born in a manger in this insignificant small town.

**Mic 5:3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.**

This birth and arrival of the Judge of Israel would be a part of the plan of salvation from sin which God was making ready when the time was right. God would allow Israel to go into labor in Babylon. Then when she had learned the folly of idolatry, this Saviour would make use of the remnant who passed through the sorrows to bless those who were willing to follow Him.

**Mic 5:4 And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.**

This verse is not talking about some human ruler who will draw upon the Divine strength to lead the remnant. This Ruler shall BE God. His name will define His importance. Those who follow Him will be successful and make his name great to all parts of the earth. There is just enough information here to rule out any human potentate. This Leader is the same as He who shared in the creation of all things.

**Mic 5:5 And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men.**

Is it contradictory to call Him a man? Not at all. He became flesh and was born of a human mother. He is sometimes called the Man-child.

The Assyrian, as it is used here is representative of all of the forces which Satan gathers against God's own. Babylon is just as much a part of it as is Assyria. For a time these foes will be successful. They will march into the very palaces of the land of Israel. Their success will not last. The Judge from Bethlehem-Ephratah shall lead seven shepherds and eight principle men in defense of the remnant.

The number seven stands for completeness. There would be a sufficiency of leadership to successfully oppose the enemies of the Lord. The eight principle men would be more than sufficient to overcome the captors.

**Mic 5:6 And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.**

God intervened in the battle against the Assyrians. A vast number were destroyed in a single night through the power of an angel of the Lord. Jesus once said He could have called ten thousand angels to defend Him if they were needed. The land of Nimrod is synonymous with the land of Assyria. When the foes of the Lord's people come marching into the palaces of Israel, they would be defeated by the sword of the Lord. The steel swords will have been turned into plowshares, and the spears turned into pruning hooks under the leadership of the Saviour. But these weapons of steel do not win ultimate victories. It is the Spirit of the Lord which overcomes the wicked who tread upon the righteous.

**Mic 5:7 And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.**

How is the victory to be won? The remnant of Israel will be scattered over the world in a manner which demonstrates the power of the Lord's providence. This remnant will then be as refreshing to the societies in which they are found as dew and rain are to a drought ridden field. This will be more than human wisdom and power could bring about. God's finger will be the determining factor.

**Mic 5:8 And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.**

Jews who are willing to be led by the Saviour will be as forceful as the King of the beasts among a flock of sheep. The tearing to pieces is not literal. It comes about because of the Word of God. The Assyrians, Babylonians, atheists, and all other foes will find themselves outnumbered by the spiritual Jews who follow the Babe from Bethlehem-Ephratah. When lined up opposite the power of the mighty arm of the Lord, defeat is inevitable.

**Mic 5:9 Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.**

The victory will be unquestionable. In the final struggle the opponents of God will be vanquished. The victors will be but the remnant who pass through the fires of tribulation, but they will win.

**Mic 5:10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots:**

The victory will not come through military advantages such as horses and chariots. It will be accomplished through the Prince of Peace. In every land where this philosophy of Christian peace has flourished, the wicked are rendered less powerful. Solomon was told not to depend upon horses and chariots. It was a serious mistake when he did so.

**Mic 5:11 And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds:**

This refers to the fenced cities which were considered strongholds. The most useful defense in the war which

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is being discussed here is a faith based upon the Rock of Ages.

Mic 5:12 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers:

Dependence upon powers which are either deceptions or are works of Satan will be found a curse rather than an advantage. Soothsayers seem to have been those who pretended to gain knowledge of the future by examining the clouds, etc.

Mic 5:13 Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.

How foolish can a person be to make a graven image with his own hands, and then bow down and worship it? The standing images fell in the same class as the graven images. They are thought to have been associated with the sex gods and goddesses. The remnant would learn not to place the work of their own hands ahead of the One who created their own soul and body.

Mic 5:14 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities.

The groves were also sites of lascivious worship acts. God's faithful will not take part in such pleasure circuses. The passions which are aroused in such deeds can very easily be turned to violence and other wicked displays of misused emotions.

Mic 5:15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

The faithful remnant of Israel would be used to bless the world as the dew and the rain bless the dry field. The defiant were to feel such anger and fury from the hand of God as they had never before heard of.

Chapter 6

God and Israel had a covenant. Israel was to be His people and He was to be Israel's God. God claimed this covenant had been broken. A courtroom scene was to be set up in which both God and the people would present their case.

Mic 6:1 Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.

God was to present the charges that Israel had failed and broken the covenant. The mountains and hills could possibly stand for governments, but it is more likely that they are called as witnesses because of their having been around long enough to see what had happened.

Mic 6:2 Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.

God will plead His innocence to begin the proceedings. He wishes for Israel to bring up any breaches which He has made in His agreement with Israel.

Mic 6:3 O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

He calls for the people to bring up a charge against Him. They have every opportunity to make a valid accusation. Meanwhile God will present His charges against them.

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**Mic 6:4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.**

They had spent some four hundred years in Egyptian bondage. He provided Moses, Aaron and Miriam to lead them from that piteous condition. Did that not support His claim that He had kept His part of the covenant? They had been led through the wilderness and were supplied with the necessities of life during that time.

**Mic 6:5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.**

When Israel had arrived south of Edom, they were denied permission to pass through that land. They then passed on to Moab where Balak, the king of Moab called upon Balaam to curse them. The curses were turned into blessings and the people arrived at Shittim on the east bank of the Jordan River. The people passed over the river and set up a memorial on the west bank at Gilgal. Surely this should be recognized as proper action on the part of the Lord in serving Israel as His people.

**Mic 6:6 Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?**

Israel then wishes to know what they should have done to please God and prove their sincerity. What



should they have offered to God to satisfy their part of the covenant? Should they bring yearling calves as burnt offerings? Was that what He desired?

**Mic 6:7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?**

If that was insufficient, would it please Him if they sacrificed thousands of sheep, or enormous amounts of olive oil? They would even go farther than that. If they gave the firstborn of their children as sacrifices would that suffice?

This last suggestion may have had more meaning that just dedicating the firstborn child. They had actually followed the practice of the heathen in offering their children for passing through the fire to the false god Molech. Just how much did God require on the part of Israel?

**Mic 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?**

The Lord's claim was that He had made it very clear. He expected more than rams, olive oil, or even the sacrificing of their children. They could go through ritual after ritual without backing these with a pure life and the ceremonies would not be pleasing. There were three things which would produce satisfaction on the part of God.

1. To do justly.
2. To love mercy.
3. To walk humbly before their God.

It is clear that they had broken the covenant in each of these ways. They had taken advantage of others in business dealings, made accusations which were not true. They had failed to assist others when they needed help. They had proudly set up their own wills in opposition to the instructions of Jehovah. These things would need to cease.

Today's world is not a great deal different than that of Micah's day. The same accusations could be leveled against persons in practically any nation of the world.

**Mic 6:9 The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.**

Any who possessed a degree of wisdom should be able to see that God's charges were well founded. When the people realized it was Almighty God who charged them, and that He had the power to punish those who defied Him, they should have repented.

**Mic 6:10 Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?**

They had not done that. The wicked among the Israelites still had gains which they had taken from those weaker than themselves. They had cheated others out of what was rightfully theirs during business transactions. That was not to be tolerated.

**Mic 6:11 Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?**

God did not intend to class men who took this kind of advantage of their fellowmen as being righteous. They could offer a multitude of sacrifices such as rams and olive oil, but if their lives did not harmonize with these outward ceremonies the sacrifices were worthless.

**Mic 6:12 For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.**

Violence, deceit and lies were causing the rich to become richer at the expense of the poor an unfortunate. They were to find out just how much Jehovah hated these patterns of action.

When asked about which was the greatest commandment Jesus answered that the first and greatest was to love the Lord God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. He then added that the second was to love one's neighbor as one's self.

**Mic 6:13 Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.**

Since they had been guilty of covetousness, the proper punishment was to take away that which they had gained unlawfully. God would see that this punishment was administered.

**Mic 6:14 Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.**

They would find themselves physically hungry. They would find that the casting down of the Lord would be found in the midst of them. He was displeased and they would find the evidence in calamity.

**Mic 6:15 Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.**

The burnt offerings of grain which they had been bringing before the Lord would be cut short. When the fields were sown, either there would be no harvest or others would take the harvest from them.

The same would be true with the olives and the grapes. If they wished to be stingy with others, they would find that God would not bless them with abundance.

**Mic 6:16 For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.**

Omri and Ahab were two of the most wicked kings of Israel. They led the way into copying the heathen worship services which included sexual relations with temple prostitutes. If Israel persisted in following the advice of men such as these, they would soon find the nation cursed and the inhabitants a mockery to those around them. Rather than being a glory to God, they would become a disgrace to Him.

The result of the contention then was that God was true to Israel, but Israel had not been true to Him. There would be good reason to send the nation into captivity.

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Chapter 7

Micah and Isaiah deal with the time period in which Israel reached very low spiritual levels. Both drew a serious picture of the future for those who failed to repent. At the same time they both predicted the coming of a finer day for those who maintained their faith amid such perilous dangers.

Mic 7:1 Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit.

The first fruit is very often especially delicious. Micah complained that when he went forth to find that delicious first fruit in the faith of the Israelites, he looked in vain. How greatly he wished to find those tasty clusters. Alas! They were not there.

Mic 7:2 The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

Micah is not only one who has found locating a good man in his society to be difficult. It has been pictured as trying to find a needle in a haystack. He observed that the vast majority were plotting the destruction of their fellowmen in order to take possession of anything he had which was valuable.

As a teenager the present writer help to trap muskrats to sell their fur. The laying of the traps was not done haphazardly. Careful pains were taken to see

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that they were placed very in the pathways the animals were accustomed to following. The wicked of Micah's day were carefully planning to take their associates in nets. It was nearly impossible to find a truly good man.

**Mic 7:3 That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.**

These liars in wait did not just do this occasionally. They put their entire energies into it. There were three classes who had power and who used that power to impoverish others. There were the princes who expected others to enrich him because of his ability to back up his commands with retaliation if they were not obeyed. There were the judges who could condemn one who was accused of a crime. A victim could either give the judge a bribe, or he could find himself condemned. And there were great men who only had to voice his desires and would see them fulfilled to the letter.

**Mic 7:4 The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.**

A brier is not the most pleasant thing with which to come into contact. Even the most upright of these three classes would not hesitate to injure the one who tried to bypass his demands.

This situation would lead to disaster. Both the abuser and his victims might expect extremely difficult times in the days to come. There would be a need to look around carefully for someone a person could trust.

**Mic 7:5 Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.**

Micah becomes more specific in his accusations. One would not even be able to trust his closest friends. Those who were supposed to be charged with giving guidance would give false advice in order to gain a profit. It would even be dangerous to trust one's own spouse. Under such conditions it was best not to reveal one's plans to anyone.

**Mic 7:6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.**

There was an almost complete breakdown of authority. Obviously men had failed to heed the instructions of God. Children had no respect for their parents. One might find that those who were his closest kinsfolk were ready to destroy him for gain.

**Mic 7:7 Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.**

Amidst all of this selfishness there was one path of escape. That was to trust in the Creator. If one would turn to Him in such a time of danger, He could be trusted. To wait for God is to place one's complete trust in Him. If that is done, the outcome will be secure. It may require some degree of suffering for the time being, but ultimately hope will rise from the midst of the horror.

**Mic 7:8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.**

It would be advisable for the enemy of the righteous person to think twice about taking advantage of the righteous. The arm of the Lord will be extended to those who fall in the darkness of an evil world. Divinity is the light of the world. God is light! In the beginning God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." There is glorious light ahead for the faithful. The present may be difficult. Eternity will be quite the opposite.

**Mic 7:9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.**

All men sin and come short of the glory of God. Honest men will admit their sins and call upon Divine help. God will not fail the one who places his future in His all powerful hands. He will ultimately uphold the righteous, and He will destroy the wicked. One day the righteous will see Him as He is; both sinless and all powerful.

**Mic 7:10 Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.**

Those who believe obedience to God is an unprofitable path will find that their stand has been one of hideous danger. We have a common saying which has been used often. "Her name shall be mud." That seems to hint of the future condition of those who ridicule God's faithful.

**Mic 7:11 In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed.**

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God's prophet is not here speaking primarily of earthly Jerusalem. He foresees a day of a multitude of souls gathering within the walls of New Jerusalem. The pain and hardship which is suffered by the holy in days such as those of Isaiah and Micah will be replaced by a great gathering to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mic 7:12 In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.

Through the power of the Almighty Jehovah, Micah envisions the time when the Word of God will be spread throughout the world. From sea to shining sea, men and women will be taken as a plentiful spiritual harvest. They are to come from every part of this earthly globe. Truly there is a "great day coming."

Mic 7:13 Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

The enemies of the Lord will not see that "Great Day." They shall reap as they have sown. Death and destruction are waiting for those who do not seek righteousness.

Mic 7:14 Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

Micah calls for God to care for those who do prove faithful to Him. The "rod" is that of the Great Shepherd. The flock who dwell in the wood are those who have been

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persecuted for their faith. Micah looks forward to the time when those faithful will feed in heavenly pastures with the faithful of all the ages.

**Mic 7:15 According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things.**

Those who find themselves persecuted by the wicked have a glorious promise. The days of persecution will come to an end. God has the power to rescue His own from the clutches of those who are deceived by the prince of darkness. He did it through ten plagues in the time of the escape from Egypt. He can do it again!

**Mic 7:16 The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf.**

One must be careful with this verse, or the beautiful truth it contains may be bypassed. What is it that the nations will see; and whose might is it that confounds others? The might that is spoken of is the might of God's faithful. The nations may mock at a God which they think does not even exist. That mockery will come to an end. Those who have persecuted God's faithful will be caused to pause and lay their hand upon their mouth. They shall not hear the call for the righteous to "Enter into the joys of thy Lord."

**Mic 7:17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee.**

God's enemies will be caused to squirm like a writhing snake. They will find that any effort to hide from the Lord will be unsuccessful. They shall ultimately come to know the unlimited power of God and will realize that God does both reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

**Mic 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.**

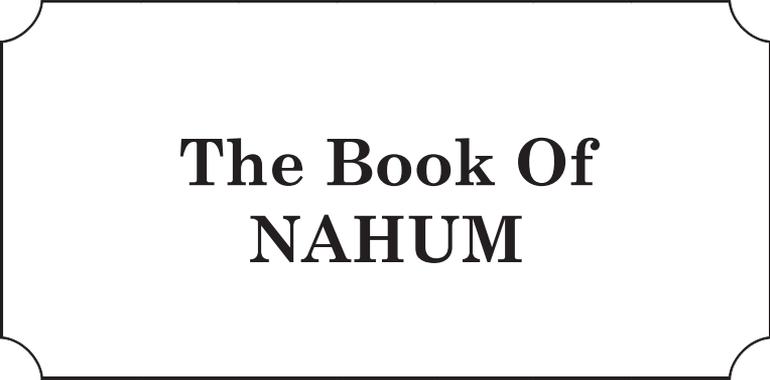
It is certainly true that every man has committed sin. "All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God." If God was not merciful and gracious, every man would be ultimately separated from His Holy presence eternally. Fortunately He provides a way for those who are penitent to turn away His anger. Those who will turn from sin and turn to Him will find that He welcomes them with open arms. Again the reader is reminded that God is not desirous that any soul perish in the tortures of hell.

**Mic 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.**

God turns His face away from those who defy Him. That does not mean it must stay that way. He is both willing and able to cast the sins of the penitent into the depths where they will never be remembered.

**Mic 7:20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.**

God is not slack concerning His promises. He made a promise to both Abraham and Jacob that the world would be blessed through their descendants. Those of every age will find that God keeps His promises. It is our sincere prayer that the reader will find himself or herself among those who will receive His promised eternal blessings!



**The Book Of  
NAHUM**



# *Introduction To Nahum*

## **The Author:**

Nahum is mentioned only in the book itself. The name means “Consolation.” This may only present one side of the writing done by this writer. He certainly does speak of future consolation for those who have been persecuted by the Assyrians. At the same time he pronounces great woe upon the Assyrians. God demonstrates mercy toward those who serve Him faithfully. He visits wrath upon those who attempt to thwart His purposes.

Nahum is said to be an “Elkoshite.” This would seem to indicate that he came from a place named Elkosh. This also is wrapped in mystery. There are mentions of a village named Elkosh in the historical records, but these are found much later than the time in which Nahum lived. Some have suggested that he may have come from Capernaum since this word means village of Nahum. It is impossible to determine whether this suggestion is valid or not.

## **Date of the Book:**

There has been much guesswork as to the date of the book of Nahum. There seems to be fairly good agreement today that the book was written sometime after 663 B.C. and 612 B.C. There is a mention in the book of the fall of Noamon, or Thebes in Egypt. This happened in 663 B.C. Thus the book was written after that date. Ninevah fell

in 612 B.C. to the Medes. The general theme of the book of Nahum is a declaration of the destruction of Ninevah. If the city had already been destroyed this would have been out of order. Thus it seems reasonable to place the writing of the book of Nahum between 663 B.C. and 612 B.C.

### **The Nature of the Book:**

The original is highly poetic in nature. This characteristic is not evident in most of the various translations. We do see, however, that the author felt the intensity of events. We can almost place ourselves at the scenes which are described.

Unlike Jeremiah who wrote under similar conditions, Nahum had little to say about the sins of Israel. He devoted his words to the future of Ninevah. God was soon to take vengeance upon this capitol city of the powerful Assyrian empire.

### **Historical Background of the Book:**

Assyria had made the determination to conquer the known world. Their forces began moving toward the west and leaving terror in their footsteps. Among the rulers of the empire were the following;

Tiglath-Pileser,

who carried some of the Israelites to Ninevah.

Shalmanezzer,

who attacked Samaria.

Sargon,

who completed what Shalmanezzer had begun in Samaria.

Sennacherib,

who moved into the south of Israel.

Esserhaddon, a son of Sennacherib

who forced his father out of power.

Ashurbanipal,

who carried the march westward into Egypt and captured Noamon (See 3:8).

Assur-etil-ilani.

Esserhaddon II,

who ruled when the Medes attacked the city of Ninevah. (Ruled from 625-620 B.C.)

Throughout their entire period of dominance Assyria was both greedy and extremely cruel. The stories of their treatment of prisoners is hideous. Among the atrocities were: causing captives to labor as slaves in the making of brick. Skinning the kings and using the skin to cover pillars. If the reader wishes to investigate more of such nausea, Farrar's book on the minor prophets will more than satisfy his curiosity.

**A Brief Outline of the Book:**

- I. God is the Judge of Ninevah
  - A. He is severe and powerful toward the wicked.
  - B. He is a refuge for the righteous.
- II. Sentence is pronounced.
  - A. God will arise against Ninevah.
  - B. She will be utterly cut off.
- III. Her punishment is described.
  - A. Her power shall be removed.
  - B. Her riches shall be plundered.
  - C. She shall be laid waste like Noamon.
- IV. Her sickness cannot be healed.
- V. The nations will rejoice at Ninevah's fall.



## Chapter 1

This first chapter of the book of Nahum deals with the nature of Jehovah and the fact that Ninevah will be destroyed. At the same time it tells of the providential care He exercises to oversee those who have dedicated themselves to His service.

### **Nahum 1:1 The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.**

Burdens are loads which are to be carried. Ninevah had placed herself in a position where she was to have a load which would be more than she could carry.

In the times of the old testament prophets God communicated with them in dreams and visions. A dream occurred during sleep. A vision occurred while the prophet was awake. With the completion of the new testament scriptures, that which was in part was done away, and that which is perfect replaced it. There was no need for further revelation.

Nahum is said to have been an Elkoshite, which apparently means he came from a location known as Elkosh. The site of the place is uncertain.

### **Nahum 1:2 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.**

Yes, God is jealous. He demands that those who serve Him keep themselves to Him, and Him only. The worship of any other so called gods brings His wrath. "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord. I will repay." A man or a woman expects their spouse to refrain from sharing

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their affections with others of the opposite sex. God expects similarity loyalty to Him.

God is not frivolous. He will make no mistakes because of irrational behavior in a fit of anger. What He will do is take note of the facts and punish those who either seduce His people, or those among His people who allow themselves to worship His rivals.

Nahum 1:3 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

The two characteristics listed in this verse work in cooperation with one another. God does not act before He thinks. He allows men far more sins than they deserve. As long as there is hope for their repentance, He is ready to forgive. But when it becomes clear to Him that they will never turn back to Him, He punishes with enormous power. That power can be seen in the tornado, the thunderstorm and other natural events. All such events are but the fringe of His abilities.

Nahum 1:4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

His power was demonstrated in the dividing of the Red Sea when Israel escaped from the Egyptians. The Jordan River divided and allowed Israel to pass through.

He has control over the water supplies upon which men so greatly depend. Nothing is completely independent of His oversight. He created the universe. It is responsible to His will.

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**Nahum 1:5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.**

When mountains shake and melted lava flows down their sides in streams, men tremble in respect. When drought burns the vegetation, or vast forest fires sweep across the land, we begin to recognize the possible effects of disobedience. Someday this entire earth will be burned up and will be replaced by another. We had best heed the present warnings and refuse to give our attentions to Satan or false deities.

**Nahum 1:6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.**

In view of what has been seen in the pages of history, the answer to this question is quite obvious. No one can successfully defy the wrath which He will pour out upon the defiant. He will first warn through repeated lighter punishments. Then, when it is seen that there will be no repentance, the fires of hell are all that remain.

Ninevah is in line for much more than they expect. The jealousy of the Lord has been provoked. Oblivion is ahead. Jonah had been sent to preach to this famous city over one hundred years before the time of Nahum. We are told that the city repented at the preaching of Jonah. But, we are also told from the present picture that the repentance did not last.

**Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.**

This seventh verse is a welcome change from the tone of the first six. The same God who will punish His enemies will not overlook His followers. Just as surely as He knows the need of punishment for the wicked, He knows of the need for protection of the faithful. He will be like a fortified wall around them when they are in danger.

**Nahum 1:8 But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.**

It is almost impossible to read this verse and fail to connect it with the manner in which Ninevah was defeated by the Babylonian forces. The city had been successful in defending itself against the invading army and had retreated inside the walls of the city. They indulged in a drunken party. During the night of their defeat the river in the area flooded and washed away large portions of the wall, leaving them at the mercy of their enemies.

When the words “utter end” are used to tell of the future of Ninevah, the point is hardly exaggerated. For centuries the location of the city of Ninevah was covered with dirt. When it was finally discovered, large numbers of remains from that influential city were found. It was plunged into the darkness and is now only remembered because of the spade of the archeologists.

**Nahum 1:9 What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.**

Do the citizens of Ninevah truly believe they can withstand the wrath of Jehovah? If so they are making a horrid mistake. When He is finished, that rebellious

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city will not cause more misery to others. It will fall to rise no more!

God is longsuffering, but when it is clear that the longsuffering is useless the patience of the Lord will come to an end.

Nahum 1:10 For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

The inhabitants of the city have placed themselves in a disastrous position. They are heaped up in one place like a pile of thorny bushes. They are doubly drunk. They are drunk with a false sense of power. They are also drunk with alcohol. When the Lord sends a spark they will burn like brush crackling in the fire.

Nahum 1:11 There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.

There is disagreement as to the identity of this wicked counsellor. Some believe it to be Satan. Others say it is Sennacherib. Still others see it as the combined spirit of Assyrian power and hunger. The fact that the word “one” is used leads the majority to conclude that it was Sennacherib, the ruler at the time.

At the same time, we must agree that the influence of Satan had saturated the thinking and behavior of the evil city.

Nahum 1:12 Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

Some have declared this verse to be difficult. Why is it said that the Assyrians were “quiet.” We have no difficulty understanding the word “many.” I do not believe the word “quiet” is that much more mysterious. Because there were many of them, and they were sitting pretty without any disturbances, they felt immune to danger of any kind.

It matters little, however, to the Lord that there were many of these enemies, nor that they felt completely safe. When He passes through in His wrath they will be cut down. They have been allowed to punish the Israelites because God knew of the need for such punishment. Now that there has been sufficiency of punishment it will come to an end. The Assyrians will no longer afflict them.

This does not mean God's people would never again suffer chastisement. They did, especially under the Romans at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Nahum 1:13 For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

The rulers of Assyria had been a great burden not only to Israel, but to nation after nation in that general area. That was to come to a halt. The power of the Assyrians to enslave others would be ripped to shreds. These wicked people had been used by the Lord to teach His people a much need lesson. Now that the lesson had been administered, the whip would be cast aside.

Nahum 1:14 And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.

This is a funeral sermon for the Ninevites. Their name will be lost among the powers of the world. They have sown destruction. They will reap the same. The false gods they worshipped were to be buried in shame. The day of glory for Ninevah is ready to set. The darkness is coming on. She will be “buried” under the sands of time and between the pages of the history books.

Nahum 1:15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

There is someone on the way who will bring a message of peace and good tidings. In the meantime the people of Judah must avoid idolatry. They must prove their love for the Lord by observing the feasts which He commanded, and fulfilling the vows which they make to Him. They no longer need to fear the Assyrian tyrants. They will have been rendered powerless.

This last verse of the chapter has Christian overtones. Similar words are written by the prophet Isaiah. (See Isaiah 52:7.)

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

The apostle Paul also referred to it (See Rom. 10:15.)

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Both the messenger who brought the glad tidings that Ninevah would no longer enslave God's people, and the messenger who declared that Jesus Christ could break the bonds of sin had beautiful feet. Those feet brought joy and happiness.

Chapter 2

Now we have a description of the battle in which the Assyrians were defeated and Ninevah was destroyed. It is not a pleasant picture, but it is a very vivid picture which is bad enough to read in print and only imagine what the real conflict was like.

The chapter underlines the fate of the wicked. It may appear for a time that all is pleasure and fame. Later the scene changes to horror and pain. God is not mocked!

Nahum 2:1 He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily.

Who is the one that dashes in pieces. At first glance it seems to be the Medes and Babylonians who have already attacked Ninevah unsuccessfully. Further examination reveals that it is the hand of the Lord which is directing the battle.

The defenders of Ninevah are challenged to prepare for war. They are to ready their weapons. They are to watch carefully on every side. They are to stand as strong as they are able. Every possible means of defense is to be called up. Then it will be seen whether or not the Assyrians can continue their terrifying conduct toward other nations.

Nahum 2:2 For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.

God had humbled Israel by allowing them to be controlled by Assyria. Their pride had been brought down.

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Their glory had been poured out until they were empty. Their productivity had become as piteous as a vine which has no fruit. They have served their period of punishment. God is now ready to bring it to an end.

**Nahum 2:3 The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.**

The destruction of the city of Ninevah is just ahead. The Medes and Babylonians are prepared to make another attempt at taking the city.

The shield which is red may or may not have that color because of tremendous bloodshed. One of the tactics of warfare is to terrify the enemy. The red shields and garments of the warriors would intensify any fear which might come about. The chariots would reflect the sunlight like torches as they rushed to and fro in preparation for the battle.

The meaning of the "fir trees" is not clear. Fir trees are strong and tall. The warriors who fit such a description might have trembled with anger.

**Nahum 2:4 The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.**

This present writer is shocked at the scene although he is thousands of miles away in distance and centuries away in time. It causes one to recall the description of the battle of Armageddon in the book of Revelation.

We can visualize the chariots of both armies

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crashing into one another with bodies lying around on the ground. We disagree with those who see this as a type of automobiles and tanks moving around through the blackness of the night in the time of the end of the present world.

Nahum 2:5 He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared.

Both the Assyrians and their attackers must have known approximately how many capable soldiers they had available. But, at this time there is a need to repeat the count. Historical records tell us that the overconfident Assyrians were in the midst of a drunken party when the news of the attack came. The stumbling of the worthies may have been due to the effects of the wine they had consumed.

Whatever the reason for the stumbling, they would move as quickly as they were able to the wall of the city to defend it.

Nahum 2:6 The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

Ninevah was located near the Tigris river and tributaries were nearby. To say that the gates of the rivers were to be opened was to declare that the water of the nearby channels would be overflowed with the result being the removal of larger portions of the city wall and flooding of the entire area.

There is some question as to just what is meant by the dissolving of the palace. Those who have visited the location tell us that the palace was built upon higher

ground than the walls. This, however, does not mean that the water could not have washed away the support of the palace and caused it to disintegrate.

Nahum 2:7 And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts.

Who is Huzzah? The best suggestion we have seen is that Huzzah is a name for the city of Ninevah. She has taken many captives in the past. It will now be her turn to know captivity.

The maids could well be the religious prostitutes who offered their services to men who desired to use this method of worshipping the false gods of Assyria. When doves are trying to express their distress, they will sometimes flutter their wings in hope that their foe will be intimidated.

Nahum 2:8 But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back.

Ninevah had been around for many, many years. Like a reservoir of water which seems as if it had been everlasting, the city was to see it's citizens fleeing for their lives. The leaders might cry out loudly for them to stand up and fight, but they will be so anxious to retreat that they will ignore the call and never even look back when it becomes evident that defeat will be certain.

Nahum 2:9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture.

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Ninevah had plundered nation after nation in her conquest of the known world. As a result she had piled up treasures without end. The Lord now gives an invitation to others to remove those treasures of silver and gold. Not only was there silver and gold. There were other treasures which were pleasant to the eye and must have ripped open the hearts of those from whom they had been taken. These valuables were all available for the taking. The invaders could now plunder the plunderers.

**Nahum 2:10 She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.**

After the treasures were removed from her storehouses the Ninevites would have both empty pocketbooks and empty hearts. There would be no ability to resist. When the heart melts and the knees knock against one another, there is not much fight left.

It has been suggested that the blackness of the faces was due to mourning in sackcloth and ashes. I rather think we can use our current meaning of the word “blue.” Their faces reflected the blues which they felt at their great losses.

**Nahum 2:11 Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion’s whelp, and none made them afraid?**

What a change was to take place! The city is compared with a lion’s den. The older lion brought in amazing amounts of food for the lioness and the cubs. The entire family had lived in perfect comfort at the expense of their victims. None had dared to enter their den.

**Nahum 2:12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.**

The master of the lion family had torn one nation after another into shreds and had brought the pieces back for his mate and family. After they were filled, he continued to bring in and store that which they could not consume. The den (city of Ninevah) was overflowing with the riches taken from others. Now it was to be different.

**Nahum 2:13 Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.**

It is not good to have the Lord of all armies on the side of the enemy. God would bring Ninevah's chariots to ashes. He would cause her strongest young warriors to fall before the sword. He would see that those who had fallen prey to her in the past would not be available to fill her greed in the future.

Those who had struck fear into the hearts of neighboring nations would no longer cringe at the demands of those she sent out to collect tribute. There would be none to deliver such messages.

## Chapter 3

God is going to close the book of Nahum by telling just how wicked the city was, and just how completely He is going to destroy it. The most powerful nations of the past have gone down one by one to lies, greed and moral corruption. They have turned their face from the Lord, and then found that He turned His face from them. It would be well for the leaders of the most powerful nations on earth at the time of this writing to read this short book of Nahum and pay careful attention.

**Nahum 3:1 Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not;**

No neighboring nation could depend upon the agreements made between themselves and Assyria. We can add that those within the nation were in the same situation. When men cannot trust those around them to tell the truth, the “father of liars” will prevail.

There are two main avenues one can use to take advantage of others. The first is deception. The second is robbery. Often the two go hand in hand. Merchandising is today falsifying much of the advertising which is placed before the public. For example, let us consider the technique called rebates. If one will buy the product being advertised, he may fill out a form, send it in and receive a check in the mail in a few days. This puts the merchandise in the customer’s hand and then he also receives cash which he may spend for more products with rebates.

The rebate allows the seller to raise the price of the product without it appearing that this was done. The real price was what the buyer actually paid after receiving the rebate. The rebate only gave a false impression of the true price.

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In the case of Ninevah, once the loot was captured, it normally did not escape.

Nahum 3:2 The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots.

The time would come when Ninevah would experience similar horrors to those she had created for those whom she had conquered. She would hear the cracking of the whips being used to spur on the horses pulling war chariots. She would hear the noise of the chariot wheels bouncing over the rough places in the streets of the city. There would also be the sound of the horses hooves pounding upon the ground. The chariots would not have smooth going. All kinds of obstacles would cause them to jump and jostle.

Nahum 3:3 The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:

Swords were manufactured for the purpose of killing an enemy. The swords of the Assyrians and those of the invaders would be unsheathed. The number of dead would be extremely high. We have in this one verse the word carcasses mentioned once, and then the word corpses used twice. Clearly the scene was bloody beyond description. Thousands lay dead and dying, sometimes lying on top of one another in heaps.

Could such a thing happen in the United States of America? Yes it could. And, yes it did. In the year 2002 A.D. a large airliner was taken over by an enemy and

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was guided directly into the New York city trade center towers. The number of dead was estimated at over three thousand. Many of the bodies were never recovered from the rubble. There are several nations in the world today which have possession of nuclear weapons, gases, biological weapons, etc. which could leave the number of corpses in the hundreds of thousands.

**Nahum 3:4 Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.**

The reader may contend that our present day nations are far more dedicated to Jehovah than to allow such massacres. We beg to differ. God is a word more often used by many as a profanity than as an object of praise. I would like to place a sentence before the reader which has a blank in it. Feel free to insert the name of a nation in the blank and then tremble when you meditate on what happened to Ninevah and others.

The following nations and empires have risen to world dominance and then disregarded the Lord of heaven and earth to the extent that they have been replaced by others; they include Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome and ???

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

Because of her filthy conduct God declared that Ninevah would be revealed to the world for just what she

was. She had attracted others to her because of what she could provide to them. That is precisely the way a harlot operates. She offers much. Then she leaves the customer with less rather than more.

God promised to lift her skirts up around her face and let all see what she really offered. That would not be pleasant, either for Ninevah or for those who came to realize how shameful she truly was. She might appear to rule the world. She did not! God is the Ruler. She would find that He was a more powerful foe than she anticipated.

**Nahum 3:6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock.**

When God was finished punishing her Ninevah would no longer find others pleading for her favors. She would be as filthy as the manure covered floor of a chicken house. Everyone who saw her would be astonished at the change.

**Nahum 3:7 And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?**

Instead of gathering around her in admiration, other nations would abhor her and try to get as far away from her as possible. God would bring about her funeral and there would be none to weep over her death. Just the opposite would be true. Others would clap their hands in joy at her fall.

**Nahum 3:8 Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the**

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waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?

As is common in the prophets, God turns from talking about one who is facing punishment, to talking to her. This verse speaks directly to her. Did she really think that she would fare any better than the city of No-amon which was a capitol city in Egypt before this? She should remember, since she was the one who caused the downfall of No-amon.

That city was in much the same position as was Ninevah. It was partly secured by it's position near rivers. She was built on both sides of the Nile. She felt confident that she was impregnable. Who could cross the desert to attack her? Yet that is just what the Assyrian forces did.

Nahum 3:9 Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.

No-amon had neighbors who were ready to fight by her side. Ethiopia, Egypt, Put and Lubim supported her. The only difficulty was that Jehovah was against her. She fell. The Assyrians should have taken notice, but had failed to do so.

Nahum 3:10 Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

That proud city in Egypt saw utter ruin. Many were taken captive. Helpless children were viciously murdered in the streets. Some of the leaders of the city were sold to

the highest bidder. Others were placed in chains where they could be seen as examples of what Assyria could do to those who resisted her.

Nahum 3:11 Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.

One who is drunk is unable to see correctly. The eyes deceive him. The mind fails to warn him of dangers which lie around him. The city of No-amon had been in such a state because of their false state of security. The prediction here is that Ninevah would find herself in a similar condition. She would be so wrapped up in her own pleasures that she would be susceptible to attack from enemies. She would seek help from those around, but they would not offer such help because of her past atrocities. As a result she would be hidden under the soil of the area for about two thousand years. She would seek to hide from the Lord, but would not be able. No one can hide from the God.

Nahum 3:12 All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.

Many of us have never seen a fig tree. But we are told that the description here is very accurate; that when the first figs are fully ripe, just the shaking of the branch will cause them to fall. The defenses of Ninevah would be so fragile that she would fall into the hands of the Medes and Babylonians.

Nahum 3:13 Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set

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**wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.**

Men and women have very different emotional makeup. Women are physically weaker than men. They also tend to panic more easily. The men of Ninevah who were charged with the defense of the city would fail to meet the challenge. There would be a severe conflict, but the Assyrian warriors would be too weak to hold the city.

The barred gates upon which the city depended to keep out opponents would be swung wide open. They would be set on fire and burned.

**Nahum 3:14 Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln.**

They would make some effort at holding the city. They would attempt to store up drinking water. They would make a last minute try to reinforce the walls with new brick. All of this would be to no avail. With God against them there was no hope.

**Nahum 3:15 There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts.**

The city would be set on fire. The swords of the Medes would leave thousands of the Ninevites lying dead in the streets. Those of the city had devoured everything in sight in the past. Now it was their turn to be eaten. It would not matter that there were large numbers of them. Plagues of insects swept over the land at time. Then they would die in massive numbers.

**Nahum 3:16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away.**

It was quite true that the greedy merchants of Ninevah had eaten at the expense of other nations. They had eaten and then moved on to greener fields.

**Nahum 3:17 Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.**

The tables would be turned upside down. The rulers and the military chiefs might be many, but they would be like the grasshoppers on a cold day. They would hide from the danger. Then when they saw the opportunity they would leave the land and no one would be able to find them.

**Nahum 3:18 Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them.**

Shepherds are expected to be alert to the dangers of wolves and lions. Those who were supposed to serve in such a capacity within the city of Ninevah would neglect their duty. The military commanders and political leaders would be rendered utterly helpless. The common people would run for fear and would be spread over the countryside, hiding among the mountains. All resistance would come to a grinding halt before the invading Medes and Babylonians.

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Nahum 3:19 There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

There are persons brought into a hospital after a serious automobile accident who are going to die regardless of any measure which might be taken to bind up their wounds. Ninevah's wounds were to be incurable. To heap trouble on top of trouble, those who heard of her distress would clap their hands in joy over the passing of such a wicked and merciless former power.

On this twenty-fifth day of August in 2002 A.D. I plead with the citizens of the United States of America to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and one's neighbor as one's self. It may not be too late. We do not wish to wait until the wounds of our souls have passed the time and are too grievous to be healed.

**The Book Of
HABAKKUK**

Introduction To Habakkuk

Personal Information on Habakkuk:

We know very little personal information on this prophet. His name can be translated as “embrace” It is appropriate since Habakkuk took the nation of Israel to heart and attempted to reconcile them to God. We do not know the location of his dwelling, though it seems probable from the text that it was in the general area of Jerusalem.

The Date of the Prophecy:

The Babylonians conquered Assyria in 612 B.C. They were moving toward Jerusalem at the time Habakkuk wrote. In 605 B.C. some of the Israelites were taken to Babylon. This had not yet taken place at the time of Habakkuk’s prophecy. It would seem safe to place the date of writing somewhere between these two dates.

Habakkuk’s Approach:

Josiah had been a good king. When Josiah died, his son Jehoahaz was installed. Jehoahaz lasted less than a year. The Egyptians removed Jehoahaz and replaced him with his own brother whose name was Eliakim. His name was changed to Jehoiakim. Both Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim were wicked kings and the moral conditions of the land went downhill rapidly.

The prophet Habakkuk was certain that the

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Babylonians would soon be upon them. He was also convinced that he would had great difficulty in raising the spiritual level of the people's thinking. He decided that his only avenue was to approach the Lord for an answer.

Jehovah informed Habakkuk that the best method was to allow the people to be taken by the Babylonians and shown that they had followed a disastrous path. The Babylonians were His instrument for proving that point. The reaction of Habakkuk was to point out to the Lord that the Babylonians were even more wicked than Israel. Why would He use an even more wicked people to punish His own nation? The answer to this question was that the final outcome would be the punishment of Babylon and the correction of Israel.

### **Basic Lessons of the Book of Habakkuk:**

1. The Lord can be depended upon to find the best possible treatment for both the wicked and the righteous.
2. Evil will ultimately destroy it's own self.
3. Suffering is sometimes necessary to bring men to righteous ways.

### **A Brief Outline of Habakkuk:**

- I. What can be done about Israel's moral condition?
- II. God replies that the Babylonians will punish them.
- III. Why allow an enemy, even more wicked to administer the punishment?
- IV. God's method will work with both Israel and the Babylonians.
- V. Woes are predicted for the Babylonians.
- VI. Habakkuk is convinced and places trust in God.



## *Chapter 1*

Habakkuk is concerned about both the wickedness of Israel, and the fact that he cannot bring about an improvement of their character. They will not listen to his preaching of the Word of the Lord. Is there an answer?

God provides an answer which shocks Habakkuk. The Chaldeans (or Babylonians) will be used to bring Israel to it's senses.

**Hab 1:1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.**

As mentioned in the introduction, Habakkuk's name is an indication that he takes his people to his heart and desires that something might be done to ease the burden which they are bearing and which he must preach to them.

**Hab 1:2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!**

It appeared to Habakkuk that all of his efforts had been to no avail. He had prayed that God might do something which would reduce the violence which was occurring between the people to whom he was preaching. As far as he could determine God had not even heard his prayer. There had been no answer that he could see.

**Hab 1:3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.**

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Those who preach the Word of the Lord often find themselves in a puzzling situation. God has revealed to them what wickedness is found among the people. They are made aware of that which needs to be taught. Yet when they teach those things, the results are almost non-existent. Habakkuk was very conscientious. He had relayed the information God expected him to preach. In spite of his hard labor, the people continued to strive with each other. They paid no attention!

Hab 1:4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

The result of the preaching was that the wicked, who were bent on doing evil took advantage of those who tried to live righteously. Thus the righteous were suffering while the wicked appeared to be prospering. There was a disrespect for the Word of the Lord. This disrespect was difficult to explain. How long would Jehovah continue to allow such conditions?

Hab 1:5 Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

Habakkuk was to be patient. Although it might seem that what was taking place was completely incomprehensible, the time would come in which that which was taking place would become far clearer.

I might add that those who are dedicated to the work of the Lord in any age will find themselves in much the same position that Habakkuk did. We cannot see the

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end from the beginning as Jehovah sees it. Twenty years after the fact we may see the reason why certain things happened the way they did. Then again, we may never know the Divine purposes. It will, however, become clear some day that the Lord knew the way much better than we.

**Hab 1:6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs.**

God was even more aware of the evil doings of the Chaldeans. They were a sinful, greedy nation who hungered after that which they did not deserve. He knew very well just what they were doing. It might appear that He did not care. In reality He was using them to prove Israel. That which comes through the fires of persecution may be of far better quality as a result of the discomfort.

**Hab 1:7 They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.**

It was most certainly true that the invaders were a source of fear and trembling. What was not as evident was that their pride was certainly not shared by the God of heaven. He knew of the horror they caused in the hearts of those whose land they trampled and conquered. But He also knew the hideous end of their ways, even though they did not.

**Hab 1:8 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening**

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wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.

Leopards are known for their swiftness. They silently creep up on their prey and then capture it almost before they are known to be present. The Chaldeans were not only as deadly as leopards; they were also as fierce as ravening wolves who are never satisfied with that which they have killed. Their horsemen maneuver around like circling eagles who will fall upon the helpless victims of their hunger.

Hab 1:9 They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

As these fearful Babylonians ride across the land they will take possession of everything and anything which strikes their fancy. They will take captives of the people of the land just as easily as one might scoop up handfuls of sand on a dry beach.

Hab 1:10 And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.

Those kings and princes who stand in their way would provide little resistance. They will easily take every fortification which they choose to overrun. Even if there are strong walls around a village or city, they will build up mounds which will allow them to surmount the walls and overcome those inside.

Hab 1:11 Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.

After having defeated the defenses of the choice tidbits which lay in his path, the enemy of Israel would believe his power was due to the strength of his own false god. He would be completely convinced that Jehovah was helpless to defend His people Israel. He could not be more wrong!

Hab 1:12 Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

Now the one speaking switches from Jehovah to Habakkuk again. One of the difficulties of this book of Habakkuk is that one must constantly keep track of the one doing the speaking. Habakkuk knows that the Lord is dependable. He is infinitely more able to look into the consequences of men's actions. No doubt God knows just what is needed by both the Babylonian and those of Israel. He will correct His own in the way which will teach them of His eternal purposes.

Hab 1:13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?

Habakkuk realizes that God does not approve of the evil ways of the invaders. Since God does not approve of

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their wickedness, why is it that He allows them to bring hurt to Israel which is more righteous in comparison? Why not bring suffering upon the more evil of the two forces?

**Hab 1:14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?**

Habakkuk sees the Chaldeans growing fatter by the day at the expense of those who are far less evil than those whom they are gobbling up. It was as if those in their way were like helpless prey which men take with the utmost ease.

**Hab 1:15 They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice and are glad.**

The “angle” is the fishhook. Modern day fishermen speak of angleworms which they place on their fishhooks and throw into the water as bait. These invading armies treat those in their way as lightly as do the fishermen. Every time they cast their net they draw it up filled with their prey.

**Hab 1:16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.**

As a result of the Chaldeans success over those whom they overcome, they burn sacrifices to false gods who have no power whatsoever. Nevertheless, they do grow fat as they consume nation after nation, including the Jews.

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**Hab 1:17 Shall they therefore empty their net,
and not spare continually to slay the nations?**

Just how long will Jehovah allow these infidels to continue marching and conquering? Surely an end will be put to their ways someday. Why are they allowed to destroy nation after nation which is less evil than they?

Chapter 2

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon was a very greedy man. He would be satisfied with nothing less than ruling the entire world. He and his forces were moving rapidly toward the land of Judah. Habakkuk was wondering about the response God would give to his own pleas for help from above. He knew that without such help the Jews were not capable of defending themselves.

Hab 2:1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

There was a watchtower where Habakkuk had been accustomed to listen for God's messages to his people. He decided to go to the watchtower and wait for God to provide assistance. He was most anxious to find out what God would say in answer to his plea for help.

He knew there was a strong possibility that God might scold him for thinking a people who had been worshipping idols would receive such help. What could he say if God did scold?

Hab 2:2 And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

The Lord did reply to Habakkuk's plea. He told him to write what He had to say upon a surface which would be very permanent. He wanted to make certain that those who needed to follow His directions would know exactly what he wanted them to do.

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**Hab 2:3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.**

That which God was going to reveal to Habakkuk was still in the future. It might seem that the wait for action would never end. But God would act. Nebuchadnezzar might think he could overrun the known world. If so, he was wrong. God would intervene.

**Hab 2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.**

The pronouns “his” and “him” may cause some uncertainty as to the meaning of this verse. It presents a sharp contrast between the wicked Nebuchadnezzar and the man who lives in obedient faith.

Nebuchadnezzar was so conceited that he believed he could command the world. Such an attitude is disastrous. Such a life may be remembered, but the memory will not be one of honor. The man who lives by faith will obey the will of Jehovah. He will find God on his side. That was what the Jews needed.

**Hab 2:5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:**

Nebuchadnezzar was proud. He was a drunkard and he was hungry for absolute power over other men. He was not doing anything profitable to humanity by conquering nation after nation. This was done only to show that he could do it.

**Hab 2:6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!**

Very few of any age would rejoice to find themselves dealing with one like the Babylonian king. Men would begin to ask just how long it would be before this proud man was halted in his greedy plan. God assured Nebuchadnezzar that the day would arrive. It might be that Nebuchadnezzar looked at the nations he was conquering as dirt, upon which he could trample with no fear of reprisal. In that case he would find out just how wrong he was.

**Hab 2:7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?**

Here is an important point that Nebuchadnezzar had overlooked. One nation might not rise up to punish him for his lack of concern for that which was not his. However, he was not dealing with a single nation now. He had many nations to deal with.

**Hab 2:8 Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.**

Country after country would watch for the opportunity to retaliate against this king. One cannot terrorize the country side, the city and all who live in a land without being hated for their selfish pride filled ways. When the



combined power of those whom Nebuchadnezzar had made miserable stood up against him, and with the power of God on their side, Nebuchadnezzar faced a dim future though he did not know it.

**Hab 2:9 Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!**

God pronounces a woe upon all such men as this one. One who thinks he can treat all others in any way he chooses in order that he may set himself up where all will be forced to bow to him is headed for a fall.

**Hab 2:10 Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.**

The soul is the most valuable possession of any person. It lives on when the body is placed in the grave. Those who had been mistreated by the Babylonians had brought shame upon themselves. There is a heavy price to pay for such selfish pride. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. It shall be separated forever from the presence of the Lord. The soul of the righteous will rise from the grave to live in eternal glory.

**Hab 2:11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.**

The sin was so horrible that the very walls of the houses would testify against it. The cry would be so loud that those of us who live on the opposite side of the earth might hear it echoing through the miles and the centuries.

**Hab 2:12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!**

A town or a city is not just a sizable number of houses with a few people in each one. A town is a number of people working together for mutual benefit. When blood is shed to build a town or a city, there is no such cooperation. Instead there will be hatred. The one who has promoted that hatred will find it aimed directly at him.

**Hab 2:13 Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?**

In the long run those who set out to gain their ends by bringing fiery destruction upon those who oppose them will find that they are laboring in vain. Those who oppose one another at every turn are not the ones who accomplish goals. They shall find that their efforts will come to nothingness.

**Hab 2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.**

This is one of your present commentator's favorite verses in all of the Bible. In the midst of a greedy and selfish world, it is difficult to believe that righteousness will win the victory and that the Word of Jehovah will ultimately be received by the vast majority of persons throughout the globe. Evil is destined to lose. Godliness is destined to win!

**Hab 2:15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh**



**him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!**

Anyone who sets out to take advantage of others is asking for punishment. The man who would take a woman into a bar with the intention of making her drunk in order than he might lie with her in nakedness will face the wrath of the All Powerful Creator. That is not a pleasant thought.

**Hab 2:16 Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.**

The false glory of Babylon is actually shame for that which she has done to others. She shall find that the embarrassment which she has caused others will be returned to her. That which goes around comes around. As she had caused others to be filled with shame, she would find a cup of shame being poured out upon her from the right hand of God. The condition then would be that she would be covered with the vomit of her own shame.

**Hab 2:17 For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.**

The violence of Lebanon was the damage done to that land as the Babylonians rampaged through the natural resources of it's hills, valleys and plains. Her violence had caused both man and beast to be filled with fear.

**Hab 2:18 What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image,**

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and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

Idolatry had been introduced into Israel through the invaders. Did they expect to benefit by causing God's people to make and worship the creation rather than the Creator? How strange it was that a man would carve out or cast an idol with his own hands and then bow down before it to beg for blessings.

Hab 2:19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.

It is the height of foolishness to ask a piece of stone to answer prayer. Wood and stone cannot teach. They have no life nor intelligence. They may well be attractive because of the gold and silver which have been used to cover them. But, they have never taken a single breath or conceived a single thought. They are worse than useless. They cause men to believe that which can never be true.

Hab 2:20 But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

It is vastly different in the case of the One True and Living God. He was not made with hands. He made all that men hold in their own hands. The person who truly understands the situation will look to the Lord who lives and cares for men. When the truth is recognized, Jehovah is the source of real glory. Those who even begin to understand His honor, power and glory will give the honor and praise to Him. They will see the worthlessness of idolatry.

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## *Chapter 3*

At this point Habakkuk offers a prayer to God in the form of a psalm. He recognizes that the Jews must endure punishment for their lack of trust in Him and their leaning toward idols. They will be punished through the invaders from Babylonia. Then the Babylonians themselves will feel God's wrath.

### **Hab 3:1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.**

To set this prayer upon Shigionoth simply means that it is highly emotional in nature as Habakkuk expressed his anxiety over just what might be expected as God disciplined both His own nation and those who had invaded the promised land.

**Hab 3:2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.**

In the "midst of the years" looks back upon the history of Israel. There were so many times during which God had been with them in trying times. Although the punishment was certain to come, the prophet begged God to show mercy even in the midst of the correctional measures. He had done so before. That same mercy was desperately needed as Habakkuk prayed.

**Hab 3:3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.**



Teman and mount Paran were locations east of the Jordan where God's mercy was extended after much grumbling and wandering in the wilderness. The glory of God had allowed the passage of the Israelites across the Jordan and into Canaan. It was easily recognized that this could only have happened through the glory and mercy of the Almighty.

**Hab 3:4 And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.**

Habakkuk describes the scene which he experienced as he perceived a vision of the Lord. It remained true that no man has seen God at any time. What Habakkuk saw was enough, however, to cause him to be awe stricken.

**Hab 3:5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.**

As the Lord moved forward across the land, Habakkuk saw plagues and fire moving along with Him. The horns coming out of His hand added to the majesty of the experience. God has unbelievable power.

**Hab 3:6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.**

Jehovah measured the possibilities as He moved along. He knew the history and the power of every nation. He knew precisely what was needed to reward or to punish every people involved in the advancement of his purposes. Even His own chosen nation faced correctional measures.

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Hab 3:7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

Habakkuk saw the effect the display of God's power had upon those nations that opposed His will. The nations were caused to tremble. This had been true in leaving the land of Egypt. It had also been true as Joshua led the people of Israel in the victory over the Midianites.

Hab 3:8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation?

God's actions had nothing to do with any feelings He had concerning the powers of nature. What was important was His intention to use His power in bringing salvation from sin to mankind.

Hab 3:9 Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.

There were a number of times when God's weapons were removed from their resting places and made active in demonstrating the need for men to follow His commandments. Floods and earthquakes had been just a part of His actions. The tribes of Israel had sworn to uphold His purposes. As they had promised to be His people, He had promised to be their God.

Hab 3:10 The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.

Every part of the natural world was subject to the word of the Lord. The heavens declared the glory of God and the earth showed forth His handiwork.

Hab 3:11 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear.

We are reminded of Joshua's long day, as the sun stood still in the heavens until the battle was ended. No people or nation had been able to interfere permanently with God's intentions.

Hab 3:12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.

Israel did not win those fierce battles through their own skills. God had been with them from Egypt until they conquered Canaan. These opposers of His will had been made to feel the sting of God's arrows. They had been thoroughly dominated.

Hab 3:13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

Now we have a hint of the coming of the Son of God as the "Anointed." The salvation which God was promoting would require the wounding of the wicked. The Babylonians would face the same future if they continued to oppose the plan of the Lord for the redemption of the faithful. The "head" directs the body. The head of the Babylonians would be wounded.

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**Hab 3:14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.**

The Egyptians had seen the effectiveness of God's weapons. Pharaoh, as the head of that nation, had seen the death of his firstborn. The intention of the Egyptians had been to devastate the army of Israel. They expected to overcome them with the greatest of ease.

**Hab 3:15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.**

What really took place was quite the opposite of what they expected. God can use the forces of nature to assure His victory in the war against Satan.

**Hab 3:16 When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.**

Just what was ahead? Habakkuk was trembling with the thought of what might fall upon himself and his people. He wanted very badly to find a way of escape from the coming wrath of the Lord. He prayed that the coming day of trouble might be less horrible than he anticipated it might be.

At the same time, he had made up his mind that he would serve the Lord no matter what was ahead.

**Hab 3:17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the**

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olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Even if the punishment of the Lord involved the failure of crops and the scarcity of meat, he would trust in that same God who had rescued His people repeatedly in past history.

Hab 3:18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

He was so sure of God's integrity that he felt he could rejoice even though the present conditions might be nearly unbearable. This attitude is the one which should be help by every child of God. This world may be filled with both joy and sorrow. The one to come will have all sorrow removed, provided one does not abandon his faith.

Hab 3:19 The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

When all has come to a close, that person who had allowed his own hands to be God's hands, and his own feet to be God's feet, can be assured that he will be lifted up to be with HIM.

**The Book Of
ZEPHANIAH**

Introduction To Zephaniah

The Man Zephaniah:

Zephaniah was the great great grandson of king Hezekiah of Judah. He was thus of royal lineage. He had a passionate opposition to the corruption of not only the people of Judah, but also those of the entire world. He was fearless in declaring the woes which would come upon those who ignored or defied Jehovah.

This short book of only three chapters is not to be overlooked by the serious student of the Holy Scriptures. There are some who can say a lot in a little. Zephaniah was definitely one of this kind.

The Date:

There is strong reason to believe that Zephaniah prophesied during the same time period as Jeremiah and Habakkuk. Each of these expressed the seriousness of the horror which was to come upon the evildoers. It is thought that Zephaniah wrote during the reign of the good king Josiah. Much of the evidence points to the year 625 B.C. The Babylonians were rapidly rising in power and presented a threat to the entire known world.

The Political and Moral Situation:

Hezekiah had been one of the better kings of Judah. He had lifted the spiritual level of the people during his rule. He had removed the high places where idolatrous

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worship was conducted. He had discouraged Baal worship and also that of the sun, moon and stars.

His son Manasseh was one of the worst of those kings. He reversed practically all the good his father had done. The high places were reestablished. He even went so far as to cause his own son to pass through fire. Ammon, the son of Manasseh was not much better. The relationship between rulers and their subjects are intertwined. Rulers have great difficulty in creating a better society. They all too often wish to go along with the desires of their subjects. The people do not usually rise above the character of their rulers. Thus the spiritual climate in Judah was declining steadily as Zephaniah and Jeremiah presented the will of God to the nation.

When Josiah came to the throne, he made a genuine attempt to bring about a respect for the word of the Lord. His efforts were only moderately successful. It is interesting that even though Zephaniah prophesied during the rule of Josiah, he did not include the king's efforts in his writings. He may have known that any improvements in the spiritual conditions of the people were not to be long lasting.

### **The Main Theme of the Book:**

By far the dominant lesson of the books is that a "Day of the Lord" is certain, and is at hand. Was he talking about a local experience involving only the part of the world in which he existed, or was he declaring that this "Day of the Lord" was the final and ultimate day of judgment upon all the world?

The answer to this question is probably that he referred to both the local scene and the climactic judgment of mankind in general. Zephaniah was not alone in presenting both views simultaneously. The prophets

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speak of several days of the Lord. Even Jesus Christ did so as He talked about the destruction of Jerusalem and made statements which clearly dealt with the end of time on earth.

Every true prophet echoed the same basic lesson, "Prepare to meet thy God."

A Brief Outline of the Book:

- I. Judgment was ahead for the entire world.
- II. Repentance was all important.
- III. Jehovah would save those who remained faithful.

Chapter 1

We are about to view a very unpleasant scene which is to be presented by the prophet Zephaniah. God has endured about all He intends to at the hands of his ungrateful people. He will purify Judah and leave but a small remnant of the southern kingdom. Already the northern kingdom had been taken by the Assyrians. That should have been sufficient warning to the south. Sadly, it was not.

Zeph 1:1 The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

These writings were not product of Zephaniah's mind. They were implanted there by the word of the Lord. There is a temptation to confuse the thinking of the prophets with that of Jehovah. The Lord chose His spokespersons with care. He knew which would be true to His revelations and which would not. Zephaniah did not arrive at these teachings through his own mind alone.

The ancestry of the prophet is traced back through four generations, or five if we count the prophet himself. The lineage goes back to Hezekiah. This means that Zephaniah was of royal blood. Usually the generations are only given to a parent, or perhaps a grandparent. The extended lineage was clearly important for the record.

The prophecy was given in the days of Josiah. It is not certain whether this was the early or late part of Josiah's reign. It does seem to fit best if we locate it in the latter portion. The Babylonians were causing fear in the hearts of one nation after another as they built their powerful empire.

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**Zeph 1:2 I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD.**

God's intervention was not to be a simple tap to let His people know He was concerned with their disobedience. He was going to remove the iniquity as a housewife might sweep the filth from her floor.

**Zeph 1:3 I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked: and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD.**

The cleansing was to include all realms of life. Both man and beast would be involved. The action would extend from the birds of the air to the fish of the sea. All of the creation which stood in the way of righteousness was to be destroyed.

This was not the destiny God desired for this land which had been so carefully prepared for the introduction of salvation to mankind. Correction was vitally needed. He would see to it that such discipline would be administered.

**Zeph 1:4 I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests;**

Placing this verse alongside the one before it we can see that God was speaking of both the Jews and the Gentiles. Neither group would escape the wrath which was ahead. When God stretches out His hand upon a

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people He will bring changes. This time the worshippers of Baal and the Chemarim were to be eliminated. The Chemarim were priests of Baal who had been approved by the kings of Judah.

Zeph 1:5 And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham;

The host of heaven were not the angelic band, unless we consider the possibility that the one's who worshipped the sun, moon and stars believed such objects were identical with the angels. God's people are not to worship anything other than Himself.

Zeph 1:6 And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him.

Those who had turned back from the Lord were the ones who had at one time walked in the paths of righteousness, but who had ceased to honor Him in seeking out His will, or abiding by it when they stumbled upon it.

Zeph 1:7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.

There are two quite opposite extremes in the behavior of men and women when they come into the presence of dignitaries. Sometimes there is shouting and merrymaking. Other times a hush falls over the multitude

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in the realization of the respect due to the personality. In this case there was a need for far greater respect than was being offered to the God of heaven.

God was preparing to offer a sacrifice, in that He would give up some of those whom He would like to have preserved and held dear to his heart. The guests at the sacrificial feast would be shown the destiny of those who had lost His respect.

**Zeph 1:8 And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.**

The strange apparel was probably the clothing which identified the persons as having dedicated themselves to Baal or other false gods. It would not matter what the level of their social position was. Kings and princes would be treated just as severely as common people who committed treason against the truth.

**Zeph 1:9 In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.**

There are a number of commentators who believe confidently that those who leaped on the threshold were worshippers of the god Dagon, who had fallen upon a threshold and been broken in pieces. We cannot go along with that explanation. The expression seems to be self explanatory. The ones who were to be included in the punishment were those who had used violence to enter into houses and take possession of whatever they saw as valuable. They were thieves and burglars.

**Zeph 1:10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills.**

Judah would be invaded! The foes would enter through the fish gate of the city of Jerusalem. There would be sounds of violence on every hand, from the hills to the valleys.

**Zeph 1:11 Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.**

Since the howling of the inhabitants of Maktesh are howling at the destruction of the merchant people who bear silver, it seems that this must refer to the areas of financial transactions. No one will escape the torments except that remnant which steadfastly remains loyal to the Lord.

**Zeph 1:12 And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.**

What are the chances of being overlooked in the consumption of the wicked? There is no chance. God will search the most secret places until everyone deserving punishment has been found in their hiding places.

**Zeph 1:13 Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they**

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shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

The treasures which have been heaped up at the expense of others will be taken by the invaders. The houses men have built will be dwelt in by those who had no hand in constructing them. The vineyards which had been cultivated to produce wine for the table would be harvested by those who had neither planted nor cared for them. The eating, drinking and merrymaking which eliminated Jehovah from the celebrations would be silenced.

Zeph 1:14 The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

The day of punishment was near, and was moving toward the people rapidly. It would not be very long before mighty men would weep like infants. The reader may believe this to be confined to the day in which Judah was to feel the wrath of God. The horrors described most surely did have a primary reference to that grief which was to come upon the Jews. But, the next few verses seem to identify it as but one more of those Days of the Lord which all point to that great day when final judgment separates the wicked from the righteous remnant.

Zeph 1:15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wastedness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

Zeph 1:16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

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How could one present a more dismal outlook? Let us just list in one, two, three fashion the terms which are used to describe this sad day.

It is a day of:

1. Wrath
2. Trouble
3. Distress
4. Wastedness
5. Desolation
6. Darkness
7. Gloominess
- 8.. Clouds
9. Trumpet warnings
10. Attacks on fenced cities
11. Attacks on high towers.

We shudder just to conceive of such a time in our mind's eye, to say nothing of actually being surrounded by, and submerged in it.

**Zeph 1:17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.**

Those who are addressed have chosen darkness over light. God will honor their wishes. He will bring such distress upon them that they will be unable to see a way of escape. The sins they have committed will cause their lives to be considered no more of value that manure which collects in the stables.

**Zeph 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the**

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fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

They will, of course, think first of the wealth which in the past had allowed them to buy their way out of unpleasantness. That will not be successful this time. The gold and silver will be of no more value than the dust of the ground. The time of reaping is at hand. And each will reap as he has sown.

Before they realize it the Babylonians will be upon the people of Judah and Jerusalem. They will be carried away to Babylon and given the opportunity to learn the identity of the only God who created the heavens and the earth.

Chapter 2

Zephaniah is now going to give voice to God's call for repentance among the nations. It is well known that the vast majority of those who fall into Satan's fold do not climb back out. This chapter calls for those who will humble themselves to do that before they are destroyed by the anger of the Lord.

Zeph 2:1 Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;

The nation which is not desired is any nation which fights against the purposes of Jehovah. Although Judah is primarily in mind, a number of other surrounding nations are addressed one by one. We are told in the New Testament that the meek shall inherit the earth. We are also told that unless ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. Pride goes before destruction.

Zeph 2:2 Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you.

The decree will bring horrors that no person would choose to experience if he knew just how serious the agony would be. Those who would turn from their disobedient ways could escape such punishment. Those who would not turn would feel the full force of God's anger. A few would turn. Most would not.

Zeph 2:3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

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Up to this point those addressed had hidden from the Lord. It was far past time for them to start seeking rather than running. If they would seek with all their heart, they would find grace and mercy.

**Zeph 2:4 For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.**

Here we have listed four cities of the Philistine territory. These had a long history of opposing Israel and inviting God's people to join them in the worship of objects which were no gods and could not save them.

**Zeph 2:5 Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.**

Verse five is addressed to the same Philistine territory, except this time it is less specific and does not name individual cities. Note that the word "Canaan" is used. As it is used here, it is applied to the inhabitants of Canaan at the time Israel entered it. When the word is used in this way it is speaking of the people who rose up to fight against the Israelites. It is very likely that God is speaking not only of those who lived in the land and worshiped idols instead of the Lord, but also those of the Israelites who had adopted the ways of the Canaanites.

**Zeph 2:6 And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.**

The seacoast of the Mediterranean which had been the dwelling place of the Philistines would change from a merchandising area to pasture land for the sheep and the goats. Tents would replace the more permanent housing of the former dwellers.

**Zeph 2:7 And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.**

The captivity of the people of Judah is clearly spelled out here. After they have served the time needed to fulfil the chastisement God knew was needed, The remnant of Judah would come back and would be allowed to inhabit the seacoast area.

**Zeph 2:8 I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border.**

From the Philistines in the west, the prophet turns to Moab and Ammon in the east. Both of these nations lay east of the Jordan. They had stood in the way of the entrance of the Israelites into the land which God had promised to them. These nations were kindred to Israel, but they hated the descendants of Jacob with great passion. They had attempted to place curses upon them. They had also attempted to melt down the border which God had established.

**Zeph 2:9 Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as**

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Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

The lands of the Moabites and the Ammonites would be left in such desolation that it could be compared to Sodom and Gomorrah, which were devastated by the Lord for their utter lack of moral values. God would allow Israel to take possession of the land inhabited by these two defiant groups of people.

We are informed that much of the salt used in that part of the world is collected from the coastal areas on the east side of the Dead Sea. Nettles grow in places where many other types of vegetation can not exist.

Zeph 2:10 This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts.

Moab and Ammon had despised the God of heaven and also His people. They had set themselves up as enemies of God. There is nothing one can do which is more foolish than challenging God. It may take a very brief time, or it may take somewhat longer, but sooner or later he who fights against the Lord will rue the day he did that.

Zeph 2:11 The LORD will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.

What does it mean to say that all of the false gods of the earth will be famished? It means that the sacrificial

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meals they have been fed will be cut off. Pay close attention dear reader. This verse includes far more than just the Moabites and the Ammonites. It takes in those lands beyond the sea which act in like manner to them. Again we see the blending of local judgments of God with those of the world as a whole.

It would be well if all men in every part of the world would learn from the days of old that God is not mocked. There will be those in every part of the earth which will later bow the knee before Jehovah, but those who fail to do so will suffer a similar fate to that of Moab and Ammon.

**Zeph 2:12 Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword.**

Now that God has spoken to the nations west and east of Israel, He turns his attention southward. The Ethiopians had maintained control of Egypt for a lengthy period of time. Ethiopia lay as far south of Palestine as any known land. The nations such as Egypt and Ethiopia had heaped many miseries upon Israel for centuries. When the “Sword of the Lord” descended from heaven upon God’s foes, No nation would evade it’s keen blade.

**Zeph 2:13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.**

We have seen what God had to say about Israel, and to the nations east, west and south of Israel. There is but one direction on the map which has not been included. That is north. Assyria, with it’s wicked city of Nineveh will reel and fall before the power of God’s mighty hand.



The exalted city, known far and wide would become a wilderness, inhabited by wild beasts rather than humans.

**Zeph 2:14 And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds; for he shall uncover the cedar work.**

What little fertility she retains will be fed upon by such animals as vultures and porcupines. The fine buildings which boasted of polished cedar walls would find their beauty exposed to the weather that they might rot.

**Zeph 2:15 This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.**

Ninevah, the capitol of Assyria, had cared little for Jehovah or His people. They were far too occupied with the lust and the pride of life. This pride filled city would become so devastated that those who passed through her former grandeur would shake their heads in astonishment that such a change might happen. The prophecy was fulfilled. Archeologists have found the location of the former city, but all they can do is hiss and wag their heads when they contemplate what once was, and what is now.

We have looked at the people of Israel themselves. We have looked north, south, east and west to the isles of the sea. God sees it all. He will reward the righteous

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and punish the wicked. Some of this will take place in the times of Zephaniah and the other prophets of the pre-Christian age. The end of it will be realized when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth to call both the living and the dead to account.

Chapter 3

“Vengeance is mine saith the Lord, I will repay.”

But –

“Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.”

Both of these truths are underlined in the book of Zephaniah. God has offered men the opportunity to receive wondrous blessings, both here and hereafter. At the same time He has warned that those who love sin will find their place in eternity to be in the company of him who is the father of liars.

**Zeph 3:1 Woe to her that is filthy and polluted,
to the oppressing city!**

This city which is oppressive, filthy and polluted is not Babylon or Ninevah. It is the city of Jerusalem which God chose as the site of His temple. How could such blessings be ignored and rejected? It is beyond our understanding. Yet the same attitude has manifested itself through the entire history of mankind. The New Jerusalem of the present age is the source of every blessing known to man, yet the vast majority of men and women turn a deaf ear to the call of the gospel.

**Zeph 3:2 She obeyed not the voice; she received
not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she
drew not near to her God.**

The following list of sins leaves no doubt of the moral corruption which infested the precious city of God. Her sins had been pointed out by one prophet after another. She only stiffened her back and turned her ear away.

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After all the Lord had done for His people, they would not listen and come when He called.

**Zeph 3:3 Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.**

The princes were the governing officials. Rather than offering their services to glorify Jehovah and uplift the citizens, they were like wolves who had gone hungry all day and consumed everything in sight. They could not wait until the next day to continue their feasting on others.

**Zeph 3:4 Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.**

The prophets of God who were supposed to be spiritual leaders were light headed. They did not take religious leadership seriously. Because of their sins, the holy places were stained. The law of the Lord was despised. There is very little more destructive to the work of the Lord than spiritual leaders who betray their Lord's will.

**Zeph 3:5 The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.**

If such persons thought they were hidden from the eyes of Jehovah, they could hardly be more mistaken. He knows their thoughts, words and deeds. He lets His displeasure be known, but the people continue to follow their sinful ways.

**Zeph 3:6 I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant.**

Earlier in this book of Zephaniah we found the nations from the four quarters of the earth condemned and punished by the Lord. Their streets had been left deserted. Their cities had been turned into ruins and ash heaps. Their tall buildings had been crumbled. Israel could see just how serious God considered the very sins they were committing themselves.

**Zeph 3:7 I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.**

After viewing the disasters which had come in the past to Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as others who despised the will of the Lord, it was to be expected that rational persons would avoid the same future. But, even when God punished them with less serious curses, they failed to take heed to what was ahead. They could hardly get up early enough each morning to plan wickedness for the day.

**Zeph 3:8 Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.**

This verse is more than just a declaration that God is going to punish Israel for their disobedience. It looks forward to the final day of judgment when every man shall give account of that which he has done, whether it be good or evil.

All the earth will be brought before Him to answer for their reaction to His Word. Those who have ignored or defied Him will be cast into a lake of fire. Those who love violence will find more than they can handle. Those who love hypocrisy will find themselves in the company of liars and covenant breakers forever.

**Zeph 3:9 For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.**

When the wicked have been removed from the pure in heart, there is to be a righteous remnant who will unite to serve with devotion. We have seen in our own day just such a people to call sincerely upon the name of the Lord. That people is the Church of Christ. They serve in love for one another and for the Lord.

**Zeph 3:10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.**

It is not just to Ethiopia, which was as far from Israel as His people knew at that time; it was from beyond the rivers of that land. It reached unto the hearts of those from every nation of the globe.

**Zeph 3:11 In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the**

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midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

When that time appeared, the people of God would be purified. Those who lived in pride and greed were to be taken away. You see, no man may enter into the Kingdom of God without first turning from such pride and greed. There will be no need for God's people to be ashamed of the church because that holy mountain will live in purity.

Zeph 3:12 I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

When God finished His purification procedure, those who were left would be the ones who had previously been abused by the wicked, selfish sinners who had been removed. The condition of the abused would be reversed. They might have been misused and left poor in the past. In the future they would be the rich of spirit who trusted in the authority of their Maker.

Zeph 3:13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

Does this verse say that no man shall sin at any level and still be accepted as a true follower of God? Surely not! Christians are to pray for the forgiveness of those sins which they commit daily. We are taught to pray that God will forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

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What is meant is that this wicked behavior is not the pattern of life for the believer. He or she may fall victim momentarily to the wiles of the Devil. They will not follow such a path by deliberate design. All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but they do not turn a deaf ear when He calls upon them to do better.

In contrast to the miseries which will come upon the evildoers, the righteous will not have to fear God. He will support them when they stumble. He will protect them from Satan's onslaughts.

**Zeph 3:14 Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.**

It is most interesting that the gender is feminine in this verse. It is not the "Sons of God" who are promised gladness and rejoicing. It is the daughters of Jerusalem. This does not imply that only the females will sing and be happy of heart in the New Jerusalem. Daughters are usually precious in the eyes of their fathers. It is so with God and the daughter of Jerusalem. He loves her for loving Him. This daughter includes both male and female.

**Zeph 3:15 The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.**

Life will become less strenuous for those who are left after the purification is completed. The viciousness of Satan's devotees is gone. Jesus Christ, as Lord of lords, and King of kings is present continually. He sees the true children of God. He will not allow them to be eternally punished.

**Zeph 3:16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.**

In the day of the Lord, His followers will be relieved of fear from the wicked. They cannot be permanently harmed. Today is the day of salvation. The need is not to be paralyzed with fear; it is to rise up and work while it is day.

**Zeph 3:17 The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.**

Does the reader recall having been punished by his or her parents. Such punishment from loving parents is profitable beyond measure. God is with His people every moment of every day. There is good reason to rejoice. He rejoices over His own to a far greater degree than any human ever rejoiced over either a pet puppy or a precious son or daughter. He will never cease to love. His joy is made full by the joy of those who serve Him.

**Zeph 3:18 I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.**

God had called earlier for the nations to gather to give an account of themselves. Now He promises that He will gather up those who love and obey Him, and who might be saddened by the reproach of God's enemies toward His worship assemblies. Those who were disappointed by the arrogance of unbelievers would find their burden lifted.

**Zeph 3:19 Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.**

At the time in which Zephaniah produced his prophecy, those who afflicted God's children were Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites. They were Assyrians and Ethiopians. Now they are those of any and every nation who refuse to give honor to the Saviour of the world and His saints.

God would see that those who afflict His people will be opposed by Him. In every land on earth His subjects will be lifted up rather than tormented.

**Zeph 3:20 At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.**

The gathering mentioned is twofold. There is that gathering of the remnant which were to return from captivity in such places as Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia. In addition the prophecy points to the deliverance from the bondage of sin. Ultimately the nations of the earth will have the chance to see this relief and give praise to God who made it possible.



**The Book Of  
HAGGAI**



# *Introduction To Haggai*

## **Date of Writing:**

The book of Haggai was written in the year of 520 B.C. This was the second year of the reign of Darius, the King of the empire of the Medes and Persians. Babylon had been the major power in the area for an extended period of time. The Jews were taken into captivity by the Babylonians and had spent almost seventy years as slaves in that land. The temple of God had been destroyed, along with much of the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

The Medes and Persians had conquered Babylon and did not care to keep the Jews in captivity. King Cyrus had given permission for them to return to the land of Canaan and rebuild God's temple. Cyrus had died after the decree to return was given. Darius followed Cyrus and allowed the return to move forward.

## **The Author:**

There were somewhat less than fifty thousand of the Jews who took advantage of the opportunity to return to Canaan. Among these were two of the prophets. These two were Zechariah and Haggai. Haggai was very blunt in his efforts to get the people to begin work on rebuilding the temple. They had been satisfied to rebuild their own homes, but did not properly respect the house of the Lord. Haggai let them know in no uncertain terms that God was not pleased with what they were doing. His house

was as important, or perhaps even more important than their own.

**The Purpose of the Book:**

One of the reasons why the work on the temple was not begun was that the Samaritans hated the Jews and tried to discourage them from rebuilding. The Samaritans were a mixed people. They had come about as a result of intermarriage between Jews who had been left in Canaan when the others were taken captive, with the people of the land. The hatred lasted for much time and can be seen in the attitude of the Samaritans toward the Jews in the time of Christ. Haggai and Zechariah had to overcome this resistance by preaching to those who should have been rebuilding the temple and were not.

## *Chapter 1*

**Hag 1:1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,**

**Hag 1:2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.**

Zerubbabel and Joshua were the two leaders of the people. Zerubbabel was the governor and political leader. Joshua was the religious leader. It would be necessary to enlist the aid of these two if anything was to be accomplished.

The people had been excusing their failure to build the temple by saying the time was not yet right. In the meantime they had been busy building comfortable homes for themselves.

Haggai informed Zerubbabel and Joshua that he had a message from the Lord. Since the people said the time for rebuilding the temple was not right, God had a question for them.

**Hag 1:3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,**

**Hag 1:4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?**

God would like to know if they thought it was time for them to live in their own houses in comfort while His house lay in ruins? Such words are not hard to understand. God was saying, "Get to work!"

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Hag 1:5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

Hag 1:6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

God wondered if they had truly considered the results of their disrespect. Their harvests had been very disappointing. They had planted and cultivated their fields sufficiently that they would ordinarily have reaped enough to take care of their needs. They had some food but not enough to satisfy their hunger. They had drink to go with their food, but they were still thirsty. They had some clothing, but not sufficient to keep them warm. When they earned wages it was as if they put the money in the top of their pocketbook, but it ran right out at the bottom faster than they could pour it in at the top.

Those of us who went through the days of the depression can at least partially understand their situation. It is not pleasant.

Hag 1:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

For the second time, God suggests that they consider their ways. The obvious response which He expected was for them to start rebuilding the temple.

Hag 1:8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

What they needed to do to change their condition was to go find wood for timber to build. When that was



done and the building was proceeding, God would be pleased. He did not expect to be ignored. One of the most important tasks which men have is to glorify the Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth.

Hag 1:9 Ye looked for much, and, lo it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

When the Jews worked hard and expected their work to be rewarded, they found that very little return was found compared to the labor they had put into their efforts. The explanation was that God, controls nature, had been disappointed with them. They had neglected their duties toward His temple and acted selfishly.

Hag 1:10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

The result was that the normally refreshing moisture which was needed for a plenteous harvest had been withheld. It was impossible for the land to bring forth food when it did not rain.

Hag 1:11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

The Lord Himself was responsible for the shortage of water. He had called for the drought. It had struck both

the mountains and the valleys. It had caused a severe shortage of everything they attempted to produce. Both the vegetation and the animals were not able to produce that which would have normally appeared.

Hag 1:12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.

Fortunately the people paid attention to God's message. Both Zerubbabel and Joshua took the lead in obeying the will of the Lord, as Haggai had delivered it to them. All of the people joined in the effort to please God.

The fear of the Lord is more than just standing and shaking in one's shoes. It is admitting that He has the right to direct our lives, and then setting about to follow His directions. That works today just as it did in the time of Haggai and Zechariah

Hag 1:13 Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.

The Lord then spoke again by Haggai. He told them He was with them. This meant their labors would once more bring forth success. If they were willing to serve and glorify God, He would return the favor and bless them with rain and harvest.

Hag 1:14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,

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**and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,**

Things immediately began to improve. The spirit of both the leaders and the people was strengthened. The work on the temple was underway.

**Hag 1:15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.**

Even in that same second year of Darius, God spoke again through Haggai, that He might encourage their rebuilding efforts.

## *Chapter 2*

**Hag 2:1** In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying,

**Hag 2:2** Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

Zerubbabel, Joshua and all of the rest of the Jews were given a message of comfort.

**Hag 2:3** Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

Anyone who had seen the temple in all of its glory before it was demolished by the Babylonians could easily see that it was far from what they had then seen. There was much to be done before that glory could be looked on with pride by either Jehovah or the people.

**Hag 2:4** Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:

The Lord promised to be with both the leaders and the people if they would put forth the effort which was needed. If the people would work, God would work along with them.

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Hag 2:5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

When Israel had come out of bondage in Egypt, God had called Moses to the top of Mount Sinai and had made a covenant with His people. If they would be His people, He would be their God. He did not intend to forget His promise to them.

This is an opportunity for the reader to get a better understanding of the Spirit of God. When God the Father wills that something be accomplished, He assigns that work to the Holy Spirit. Just as the spirit of a man enables that man to do what his mind desires to be done, the Holy Spirit of God puts into action that which God the Father wills.

There is a strong lesson here for Christians. When one becomes a Christian and is born of the Spirit, that one can do whatever God calls upon him or her to do.

To the apostles that meant speaking in tongues and doing miraculous deeds. To the Christian today it means bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit such as love, joy, peace and brotherly kindness. Only when one works with God can Satan be defeated.

Hag 2:6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

God promised through Haggai that it would not be a long time before there would be a great change on earth. This change would be felt both in the heavens and on the earth. It would be felt on both sea and land.

Hag 2:7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

Have you ever been awakened by having someone shake you until you quite dreaming and realized there was something exciting going on? God was informing His people that something similar to that was going to occur. The house which they were in the process of building for the purpose of worshipping Him would be filled with a glory even greater than that of the temple which had been destroyed.

Hag 2:8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.

Hag 2:9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

There is a hint in this verse that God does not need men's gold or silver. He owns it all anyway. What He does desire is that something greater than silver and gold might be sent forth from that rebuilt temple. From the temple which was being rebuilt peace would come to men.

Hag 2:10 In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

Hag 2:11 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,

Haggai had another message from God. They were to ask the priests about the law.

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**Hag 2:12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.**

If that which was holy were to come into contact with that which was unclean, would that which was holy cause that which was unclean to become holy? The priests answered that it would still be unholy.

**Hag 2:13 Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.**

Haggai then presented another question from the Lord. If a person who was unclean because he had touched that which was unclean were to touch that which was clean, would that which had been touched by the unclean person be made unclean. The priests answered that the thing touched would become unclean.

**Hag 2:14 Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.**

Haggai then proceeded to explain why he had asked the two questions. God's people were unclean. Everything which they offered had become unclean because they had touched it.

**Hag 2:15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:**

Before they had begun to rebuild the temple they had found that there were serious problems.

**Hag 2:16 Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty.**

They had expected to find a given harvest of wheat. When they counted it up, they had only half of what the expected. They had expected fifty containers of product to come out of the fatpress. Instead they had only gotten twenty.

We suspect that they did not have to have these facts underlined for them. They would have been very much aware of it.

**Hag 2:17 I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.**

Strangely enough, after all that the Lord had done for them in times past, they failed to see the cure for their difficulties. What needed to be done was for them to honor and glorify God. They had not done that.

**Hag 2:18 Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider it.**

For all this time since they had returned to Canaan, even after the foundation of the temple was laid, the problem continued.

**Hag 2:19 Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.**

Were the granaries yet full? Did the vines and the fruit trees bear what they had expected. The answer to both questions was “No.” However, if they would watch from the time they resumed the work on the temple, they would find that things would be changed. Their work would be productive.

**Hag 2:20 And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying,**

**Hag 2:21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;**

A message was then presented from Haggai to Zerubbabel. This was a far more joyful message than had been heard before.

**Hag 2:22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.**

There was to be a major shakeup on the earth. Kingdoms which had been powerful, with great armies would find the power to be crumbled. They would be overthrown because the foes of the Lord would begin fighting among themselves.

**Hag 2:23 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.**

The manner in which God would make Zerubbabel to be a signet was that he was to become a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Zerubbabel led the people of God out of fleshly bondage, Christ would lead men out of the bondage of sin. As Zerubbabel led in the building of the temple in Old Jerusalem, Christ would build the spiritual temple of the New Jerusalem.



**The Book Of  
ZECHARIAH**



# *Introduction To Zechariah*

## **Author:**

According to the very first verse of the book, it was authored by Zechariah, who was the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo. In contrast, Ezra says he was the son of Iddo. See Zechariah 1:1 and Ezra 5:1.

**Zech 1:1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,**

*Ezra 5:1 Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.*

The difference in the two passages is not a contradiction. It was common to call a grandson, or other male descendant a son.

A more serious consideration is the claim by some liberal students of the scriptures that the book is very dissimilar in the latter chapters (9-14) to what it is in the early chapters (1-8). They contend that this indicates more than one author.

However, the early chapters are much more concerned with the building of the temple, while the later ones are messianic in nature. We might then expect wide variation

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in the style. It is the present commentator's conviction that Zechariah was the author of the entire work.

Date:

Conservative students have little disagreement in placing the date at 520-518 B.C. This would have been shortly after the return from captivity. This fits nicely with the single author position. The more liberal students, who believe in multiple authors are sharply divided as to the date of the latter chapters. Their estimates range from 333 B.C. to 140 B.C. The conservative position is much preferred by the present writer. This agrees with the fact that Zechariah and Haggai were prophesying at the same time.

Key Themes:

The first eight chapters are a call to resume the way of life under the Mosaic law. There must be a very earnest effort to avoid the idolatry and immorality which led to the Babylonian captivity. The temple must be built back and the worship services of Jehovah resumed in accordance with His directions. Eight visions are seen by the prophet.

1. The rider and horsemen among myrtle trees.
2. Four horns and four smiths.
3. A man with a measuring line.
4. Trial of the high priest.
5. The lampstand and the two olive trees.
6. A flying roll.
7. The woman in the ephah.
8. The four chariots and horses of varying colors.

The last six chapters point to a world triumph for the Kingdom of God over the heathen powers of the world. A Messiah and King is to appear. He will lead the people of God to a complete victory over those who oppose God's kingdom. Two shepherds are compared. One is a false shepherd who leads men astray. The other is a wise Shepherd who attempts to lead the people in love and care. There is to be a great judgment to separate the followers of the wise and the foolish shepherds.

There is to be destruction of those nations which oppose Jehovah and His holy nation. Many will be converted from heathenism. That which is holy will be victorious, and will be preserved.

Chapter 1

God speaks through the prophet Zechariah and makes an urgent call for repentance. If the people will turn to Him, He will turn to them. There is need for immediate action. Much opposition will be encountered, but with the help of Jehovah, all will be overcome and righteousness will be victorious

Zech 1:1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

Darius was a Mede. The year was 520 B.C. The Medes and Persians had defeated Babylon and Cyrus had given a decree that the Jews were to be allowed to return to Palestine. Darius had given some encouragement to the rebuilding of the temple, but little had been done.

Zechariah had been selected by the Lord to work along with Haggai to spur action on the part of the remnant which had returned. Zechariah was the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo. Iddo had also been a prophet.

Zech 1:2 The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

The captivity had taken place because of the displeasure of the Lord toward His wayward people. This should have been a lesson to the ones who had returned. However, God was still not completely happy with the effort which was being made to conform to His will.

Zech 1:3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith

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**the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.**

It had been true from the beginning that if God's people were true to Him, He would bless them. If they were untrue they would be punished for their disobedience. When they learned the need to obey and made the decision to turn back to Him, He was pleased to resume the blessings. This will apparently be true until the end of time.

**Zech 1:4 Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.**

The word "fathers" here includes more than just their immediate male parents. As used here it applies to those of their ancestors who had been warned to repent of their idolatry, etc. and had not responded to the warning. This had been a terrible mistake. The present generation was not to follow in their footsteps.

**Zech 1:5 Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?**

The fathers had died. They could not warn those who had returned. The prophets who had cried out God's warnings to those of past times were now also dead. They could not issue words of caution. How would the Lord proceed to prevent the remnant from entering into the same sins as had caused their ancestors to be taken to Babylon?

**Zech 1:6 But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.**

Though the fathers were dead and the prophets also, the Word of the Lord continued to be dependable. It had caught up with those of days past who ignored it. The present generation must hear God's directions and obey them, else a similar fate would befall them.

**Zech 1:7 Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,**

The visions which Zechariah saw came to him very shortly after Haggai had spoken the Word of God to the same people. The reader should take note that these visions all came to Zechariah in the same day. He had a busy twenty-four hours. There were eight visions in all.

We are informed that these visions were not the word of Zechariah. He was but a spokesman for God.

**Zech 1:8 I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.**

It was in the night that Zechariah saw the visions, but this does not necessarily mean they were dreams.

Dreams occur when men are asleep. Visions come while one is awake.

In the vision, the prophet saw a man riding on a red horse. Horses were usually associated with war in Biblical times. This red horse is thought to be of that color to represent the blood which is shed in battle. The horse and rider were standing among myrtle trees in the bottom. Myrtle trees were common in Palestine at the time. They were sometimes planted for scenery and also for the aroma which they gave off.

We are not told the total number of horses which were seen in the vision. There was one who stood out from the rest. The rest of the horses were speckled with red and white.

**Zech 1:9 Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.**

We are not left to guess the meaning of the horses and riders. Zechariah asked the rider on the red horse what the meaning was, and he replied that he would explain it. Zechariah referred to the rider of the red horse as "lord." This would only indicate that the rider was of great prestige. Within itself, it would not necessarily mean the rider was divine in nature.

**Zech 1:10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.**

The rider of the red horse explained that the horses had been sent by the Lord to walk through the earth and observe what was to take place.

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Zech 1:11 And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.

At this point the rider of the red horse is called “the angel of the Lord.” An angel can be any messenger. An angel of the Lord would be one who carried messages to or from Jehovah.

The rider of the red horse received word from the horses which had walked through the earth that little was going on. Everything was at rest. That might sound like a peaceful situation and to be desired. That is not the meaning. The people were to be busy working for God. The nation of Israel had a promise that they would help to bring a blessing to all nations. They were expected to rebuild the temple which the Babylonians had destroyed and were to keep the law as given through Moses.

Zech 1:12 Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?

This is not just any angel of the Lord. It is “THE” angel of the Lord. There is one very special angel of the Lord who is mentioned again and again in both the old and new testament scriptures. Many hold that this angel is Jesus Christ, the greatest messenger who has ever come to man from the throne room of the trinity.

The angel of the Lord then cried out to the Lord of hosts, asking how long it would be before He would have mercy on Jerusalem and other cities of Judah. It had been seventy years since the captivity began and Jeremiah had

informed them that seventy years would be the length of the captivity. Was something about to happen now that the time had expired?

Zech 1:13 And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.

The Lord of hosts then answered the question of the angelic rider of the red horse. The answer was one of comforting nature. Action would begin. God will bless His people if they will obey Him.

Zech 1:14 So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

The rider of the red horse commanded Zechariah to tell the remnant that He was concerned about the people. He would give them the protection that any person would give one for whom they were jealous. He was prepared to bless them and watch over them.

Zech 1:15 And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

Jehovah was not just slightly displeased with the heathen who would like to see nothing done in Israel's work for Him. He had already been unhappy with them. But they had increased His anger when they had extended the punishment of His people beyond the seventy years He had laid out.

Zech 1:16 Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.

What comforting words these were indeed. God was now ready to resume His blessings of Israel. The temple would be rebuilt. The measuring line would not only be laid upon the temple to rebuild it. It would be stretched out upon the entire city of Jerusalem. Sometimes as measuring line indicates judgment. At other times it was a beginning point for building. The latter was the case here.

There is a hint here of the coming spiritual temple of the Lord which is the church of Jesus Christ. That would come later. First the physical temple would be rebuilt in Jerusalem.

Zech 1:17 Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

The angel of the Lord urged Zechariah to continue the comforting words. It was not just Jerusalem that would be rebuilt. Many cities would become prosperous just as Jerusalem would be.

This concludes the first of the eight visions which Zechariah saw.

Zech 1:18 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns.

Here we have the beginning of the second vision. This time Zechariah saw four horns. Horns are symbolic

of power which used in figurative language, as they are here. Now our curiosity is aroused as to the identity of the four horns. Are they for, or are they opposed to the people who have been told to begin rebuilding?

Zech 1:19 And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

Zechariah asked the angel our question and received an answer. There were horns which had scattered Israel, Judah and Jerusalem.

Daniel had also seen a vision of an image which was made up of four beasts. (See Daniel 7:2-7.)

Dan 7:2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

Dan 7:3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

Dan 7:4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

Dan 7:5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

Dan 7:6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

Dan 7:7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong

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*exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.*

These beasts are not identical with the four horns seen by Zechariah. The beasts of Daniel seem to have been Babylon, MedoPersia, Greece and Rome, all of whom opposed the purposes of God's servants. But this does not quite fit in parallel with Daniel's four. The four horns of Zechariah's vision had already scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. The four beasts of Daniel included Greece and Rome which had not yet participated in such oppression. Horns are mentioned in Daniel, but they are all on the fourth beast.

May we suggest that the four horns of the vision seen by Zechariah were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and MedoPersia. All four of these persecuted Israel either in or very shortly after Daniel's day.

**Zech 1:20 And the LORD shewed me four carpenters.**

Carpenters have a mission which is just the opposite of horns. Horns are agents which tear and destroy. Carpenters build up that upon which they work. These carpenters will reverse the effects of the four horns and will bring about the progress which both Israel and the Lord seek.

**Zech 1:21 Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.**

Observe that there are two usages of the word “these” in this verse. They are not the same. The first occurrence is that of the horns. The second occurrence refers to the carpenters. The first scattered and humiliated the people of Israel. The second are those who came to cast out the horns of the Gentiles who scattered Israel. Israel, Judah and Jerusalem had been scattered by the horns. They would be rebuilt by the carpenters.

## *Chapter 2*

God assures Zechariah that the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt and that He will be with His people in that city. The reader must be careful to notice the spiritual overtones which doubtless have reference to the spiritual city, which in the New Testament is called the “New Jerusalem.”

God used the law of Moses as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. The careful student will observe a continuing revelation of God’s plan for man. The book of Zechariah is loaded with figures which point to the Saviour of the world and His church.

**Zech 2:1 I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.**

It had been predicted in chapter one that the city of God would be measured as a preliminary to the rebuilding process. This measuring is what Zechariah is privileged to see in the third of the eight visions. The result will be somewhat unexpected for Zechariah and for the remnant which is expecting such building.

**Zech 2:2 Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.**

Zechariah asked the man with the measuring line where he is going. The answer is that Jerusalem is about to be measured to see how wide and how long it is to be. This is a matter of good judgment. One ought not to build until he has a clear picture of the finished product.

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Zech 2:3 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him,

As the angel who had talked with Zechariah continued on his way to making the measurement, he was met by another angel. We should not be concerned with the fact that the man with the measuring line is called a “man” and then later called an angel. Angels sometimes appeared in the form of men. Now we have two angels speaking to one another.

Zech 2:4 And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein:

The second angel told the first to give Zechariah some information concerning the nature of the city as it is rebuilt. The first statement about the city is one which would be shocking to those who had taken great pride in the walls of the city in previous times. The rebuilt city was to have large numbers of both men and livestock. Strangely, it was to have no walls of defense surrounding it.

Zech 2:5 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

The reason for the lack of walls was that the Lord Himself would be a protective wall around it, and He would also be glory in the midst of her.

We can already see the spiritual side of the rebuilt city coming into view. It is true that Christ came to the rebuilt

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city and that the glory of God shone brightly because of His words and deeds done there. However, we must look farther and see the New Jerusalem in which the spiritual presence of all three members of the trinity abide, and shed the glory of God to all parts of the world.

**Zech 2:6 Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD.**

The double “Ho” is God’s urgent call for those of Israel who had remained in the Babylonian nation to leave and come to Him. Babylon represents the confused world which fights against the city of God. Anyone who stays in the world when God calls and warns them to leave has allied themselves with the enemies of the Lord.

God had scattered Israel to the four winds to teach them a lesson about holy conduct. The lesson had now been concluded and those who had learned it would heed His call to come to the rebuilt city.

**Zech 2:7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.**

The portion of God’s people who had still not returned to Palestine needed to depart from Babylon and join their brethren who had already freed themselves from that wicked place.

The comparison between the scene here and that presented in the book of Revelation is hard to miss. In that book Babylon has opposed the New Jerusalem. The result is destruction of the antichristian army.

**Zech 2:8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which**

**spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.**

What is meant by the words of the angel that God had sent him to the nations which had spoiled Israel after glory? It is not a matter of time. The verse means that through the power of God those nations which attempted to destroy Israel would be punished for those attempts. When that had been accomplished, God's glory would shine brightly. They had made the mistake of trying to injure that which was as precious to the Lord as the pupil of the eye is to a human.

**Zech 2:9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.**

The power of God is so great that the mere shaking of His hand is sufficient to demonstrate that power. When He has raised His Almighty arm in the direction of His foes, they will know they have insulted the captain of all the hosts of heaven.

**Zech 2:10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.**

There was reason for God's children to sing and rejoice. As a wall of fire about them and as a glory in the midst of them, they need fear no agent of destruction. The last part of the eighth chapter of Romans expresses much of the same confidence. (See Romans 8:31-29.)

*Rom 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

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Rom 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Rom 8:33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Rom 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Rom 8:36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Rom 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Rom 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord predicts that the old city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, but even more important the schoolmaster point to the security and blessings which are found in the New Jerusalem, the present day church of the Lord.

Zech 2:11 And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

Why is it irrational to build a wall around the city? It is because it will contain so many citizens that it's size

is incomprehensible. The length and width of such a city cannot be measured. The figures given in the book of Revelation are symbolic of completeness, not miles. Men would come from many nations to enroll in the new city of God. They were to be joined to the Lord and in turn He would dwell in their midst and protect them.

Zech 2:12 And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.

Any land where God is supreme is a “holy land.” Judah was to receive her inheritance from the Lord. He would in a very special way choose this new spiritual city and nation as His own. Both the Lord and His people are to take pride in this spiritual kingdom.

Zech 2:13 Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

At times we humans find ourselves speechless as we experience some magnificent scene or some indescribable athletic accomplishment. When God has worked with Israel to rebuild the earthly city of Jerusalem, men will recognize that only He could have caused this to happen against all the opposition of worldly forces.

Even more wondrous is the events we who live centuries afterward have seen in the establishment of the New Jerusalem from above, which is inhabited by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

God hath spoken! Let all men be silent and give Him the glory!

Chapter 3

The remnant of the nation of Israel had returned from Babylonian captivity. Now the temple was to be rebuilt and the ceremonies associated with it were to be resumed. A very important part of that arrangement was the reestablishment of the high priesthood. These things will be dealt with in chapter three.

We must never forget that God was gradually bringing His people forward to the point that they would be ready for the introduction of the Saviour of the world. Much that is discussed in this chapter is closely related to the coming of the Messiah, who was to be the High Priest of the spiritual temple of our present Christian age.

Zech 3:1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

Be careful my friends not to confuse the Joshua mentioned here with the Joshua who led the nation into the promised land many year before this.

It is interesting that the name “Jesus” means precisely the same thing as does “Joshua.” In fact, both of these persons called Joshua in the old testament are typical of the High Priest who is now the Son of God. One of these men led Israel into the promised land. The other served as a high priest. Jesus Christ did both.

The angel of the Lord represents the Godhead. Satan stands on the right hand of Joshua ready to accuse him of sins which would disqualify him for the duties of the high priesthood. Satan is called both an accuser and an adversary in the scriptures. He is filling both roles in the present vision. Thus we have God defending Joshua and Satan prosecuting him.

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**Zech 3:2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?**

Before Satan even begins his accusations, the Lord rebukes him for what he is about to attempt. The fact the Lord calls for the Lord to rebuke Satan is no great problem. There are three persons in the Godhead. God the Father could be calling for the entire Godhead to rebuke Satan.

The reason given for challenging Satan is that God has a very special interest in this remnant which has survived the fire of persecution in Babylon. The nation was almost completely burned up. Only this smoking brand was all that was left. God had no intention of allowing it to be snuffed out.

**Zech 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.**

As Joshua stood before the angel of the Lord, he was dressed in filthy rags. The filth was the sin of both himself and the people whom he was to represent when he served as high priest. Satan would have been correct in saying he was not fit to act as a high priest in the condition he was as he stood before the angel of the Lord. It is our understanding that the word which is translated as "filthy" is a much stronger word than our English word would convey. I will not pursue that point further.

**Zech 3:4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.**

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The angel of the Lord commanded those who were serving Him to remove the filthy garments of Joshua, which were soiled with sin. They were to be replaced with some which were more appropriate to the role he was to fill.

Who can forgive sins? Under what conditions can these sins be forgiven? Under those which are set out by the Divine will. Joshua's sin was to be removed and he was to be given clean ones.

Zech 3:5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.

The mitre was a headdress which indicated the right to represent the Lord in the government of God's people. The filthy garments in which Joshua had been clothed were replaced by clean ones.

Zech 3:6 And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying,

Zech 3:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.

Joshua was to be a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since the Son of God was to be pure and sinless, the high priest who typified Him must be obedient to God's will. There are three aspects of this obedience.

1. He must be pure and sinless.
2. He must judge God's house.
3. He must see that the court is free of idolatry.

When these duties are tended to God would give him a place of prestige among all His servants.

Zech 3:8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.

Who are the fellows that sit before Joshua and are wondered at? I believe they are those who were to follow Joshua in the office of high priest. The reason they were to be wondered at is that they were to be men of spiritual stature who might cause others to respect them and become prepared for the coming of the One who was to become Prophet, Priest and King in the coming spiritual temple.

The BRANCH was to be one who arose from the root of David. He would be faithful to the Father in all things. He would be not only a Servant to God the Father; He would become a servant to His brethren in the house of Jehovah. This BRANCH is the Messiah, as proven by the following references.

(See the following: Isa. 4:2; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5-6 and Jer. 23:15.)

Isa 4:2 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

Isa 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

Jer 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

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*Jer 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

*Jer 33:15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.*

**Zech 3:9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.**

The Living STONE is also the Messiah. It can also be thought of as the foundation or chief cornerstone of the spiritual temple which is the church. The seven eyes roam about the earth directing the providential care of the Godhead.

(See 1 Pet. 2:6-9 and Rom. 9:32-33.)

*1Pet 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

*1Pet 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,*

*1Pet 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

*1Pet 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;*

*Rom 9:32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;*

*Rom 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

The temple will grow strong and beautiful as it is constructed under the directions of the Finger of God.

While Joshua's filthy garments were replaced by robes of righteousness, in advance of the one day spoken of here, The coming High Priest would in one day provide a sacrifice for the sins of the royal priesthood which is made up of all faithful Christians. That day took place when the Lord was nailed to the cross of Calvary.

**Zech 3:10 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.**

The vine and the fig tree will be recognized as symbols of security and prosperity. Those who are built upon the chief cornerstone and branch of David are to be so pleased with the blessings bestowed upon them that they will call upon their neighbors to join them in that blessed experience where every man is a part of the royal priesthood and is clothed in righteous robes.

## Chapter 4

God had brought His remnant out of Babylonian captivity and was encouraging them to rebuild the temple and resume the keeping of the ceremonies of the law, as delivered through Moses. It seems that they were moving much more slowly than should have been the case.

The information seen by Zechariah in this chapter was intended to spur them on to accomplish His purposes. There would be large obstacles in the way which could appear to be impossible to overcome. With the help of God, these obstacles could be hurdled or removed.

**Zech 4:1 And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep.**

The angel of the Lord who had been showing the prophet the truths which God wanted taught was now ready to discuss one more of these eight visions. He had returned and was prepared to present another in the series.

Zechariah had been asleep, or in a state resembling sleep. The angel woke him in order to speak with him. The majority of commentators see this as a vision. That is not necessarily true. Zechariah may have seen this scene in a dream before he was awakened. This makes little difference in that whether a vision or a dream, God was the source of the important message.

**Zech 4:2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof:**

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The grammar here could mean “What have you been seeing while you were sleeping?” Or it could mean, “What are you seeing now that you have been awakened?” Zechariah proceeded to tell what had been revealed to him.

He had seen a golden candlestick with a bowl on the top and seven lamps upon it. There were seven pipes leading from the bowl to the seven lamps. The pipes obviously allowed the contents of the bowl to flow to each of the seven lamps in order that they could emit light.

Zech 4:3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.

An olive tree could be seen on opposite sides of the bowl. These would have supplied oil to the bowl, which then was delivered to the seven lamps through the pipes. The two olive trees were clearly main sources of oil.

Zech 4:4 So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?

Zechariah was puzzled as to the meaning of the scene. He asked the angel what was being signified. He called the angel “Lord” which leads us to see this angel as “The angel of the Lord” or perhaps even a preincarnate appearance of the Word of God.

Zech 4:5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

The angel appears to be surprised. He asks Zechariah if he does not know the answer to his question. The prophet replied that he did not know.

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It is not always easy to admit ignorance. Too many times students of the Bible will give an explanation of a topic when they are not qualified to give that explanation. Zechariah is to be commended for his honesty, and also for his desire to know the truth.

**Zech 4:6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.**

The angel then proceeded to provide the correct explanation of the scene. He pointed out that Zerubbabel, who was the governor of the people at the time was to be told the task of building the temple was not to be accomplished by human effort alone. It would require the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit to bring it about.

One of the great mistakes being made by individuals, corporations and national governments today is to set about their objectives without including prayer to the help of God. If God is for us, who can be against us?

**Zech 4:7 Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.**

There were great obstacles ahead. It was as if a great mountain stood in the way. This would make little difference if God was a partner. If that was true the mountain could be removed and turned into a plain which might be easily crossed.

Zechariah had already begun the rebuilding. The foundation stone had been laid, but the headstone would only be put into place when the temple was completed.

Zerubbabel was to be told that there would be shouting and rejoicing when the task was completed. Ezra tells us that the people wept when they compared the completely rebuilt temple with the glory of the one which the Babylonians had destroyed. Still, the one which had been rebuilt was recognized as a gift from the grace of God.

**Zech 4:8 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

There was more. The Lord added more encouragement.

**Zech 4:9 The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.**

Zerubbabel had laid the foundation. He would live to see it finished. This would be proof that Jehovah had provided the strength of His Spirit to the wisdom and power of men to get it done.

**Zech 4:10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.**

It might seem that this rebuilt temple was but a small thing in comparison with the previous one. That would be an error. When they saw the finished temple with the seven eyes of the Lord running throughout the earth they could be assured that what seemed small could be most marvelous.

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Zech 4:11 Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?

Now Zechariah had another question. He wished to know the meaning of the two olive trees which stood on each side of the golden candlestick. The answer to this question is extremely revealing. It tells the source of divine truth. Jesus once said, "If ye are my disciples ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Let each of us seek that truth with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. When that is done, God will provide the portion of truth which He knows we can use wisely at that point.

Zech 4:12 And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?

Zechariah was insistent. Perhaps the angel hesitated in giving the reply to his question. He asked it again! What is the meaning of the two olive trees which empty oil into the two pipes which feed the bowl and thus distribute the oil to the seven lamps?

It is helpful now to recall two other passages of scripture which speak of a golden candlestick. One occurs when the original temple was being constructed. The other is found in the book of Revelation at the end of the Bible. In each case the golden candlestick was for the purpose of providing light for a holy area. The same is true here. God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. One of the first actions of God in the creation of the heavens and the earth was to provide light. The sun, moon and stars gave off physical light. The golden

candlestick was to provide spiritual light to Israel in order that they might move toward the day when the Sun of Righteousness would appear with healing in His wings.

Zech 4:13 And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

Again the angel seemed shocked that Zechariah did not already know the meaning of the olive trees and the candlestick. Again Zechariah honestly and humbly confessed that he did not know.

Zech 4:14 Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

The prophet was told that the two olive trees are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of heaven and earth. However, if the reader were asked at this point if he or she knew the identity of the two anointed ones, would he or she be able to truthfully answer that the identity is known? Various students of the Bible disagree on that question. Some believe the two anointed ones to be Zerubbabel, the civic leader, and Joshua, the high priest and spiritual leader. The offices of King and high priest were both entered with an anointing.

Burton Coffman takes issue with this position. He believes the two olive trees are the Old and New Testaments. It is from these two sources that God has shed His light upon men. There are questions involved in assuming Zerubbabel and Joshua to be the two anointed ones. Those questions are more adequately dealt with when the Old and New Testaments are accepted as the two olive trees.

Chapter 5

There are two more visions discussed in chapter six. The first is a flying scroll. The second is a woman in an ephah. Both are pointed toward the removal of wickedness from the returned remnant. If the rebuilding of the temple and the resumption of the sacred activities associated with it are successful, the people are going to find it necessary to live lives that verify the purity which must accompany the above.

Zech 5:1 Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll.

This time we are not told that the angel awakened Zechariah before calling his attention to the vision. This may be an indication that the awakening mentioned in chapter five was merely a matter of calling his attention rather than meaning he had been sound asleep. In that case it would qualify as a vision rather than a dream.

When Zechariah looked upward to see what the angel was ready to show him, he saw a flying roll or scroll. Documents were written at that time on parchment or animal skins. They were unrolled from one roller and transferred to a second roller as the reader covered the material. Some important information was to be revealed to Zechariah.

Zech 5:2 And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

The angel then asked him as had been done before, just as had been done before. He replied that he saw a

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flying roll. He then added the dimensions of the roll. It was ten by twenty cubits. It is generally accepted that a cubit was approximately eighteen inches. This would have meant that the roll was about fifteen by thirty feet. This would be an enormous size for a document. It must mean that the message should not be ignored.

**Zech 5:3 Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it.**

The angel explained that the roll contained a curse which would pass over the whole earth and would alight upon both those who stole and those who swore in blasphemous manner. On one side of the roll was a declaration that those who stole would be cut off from God's favor. On the other side was a similar declaration that those who swore would meet the same fate.

It is important that we notice the difference between swearing before God to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, if this was followed by a statement of the truth false swearing which was a very serious form of lying. The swearing mentioned here might also include swearing by calling upon the name of a false god or an idol.

**Zech 5:4 I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.**

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The flying roll would discover the houses of those who participated in either or both of these two sins and would enter the house and remain there until the liars and blasphemers were destroyed along with the very timbers and stones with which the house was constructed.

The point of the entire vision is that God was not going to allow this kind of wickedness to be resumed in the remnant which had returned from Babylon. These were but two of the ten commandments, but may very well have represented the group of sins which can be committed against one's neighbor, and against Jehovah the Lord.

Zech 5:5 Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth.

The second vision teaches the same lesson. God is not going to tolerate the kind of behavior which existed when the people were deported to Babylon for their rejection of His laws.

Zech 5:6 And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth.

As before, Zechariah wished to know the meaning of the vision. He was not scolded this time for asking the question. It was explained that the ephah resembled the wickedness which was covering the land. An ephah was a container normally amounting to about a bushel.

Zech 5:7 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.

The angel then took off the lead covering of the ephah, revealing a woman sitting inside. Unless this ephah was larger than usual, it would not have room for even a small woman. This causes some to contend that the woman was an idol rather than a human. It is, of course, possible that this was a larger container than the usual ephah.

Zech 5:8 And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.

There is a hesitancy on the part of some Bible students to accept this woman as a human. She is said to represent wickedness. Does this mean that only women are wicked, and that men are not? Surely the passage is not teaching that.

It is much more likely that this woman is one of those evil women like Jezebel, or that great Harlot known as the city of Babylon. This is not a statement of women as the source of wickedness in the world.

Zech 5:9 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven.

Something else was then introduced into the vision. This time there were two women who had wings like those strong wings of a stork. The wind aided them in lifting up the ephah with the wickedness inside and flew away with it.

It is useless to interpret any symbolism of the two women. The Bible does not give us that information. We only know that they are agents of the Lord in the removal of wickedness from the returned remnant.

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**Zech 5:10 Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah?**

Zechariah then wanted to know where the two women were taking the ephah. If it was not to be allowed to remain among the people of Israel, where would it be deposited?

**Zech 5:11 And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.**

This last verse does appear to verify that the woman in the ephah was an idol rather than being a human female. The ephah was to be taken to the land of Shinar, which was the location of the city of Babylon, and the land from which Israel had returned. This would mean that the idolatry which was greatly responsible for the nation being sent into Babylonian captivity was to be sent back to the place from which it had come. It was not to find a home in Israel.

Idols normally rested upon some type of base. The base for this ephah was the land of Babylon. That land and that city represented wickedness from the earliest days as mentioned in the tenth chapter of Genesis. It was the land of Shinar. Babylon will be judged and destroyed when the righteous and the wicked received their final destinies in heaven and in hell.

## *Chapter 6*

We have come to the eighth and final vision of that night of many. The Lord will make it clear that He has the power to punish those powers that try to overcome those who remain faithful to Him. He has agents which will be sent to the north, to the south, and to the ends of the earth.

**Zech 6:1 And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass.**

The fact that Zechariah “lifted up” his eyes time after time in these visions tells us they were seen on high rather than at ground level. When he did so this time he saw four chariots coming into his view from between two mountains of brass. Chariots are normally associated with power in the Bible. This is not always true, but the context here calls for that understanding.

There are four chariots. There were four winds. There are four basic directions, north south, east and west, when considering geographical locations. These four chariots will be dispatched to all parts of the earth.

The two mountains of brass are indicative of solidity. The guess of many writers that they represented Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives is just that; only a guess. These chariots had been sent out from God. They had a mission to achieve. They were to demonstrate the power of God to all men.

**Zech 6:2 In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses;**



Red horses remind us of war and bloodshed. War had been going on between God's people and nations on every side who opposed God's people and God's eternal purposes.

The color black is associated with sorrow and famine. Those who fight against God may expect tears and shortages of the necessities of life.

**Zech 6:3 And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses.**

White can represent purity, but in the present picture it is more apt to be a sign of coming victory over God's enemies. The grisled and bay horses were of mixed colors, which could well be a variety of woes which would fall upon any who decided to oppose God's remnant.

**Zech 6:4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord?**

**Zech 6:5 And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.**

Again and again Zechariah wanted to know the meaning behind the eight visions which he had seen. What is the meaning of these four chariots drawn by horses of different colors?

The answer this time tells him of four spirits which stand ready before God to execute His will in all the earth. Spirits are the activating agents which bring about the ends which their owners desire. They bring to life that which would otherwise be inactive. As an example, "The body without the spirit is dead."

**Zech 6:6 The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country.**

The black horses were sent into the north country. This was the direction from which the Babylonians invaded Canaan. There would be sorrow in Babylon. The reason for that sorrow would be that Babylon would be defeated.

The white horses which followed the black symbolize the victory which God would win over that long lasting enemy. Those who went toward the south country were headed in the direction from which Egypt had proved to be dangerous.

**Zech 6:7 And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.**

The grizzled and bay horses desired to patrol other areas of the earth. They were given permission to do so and set out to perform that duty. God's remnant was secure from annihilation. From that remnant He would bring forth the Messiah.

**Zech 6:8 Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.**

Zechariah was told that those who had gone in the direction of Babylon had reported conditions which would

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ease any discomfort on the part of the Lord from that direction. His Spirit could rest with respect to invasion from the north.

Zech 6:9 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Zech 6:10 Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah;

This provided an appropriate time for a new event among the people of Israel. A king was to be crowned from among the returning remnant. Zechariah was to gather three men of them and take the three to the house of Josiah. The three were Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah. He was to waste no time in taking this action.

Zech 6:11 Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;

Precious silver and gold were to be fashioned into crowns and were to be placed on the head of Joshua, the High Priest. There is some difficulty in the statement that a plurality of crowns was to be made rather than just one. This may have only meant that one crown was to be composed of more than one circle of gold and silver. The verse seems to mean that the multiple crowns were placed upon the head of Joshua only. One man does not ordinarily wear more than one crown at once. This would have meant that Joshua was to act as both High Priest and ruling King.

It is believed by some that Joshua was to wear one of the crowns and Zerubbabel another.

Zech 6:12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:

The passage causes the least concern if we allow it to point to the coming of the Son of God who was to be both a High Priest and a King of kings. Jesus was known as the BRANCH from David. It was Zerubbabel who directed the rebuilding of the temple at the time of Zechariah, but it was Christ who was to build the temple which Christians know today as the church or temple of God. In connection with the BRANCH see Isa. 52:3; I Pet. 2:5; Isa. 9:6-7; Heb. 7:1-3; Mic. 5:5, etc.

Isa 53:2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

1Pet 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Heb 7:1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

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*Heb 7:2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;*

*Heb 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.*

*Mic 5:5 And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men.*

**Zech 6:13 Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.**

In the rebuilding of the temple in the time of Zechariah the high priest and the king were to work together in peaceful harmony and were to receive honor for their efforts.

**Zech 6:14 And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD.**

This verse implies that the crowns did not continue to rest upon the head of Joshua, but were to be removed and placed in the temple of God as a memorial to the cooperative efforts of all who took leadership in the rebuilding process.

**Zech 6:15 And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall**

**know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.**

Our chapter closes with a beautiful prediction of success for the growth of the spiritual temple of the Lord. Just as those horses had walked to and fro through whole earth, there would be persons from far off in other nations who would lend their help in the building of the temple which would be used by gentiles as well as by those of fleshly Israel. Persons of all nations and races would have a part in the building of the temple whose foundation and capstone were to be laid by the Messiah. This magnificent temple is being built today with Christians as not only builders, but living stones built upon that chief cornerstone.

## *Chapter 7*

In this chapter we have a record of the delegation which was sent from Bethel to Jerusalem to see if the series of fasts the people were observing needed to be continue. The rebuilding of the temple was now proceeding smoothly. Did God expect a continuation of the fasting? The question is followed by a response of the Lord through the prophet Zechariah.

**Zech 7:1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu;**

It had been two years since Zechariah had presented the displeasure of Jehovah to the people as they returned from captivity with little indication that they were about to rebuild the temple and resume the observing of the ceremonies of the law of Moses. We are not to conclude that Zechariah was silent for those two years. This was but the next event which God decided needed to be included in the record.

The day and month of the year should not be used to make comparison with the seasons of other parts of the world. The reason for the information given here has to do with the times of the year at which the various fasts were being observed by Israel in that land.

**Zech 7:2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,**

The people living in Bethel recognized that the temple was the heart of God's communication with His people.

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Two representatives, along with a delegation were sent to Jerusalem to make an inquiry of Jehovah. These two leaders of the delegation had non-Jewish names. They had probably been born in Babylonian territory.

Zech 7:3 And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?

They were to inquire from the priests at the temple as to whether it was best to continue the fasting and grieving over the disaster which had deprived them of meeting at the temple for worship. In their minds it was quite possible that such fasting was out of order since things seemed to be going so smoothly. The main question was related to the fasting which remembered the death of Gedaliah, the governor who had been appointed by Nebuchadnezzar. The death of Gedaliah had resulted in many Jews being taken into the land of the Ammonites and other sites.

Jeremiah had told the Jews to accept the rule of Gedaliah and all would go well with them. He was correct. Their conditions were a part of the corrective plan of the Lord. When Gedaliah was murdered the repercussions resulted in much grief among those of Israel. For nearly seventy years the fast of the fifth month had been held. Should they now cease that fast?

Zech 7:4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,

Zech 7:5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those

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**seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?**

The Lord answered them through the lips of His prophet Zechariah. He clearly told them that the fast of the fifth month was not instituted by Him. It was strictly a memorial of their own creation. They were fasting because they were sorry for themselves, and not because they were sorry for their sins. The only fast which God had ordained was the Day of Atonement. That was for a far different purpose than the one they were memorializing in the fast of the fifth month.

**Zech 7:6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?**

Neither fasting nor feasting which is done in a self centered manner will bring the good will of the Lord. Those of our present day might well remember this admonition when partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is not to be taken lightly. It speaks more of sorrow than of joy. The sorrow is in memory of the crucifixion of the Son of God.

**Zech 7:7 Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?**

If Israel had listened to the Word of God when it was presented to them by His prophets in the time before the captivity, the unhappiness of that experience could have been avoided. At that time the city of Jerusalem was well

populated and Israel prospered. This was true throughout the land of Canaan.

They had not heeded the words of Jeremiah when he warned them. They had suffered the consequences of their failure to take heed.

**Zech 7:8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,**

**Zech 7:9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:**

God urged them to learn the lesson He had intended. They could avoid further disappointment by doing His will with all their heart. This would include not only ceremonial respect, but ethical behavior toward their fellowmen. They were to:

Show mercy and judgment.

They were to have compassion on their brethren

**Zech 7:10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.**

They were not to take advantage of the helpless.

They were not even to imagine such actions.

**Zech 7:11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.**

God used three vivid pictures to show how those who went into the captivity had defied His will.

They had stopped their ears against His words.

They had turned a cold shoulder toward Him.



**Zech 7:12** Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

They had become more hard hearted than stone.

It brings on the wrath of God when men and women respond to God's blessing by ignoring those who speak in harmony with His Spirit.

**Zech 7:13** Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:

The lesson of this verse cannot be put into plainer words than God spoke through Zechariah.

"I spoke and you did not listen."

"Now you have spoken and I did not listen!"

**Zech 7:14** But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

At one time God had told His people that if they would follow His lead, they would be directed to a land which He would show them. That land was Canaan. When they failed to love and obey Him He reversed His blessing and scattered them through other lands in which they dealt with strangers. Canaan was left desolate. The temple was destroyed. They had now had seventy years to regret their spiritual adultery. They should cease feeling sorry

for themselves and begin living a new life of gratitude and penitent respect toward Him and toward their neighbors.

## *Chapter 8*

The ordeals of the captivity in Babylon, and the exposure to idolatry found in that place had prepared Israel for the truths presented in this present chapter. They had been allowed to be taken into captivity because of their failure to appreciate the true God. He had acted as their God, but they had not acted as His people. By this time they should have learned the horror which results from such behavior. If they will truly become His people in thought, word and deed, He promises to make them a blessing to all nations.

**Zech 8:1 Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying,**

Through this eighth chapter about one out of every two verses declares that these are not the words of Zechariah. They are the words of Jehovah, the Lord of hosts. This should be the goal of all who stand in the pulpits of the Church of Jesus Christ. This should also be the attitude of faithful Christians while they listen to the men who speak from those pulpits. Are the words they are hearing speculations of the preacher, or are they backed by the Word of the Living God?

**Zech 8:2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.**

Jehovah had never appreciated a rival for His attentions. When Israel began to turn to idolatry for spiritual truth and strength, He became jealous of her infidelity. The fact of the matter is that He could not bear to look on with indifference, any more than a human

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husband would put up with his wife turning to other men for affection. He was jealous, and He had a right to be. Something had to be done.

Zech 8:3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.

Now that Israel had experienced the consequences of turning to those which are no God, they should be ready to depend upon the love of the only True and Living God, Jehovah.

Under such an arrangement God was prepared to return to His people and dwell in their midst. In that case Jerusalem would become known as a city where truth could be found, and where the enemies of truth would find it impossible to enter and destroy.

Zech 8:4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.

As long as men and women would remain faithful to the Lord, He would make it possible for them to live in the Holy city without fear of destruction.

This has its surface meaning in its promise that the earthly city of Jerusalem would receive both blessings and protection from the hand of the Lord. But, as is the case in many of God's promises, this security and protection were dependent upon the willingness of Israel to love and obey Him. Those who were faithful unto death could depend upon His care in the spiritual city which will some day be caught up into heaven itself.

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**Zech 8:5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.**

There were days in the history of Jerusalem when boys and girls could not play in the streets because of the fear of the Babylonians and the Assyrians. If His people would devote their attentions to the One who deserved such attention, He would return their affection in blessing that remnant which remained faithful.

**Zech 8:6 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.**

If such conditions were pleasing to those who were true to Him, He would assure them of His continued blessings for them. It would be just as pleasing to Him as it was to His faithful.

Such was true then and is still true in the Christian age. God knows who those are who wish to live and walk with Him. Satan and his allies may try as hard as they may. They will not be able to separate God and those whom He protects. When one lives in the Holy City and on the top of Mount Zion, that one will discover a marvelous partnership.

**Zech 8:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;**

We could well think of Egypt as the west country and Babylon as the east country. Israel had found by personal experience that they needed Jehovah if they were to be happy and prosperous.

Let us not make the mistake of limiting the truth presented here to the Jerusalem in the land of Canaan. There is a New Jerusalem which is the city of God today. It is the church of God. There are those who would eliminate it from the planet earth. They will not succeed in those efforts. God is the Husband of that faithful remnant. No individual, nor organization will ever have the power to defeat that spiritual combination.

**Zech 8:8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.**

Here is the proof that the scripture is not limiting itself to earthly Jerusalem and in earthly security. God had already brought back His people from both Egypt and from Babylon of that day. He is extending His promises to men until the end of time. Those who hear the gospel call will be allowed to escape from the forces which are determined to defeat God's eternal purpose. When His people live in His truth and in His righteousness, He will be their teacher and protector. Heaven will be their destiny.

**Zech 8:9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.**

There had been a time when Israel had failed to hear the Word of the Lord. That day should have been over at the time Zechariah was doing the writing of this book.

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In those days of the past the beginnings of the temple of God were laid. The work had been interrupted by lack of faith.

Now was the time for all good men to come to the aid of the construction project. The temple of God was to be rebuilt. The renewed temple now lies in ruin as I write these words. It was demolished by the forces of Rome. However, the spiritual temple which God has been building is protected by His infinite power and wisdom. It will outlast time.

Zech 8:10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.

When the prophet spoke of “before these days” he was referring to the period when His people did not listen to the prophets whom He sent to guide them. That brought on a situation in which there was a lack of cooperation so serious that neither man nor beast could be confident of reward for their efforts and time. There was violence on every side. This was true among the Israelites, and was also true with respect to foreign powers. Peace was nearly impossible.

Zech 8:11 But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.

Through the lips and writings of Zechariah God sought to return the conditions to those which had existed when Israel had conquered Canaan and found both prosperity and security. How sad it was that it had been necessary

for them to go into bondage to learn the results of failure to give God the credit for such blessings.

Zech 8:12 For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.

God's promise was that those former days of blessing could be reclaimed. The crops would be abundant. The dew and the rain would water the ground. His people could look forward to the same kind of blessings which had been enjoyed in the past if they would be true to Him. The returning remnant could enjoy the same joyous outpouring of God's love if they would return that love to Him.

Zech 8:13 And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

It had not gone well with those nations who had placed Israel in bondage. Every nation which has set itself up in opposition to the purposes of Jehovah has had a similar history. The opposite could be true in the future. When Israel became the source of spiritual blessing to all nations of the earth through the teachings and example of the Son of God, both God's people and those among whom they lived could be happier.

It would, however, require a strong commitment and a strong arm on their part. They might not be capable of saving themselves without His aid. But with their

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commitment and His unlimited power, all things good and righteous are possible.

**Zech 8:14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:**

The Lord had kept His promises in the past. Lack of obedience on Israel's part had brought on just the punishment which had been promised. God had not failed to do that which He had laid out. Men may lie. God does not! When He predicts punishment, that punishment will be applied. When He predicts rewards, those rewards will be enjoyed.

**Zech 8:15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.**

God had blessed Israel in the past. He could and would bless them again if only they kept His commandments. But why does God limit these words to Jerusalem and Judah. It is not because He does not care about the northern kingdom of Israel. It is only because these are the ones who are in the proximity of his message at the moment. The ten tribes of the north were not lost. Those who were true to Jehovah from that area were not the focus of the prophecy at the time. Any person who is true to God will find that God is true to him or her.

**Zech 8:16 These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:**

What did God expect of those who wished to receive His blessings in the future? The first condition was that they were to be truthful. They were to treat one another as they wished to be treated. One could not expect peace as long as he sought out violence. He could not expect others to speak the truth if he promoted lying and dishonesty.

**Zech 8:17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.**

The one who spent his time in planning to take advantage of his fellowman would find his fellowman doing the same toward him. God is not a liar. He does not expect those who wish to receive His blessings to use lies to advance their own welfare. It is true that God is love, but it is also true that He hates that which tears down that which He is striving to build up.

**Zech 8:18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,**

**Zech 8:19 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.**

We are reminded again that these thoughts did not originate in the mind of Zechariah. He was acting as a spokesman for Jehovah. Jehovah was ready to make a promise to His faithful.

The people of Israel had been observing a number of fasts to express their sorrow at the destruction of the

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land and the temple. These fasts were times in which memories of the past were recalled with much grief. They seemed to be little more than memories. That could change to a set of thoughts which were just the opposite. Those fasts with sackcloth and ashes could be replaced with feasting and joy. But, this could only happen if they fastened their affections on love and peace. Violence and lying would only bring on hatred and war.

Zech 8:20 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:

What a wonderful picture is now presented through God's prophet. If Israel were to follow God's instructions they would find people from many nations coming to her to share in the peace and love. They would not be coming to take possession of her territory and her people. They would be trying to find the same blessings which she enjoyed.

Zech 8:21 And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.

Do the words of these last verses stir up the reader's mind as to the need for missionary endeavor on the part of the Christians of these latter days? They certainly should. That is precisely what God has commanded His family to do. Go and preach the gospel unto every creature. Those who believe and obey will be allowed to share in the blessings which are found in the New Jerusalem.

Zech 8:22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

Dear reader, I have only been to the earthly city of Jerusalem for a few days in order that I might see some of those places I had read about so many times. I have never lived in that earthly city more than a week. In contrast, I do live in the New Jerusalem. It is an eternal city of God which shall never be destroyed. Other people and other nations have felt the attractions of that spiritual city.

If the reader will pause for a moment to reflect upon the welfare of the nations of the world which have truly loved and lived in the light of God's Word, that reader will find the promises of blessings just as dependable in eternity as they were in the days of Zechariah.

Zech 8:23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

How is this last verse of the chapter to be understood? Is it to be fulfilled through a massive movement of all of the nations of the earth to make earthly Jerusalem the capital of the earth? I think not. The Jew which is spoken of in this verse is Jesus Christ and those who have been baptized into His body, the church. God recognizes His faithful today as spiritual Jews. They are the chosen people. They have chosen Him and He has chosen them.

Those who preach the Word of God and live by the Word of God will forever be inviting others to share in the divine blessings. They will find that there will be others who will hear and accept the invitation. "We have heard that God is with you." "We will go with you."

Chapter 9

We move now into the third section of the book of Zechariah. This section from chapter nine to chapter fourteen deals with two burdens. The first burden begins here. The second begins in chapter twelve. A burden is something which is laid upon beasts or humans that they may carry it. The reader is invited to discover the carrier of the burdens as we go forward.

Zech 9:1 The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD.

There is to be a burden placed upon the nations surrounding Israel. There is only guesswork as to the location of Hadrach. In contrast, Damascus was the capital of Syria. A time was to come when rather than being a persistent enemy of Israel, many of the people of these lands would turn their eyes favorably toward Jehovah as those of Judah and Israel had done.

Zech 9:2 And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.

Tyre and Sidon were commercial centers which had been far more interested in silver and gold than they were in any cooperative venture with the Israelites.

Zech 9:3 And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.

Tyre was famous for its fortifications. It was located on an island off the shore of the Mediterranean

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Sea. Nebuchadnezzar had tried to conquer it without success. It had become extremely wealthy through its merchandising.

**Zech 9:4 Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.**

The wealth would not stand up under the burden which the Lord was going to place upon it.

Alexander the Great of Greece found a way to invade the island. He built a strip of land out to the island and sent in equipment to break down the walls. Tyre was left as a place for the drying of fishermen's nets.

**Zech 9:5 Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.**

Along with Tyre and Sidon Ashkelon, Gaza and Ekron would find that their opposition to Israel would result in disaster for their hopes of future prosperity. Neither individuals nor nations as a whole can fight against God and prosper.

**Zech 9:6 And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.**

As the term is used here, a "bastard" is probably the result of an intermingling of national bloodlines which lowered their ideals to corrupt levels. It is not even impossible that some of the Israelites had intermarried with the Philistines.

**Zech 9:7 And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.**

This bastard people were violent and bloodthirsty. It would be necessary for God to remove the prey from their mouth. Many of them would be destroyed, but those who remained after the rod of God had fallen upon them would be convinced to respect the purposes of the Lord.

**Zech 9:8 And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.**

At this point the center of attention seems to turn to prophecy. "Mine house" is speaking of a time when the oppressors will find it impossible to terrorize God's faithful as they had in the past. God had His protective eye upon His own. He would act as a wall around His people in order that they could not be defeated, assuming that they remained true.

**Zech 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.**

There are two passages which must be compared with the present verse. They are Isaiah 62:11 and Matthew 21:4-5.

*Isa 62:11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.*

*Matt 21:4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,*

*Matt 21:5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*

Can there be any doubt whatsoever that Matthew was referring back to these passages when he wrote the inspired words concerning the arrival of Jesus Christ in the city of Jerusalem to offer His life on the cross of Calvary for the forgiveness of the sins of those who would follow the will of the Father in heaven?

The remnant who remained true to God might look forward to a day when victory in Jesus was to become a reality.

**Zech 9:10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.**

The nations in the time of Zechariah had little understanding of peaceful cooperation. Power was far more important to them than efforts to live together in peace. The Messiah would present a message of peace among men. He would urge men to cease their dependence upon the horses and chariots which were symbols of war. He would condemn the use of spears and bows.

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If He had used present day terms He might well have spoken of nuclear and chemical warfare. The time would come when Christ would have been heard throughout the entire globe. The weapons used by Christians would be the sword of the Spirit and the helmet of salvation.

Zech 9:11 As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

Prisoners were at that time dropped into a cistern with no water. They could not escape without help from outside of their pit. Through the shed blood of the Son of God, those who had been imprisoned without hope would be provided a means of escape from an otherwise hopeless condition.

Zech 9:12 Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee;

Those who had suffered as a result of their faith would find that the New Jerusalem offered enough blessings to at least double the anguish they had endured. Some Christians in time at which I write these words have suffered beyond what those of us who have not seen such grief can understand. Those who have suffered in patience will find the peace of heaven doubly rewarding.

Zech 9:13 When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.

Judah was to be bent like a bow, and Ephraim would be the arrow in the coming battle. This is merely a way

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of saying ALL of the remnant of God's faithful would be as a spiritual army with the power to overcome physical armies such as those of Alexander the Great. The spiritual weapons of Israel would be capable of victory over the mightiest of the forces led by Satan.

**Zech 9:14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.**

These last four verses of chapter nine picture the joy of conquest over the forces of evil. When Jehovah blows the trumpet for the battle to begin, the storms which descend upon the persecuting nations would render them helpless.

**Zech 9:15 The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.**

God's spiritual army will no more be trampled under the feet of the wicked. God will be with His own. They shall see victory. There will be rejoicing and gladness in every corner of the temple of the Lord.

**Zech 9:16 And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.**

Jehovah is the GREAT SHEPHERD. His sheep will be lifted up on high, safe and secure from the jaws of

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prowling wolflike nations. Those who take note of them will see them displayed like precious jewels in the crown of the King of kings.

Zech 9:17 For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

There's a great day coming! The goodness and beauty of God and His salvation will cause joy without measure. Those of every age in the history of mankind who have kept the faith will share in the joy of that time. The corn represents food. The new wine represents drink. We are not talking about wine which can make one drunken. The picture is that of a people who are blessed with food, drink and every good thing which can flow from the hand of the God of love.

Chapter 10

God had not forgotten His promise that the seed of Abraham would bring forth blessings not only to the Jews, but to those of nations around the world who were willing to according to His will. This chapter urges the Jews who have been cast out of Palestine to turn to their Lord and reach out for such blessings. Some have returned to the land and are privileged to take the lead in reestablishing the much needed relationships with Jehovah.

Zech 10:1 Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

The latter rain was that which caused the kernels of wheat to fill out and become plump. We do not ordinarily associate bright clouds with rain. Dark clouds usually bring rain. The difference here is that these clouds will bring joy and thanksgiving. They will be the answer of the Lord to the prayers of His people.

Zech 10:2 For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

God's people had been led astray by several agents of the devil. There were those who looked at the lobes of a liver which had been pitched up and allowed to drop. The diviner pretended to give advice based on the position of the lobes. They did not hesitate to speak lies. Whether these lies originated in their own minds, or were planted

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there through the wiles of Satan, is not clear. They interpreted the dreams of men as omens of prosperity or adversity.

The result was that God's people were led into troublous times. God was the True Shepherd, but they had refused to follow His leadership. The diviners and interpreters of dreams had left the people in serious confusion.

**Zech 10:3 Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.**

There was a spiritual battle going on. These lying leaders were like the goats who were used to lead sheep to the butcher's ramp. The people were intended to be the white horse which could be ridden to victory. God declared that He would punish those who misled His spiritual army.

**Zech 10:4 Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.**

Just how had God visited His people and used them as His powerful war horse? He had done so by sending forth a cornerstone, and a nail or tent peg. Jesus Christ is called the chief cornerstone in the spiritual battle between the forces of Satan and those of Jehovah. The Saviour is a solidly planted tent pin which anchors His tent of salvation. The oppressors are not capable of destroying those who are anchored in Christ.

**Zech 10:5 And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the**

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streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.

The army of the Lord will with His power and wisdom tread down every enemy which Satan can muster. Neither physical war nor spiritual war is a pleasant sight. Blood runs like rivers. Souls are cut off from the protective arm of the Father above.

However, the battle for the souls of men will be fought, and it will be won over those who would place their confidence in horses, chariots, bows, arrows and advanced weapons of these latter days. Victory belongs to those who lift up their eyes and their prayers to the heavens.

Zech 10:6 And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them.

The next few verses are often applied to a physical return of the Jews to the land of Palestine. This does not have to be the meaning. God says He will bring them again to place them, but His does not say that place is the land of Canaan. He declares that when they turn to Him, He will treat them with the same kind of prosperity which was theirs before the departure into idolatry. When they prayed in the former ages, He heard and answered them. He planned to do the same again if they would hear Him.

Zech 10:7 And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as

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**through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.**

The ten tribes of Ephraim in the northern kingdom were not lost. This verse tells us they were to become mighty and powerful. Both they and their children would rejoice when they united themselves with the chief cornerstone and the spiritual tent pin.

**Zech 10:8 I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.**

Various explanations or examples have been used to clarify the nature of the hissing. The truth is not enhanced by such guesswork. God only promises that He will call for His flock, and when He has gathered them into His fold they will increase in amazing fashion.

Christ and His apostles have hissed to those of their own day. Other followers of Christ have preached the gospel to many nations. The number of followers of the Great Shepherd has increased in fantastic fashion.

**Zech 10:9 And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.**

The Jews would be scattered among many lands as seed is sown in a field. To sow in these far countries was to expect a harvest from that which had been sown. This sowing would result in the Jews remembering the goodness of Jehovah and rededicating themselves to Him. It would also result in the Gentiles in those lands hearing and believing in the Lord of hosts.

**Zech 10:10 I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them.**

Egypt and Assyria stand for those people who had held God's people in bondage. As the Messiah was lifted up in those lands, those who would hear the call of the Lord would enter into the fold of the Lord until there were vast numbers of them.

**Zech 10:11 And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.**

These last two verses assure us that the names above were figurative. Just as God had led Israel through the Red Sea as they left the land of Egypt, and as others had been released from captivity in Assyria, He would again rescue the faithful from the bondage of sin.

**Zech 10:12 And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.**

Is it not interesting that "I" will strengthen them in the Lord. May I suggest that the "I" is the Father in heaven, and the LORD is the Messiah. When this strengthening was accomplished the strengthened ones would march victoriously and proudly, exalting the name of all three persons of the Godhead.

## Chapter 11

For students who are interested in Bible prophecy, there may be few chapters in the entire Word of God which are more interesting. It is highly figurative and the figures are not easy to apply. It seems that is the case in much of the Holy Scripture that there are immediate applications, and then there are parallels which apply to the latter portion of the Christian age.

There are many varying explanations of the material. We will do the best we can to seek out the meanings. The reader must be cautioned to compare everything which is presented here with the Bible. We can only hope to help in making it clear.

**Zech 11:1 Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.**

This first verse is applied by many to the veil of the temple or to the temple doors. This is possible, but this may not be the best explanation. Lebanon was north of Canaan. At the time these words were first written there were forests of majestic cedar trees beautifying that part of the land. God was about to send a devouring army into Israel. This would leave part of the land in ruins as that army passed into Palestine.

**Zech 11:2 Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.**

Somewhat farther south the fir and oak trees could be seen. This was the beauty of the land into which Joshua and the people of God marched as they entered it.

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This beauty was to come crashing down according to the message of God as spoken by the prophet Zechariah.

Zech 11:3 There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

A shepherd is the leader of a flock. There were leaders of God's people who had misled them. Rather than protecting and guiding and feeding them, these shepherds were feeding on them. This was to result in humiliation for both the shepherds and those who were persuaded to follow them. The honor which had been heaped upon them would be turned to shame. The intimidating voices of the pride filled opposers of the will of God would be silenced. The land, as well as the power hungry shepherds would be left in ruins.

Zech 11:4 Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;

Who is it that is told to feed the flock of the slaughter, and what is that flock? The flock of the slaughter is the congregation of the Lord which was being led to the butcher shop to become food for the false shepherds. God was highly provoked that they were doing precisely the opposite of that which they were expected to do. Sadly, they will ignore His command!

Zech 11:5 Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.

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The possessors are those who find themselves in control. After having taken profit from the flock, they lift their voices in pride and boast that God is with them or they would not be enjoying such power. They see no reason why those who are under their control should not be fleeced since they have chosen to follow the lying leaders.

**Zech 11:6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.**

The Lord is not just angry at the shepherds who abuse the flock. He is also angry that the flock is simple minded enough to follow such leadership. His patience is at an end. He is ready to let them fall into the pit toward which they are being led. Violence will cover the land. Those in power will bring misery into the hearts of those who are so foolish as to commit spiritual suicide.

**Zech 11:7 And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.**

Although God was going to allow those who were getting rich at the expense of the poor, He had not forgotten the poor. "Blessed are the poor in heart."

God will act as the Shepherd. He will see that they are fed as they should be. He will make use of two staves. One of these staves is called "Beauty" and the other is called "Bands." A number of translations render the name of the first stave as "Grace." This probably gives

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us a clearer understanding than the word “Beauty.” God is going to remove His grace from those who turn away from Him. Dear reader, do not think you can live like the Devil and enjoy the grace and beautiful blessings of God!

The second stave is called “Bands” because God was ready to loose the bands between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. A new covenant was in the future. It would reach out to the ends of the earth and call the Gentiles into fellowship with the Jews. No longer would the seed of Abraham be the chosen people. The seed of Abraham would be those who cherished the same God whom the “Father of the faithful” had loved and obeyed, whether they be Jew or Gentile.

Zech 11:8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.

There is much difference of understanding as to the identity of the three shepherds who were to be cut off. One prevailing opinion is that they were the Scribes, Pharisees and Herodian, which made up the evil group who hated the Son of God enough to bring about His murder on the cross. They had cut off the life of the Saviour. God would cut them off.

A second view is that the number three is an inclusive number of completeness as it is used in the Godhead. However, this time the completeness would include all of those who betrayed the people in the past, and those who would do so in the future.

The question remains as to the meaning of the “one month.” I understand that to mean that those of the depraved mob who were not satisfied until they saw

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Christ dead, were to be removed from power far more abruptly than might have been predicted. If the three shepherds means those who use deception to mislead God's sheep in the Christian age, they will also find their profiteering cut short in the end of the world. Eternity is "extremely long" when compared to even one hundred thousand years. Since these false shepherds hated God, He would turn from them.

**Zech 11:9 Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.**

The Lord was making it crystal clear that Israel and their false shepherds had reached the point of no return. Some believe this to be impossible. It is not! God knows when one has proven he or she will never repent. When that point is reached He will let that soul die. In the case of those who were following the false shepherds He was ready to let them separate themselves from the spiritual food He offered. This would result in conditions so severe that they would later become so physically hungry that they would eat their own infants.

**Zech 11:10 And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.**

Does God ever truly break a covenant which He has made with His people? Only after they have broken their part of the covenant first. Israel had done just that. There were a remnant who still held to their faith. He would not forsake them.

**Zech 11:11 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD.**

His staff of Beauty, or Grace, was cut into pieces and cast aside. When it became evident to that remnant who still held to their trust in Him, it would become clear that the words He had spoken through the prophet Zechariah were those given him by God.

**Zech 11:12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.**

This is a forecast of the betrayal of our Lord Jesus Christ by Judas. The event is recorded in Matthew 27:9.

*Matt 27:9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;*

It is not clear as to why Matthew spoke of Jeremiah rather than Zechariah. Some of the “higher” critics say Matthew must have had a lapse of memory. Some say a copyist slipped and wrote Jeremiah when he intended to write Zechariah. Others propose that a number of books of the old testament were grouped under the one heading Jeremiah, and that Zechariah was one of those books. If we had all the details we might have no problem at all. Many time complex questions are cleared up with further study.

Whatever the case, there is no doubt that the price paid to Judas is the one mentioned in the above verse. Here is proof that the words written in this book of

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Jeremiah had an application to the Christian age. This is true again and again in the writings of the Biblical prophets.

Thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave who had been gored by an ox. Judas had asked the Pharisees to give him what they thought was right for the purchase of Christ's life. They suggested the price of a crippled slave. He agreed to take it.

Zech 11:13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

The field of the potter was a place where the vessels which were not fit to use were thrown out into the trash. The potter used a wheel to form the vessels. If there was a serious defect, the vessel found it's way to the garbage. This is what the false shepherds in the time of Zechariah thought of the Word of God. The same attitude held true when the Scribes and Pharisees arranged for the crucifixion of our Saviour.

Is it any wonder that God broke his staff of "Grace?"

Zech 11:14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

The other staff of "Bands" had held the linkage between Israel and Judah loosely together. They both had been claimed by Jehovah as His people. That was now going to change. The brotherhood of God would in the future be bound together by faith rather than by blood lines. We are one in Christ Jesus.

Zech 11:15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

These last three verses of this eleventh chapter are most fascinating. I will give what I believe to be the meaning, but urge the reader to use the Bible as the final standard rather than the explanations provided by myself or any other human.

Since God had discarded the two staves of Grace and Bands, He realized the foolish people who had followed the false shepherds before would do the same again. The foolish shepherd would have staves of his own which he would be willing to offer them.

Zech 11:16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.

God is not in the habit of raising up evil souls who will mislead His sheep. Still, He does give men and angels the freedom of choice as to whether they will follow Him or oppose Him. This shepherd will choose to oppose Him.

Such a shepherd would not;

1. Visit the fatherless and the widows.
2. Train up children in the way they should go.
3. Heal the broken hearted.
4. Feed the faint and feeble.

Such a shepherd would;

1. Cause the spiritually healthy to starve.
2. Leave them defenseless.



Do the two lists above not ring a bell in the mind of the reader who is familiar with the comparison between the actions of the Good Shepherd and the Antichrist?? The contrast cannot be ignored.

Zech 11:17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

Why is this false shepherd called an “idol” shepherd? Probably because he attempts to be something when he is less than nothing.

The Bible book of Revelation spends some time in describing the nature and activities of the antichrist. Anyone who places himself in opposition to Jesus Christ is fittingly called “antichrist.” Such a person has invited the Lord to dry up his strength and leave him walking in the spiritual darkness until he finds his way to the pit which is illuminated by the fires of hell.

Chapter 12

In this chapter Zechariah presents a scene of victory for the New Jerusalem over the host of enemies who would seek to destroy her. This victory would result from the power of the Almighty as He supports His faithful. Many would be brought to the realization that it was a result of their own sins that the Son of God would be pierced and meet His death on the cross.

Zech 12:1 The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

As mentioned a number of times before God uses the word burden to speak of that which is difficult to bear. Israel here is the spiritual Israel which includes the faithful of God from both Jews and Gentiles.

The Lord made heaven and earth and all that is in them. That includes man who was created in His image.

Zech 12:2 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.

The drinking of the cup of God's wrath is a most fearful experience. It is capable of striking such terror into the hearts of men that they lose control of their emotions and shudder at the danger they face.

The people round about who would destroy God's city were to find themselves facing much greater obstacles than they imagined when they made the decision to fight against those who stand with Him.

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Judah and Jerusalem are allies in this great battle which was to be waged against the spiritual house of David, as led by Jesus Christ a descendant of that earthly king.

**Zech 12:3 And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.**

“In that day” is a phrase which usually means the Christian age. It is especially applied to the latter portion of that age when it is drawing toward it’s close.

It will not matter what portion of the people of the earth decide to line up in opposition to the spiritual city of God. They will find that they had tried to lift a burden which is so heavy they cannot stand under it. Just as a man might find himself severely injured by dropping a boulder which he could not hold up, these enemies of God would find they had suffered horrible cuts as they staggered and the stone fell upon them.

**Zech 12:4 In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.**

Here again we see the words, “in that day.” It is the day that sees victory of God’s city over the forces which were to be brought against it. Horses and riders represented warfare in the day of Zechariah. We still understand that symbolism. The most powerful forces the opponents of the New Jerusalem bring against her

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will be sent down to an embarrassing defeat. Both horses and riders, or even nuclear weapons, can be rendered powerless when they challenge the will of Jehovah.

God's opening of His eyes upon the house of Judah does not imply that He will be displeased with those of the southern kingdom of the Jews and therefore smite their horses and riders. It states that since Judah is allied with Jerusalem God will see that Judah's enemies meet defeat.

Zech 12:5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God.

Powerful leaders among the fleshly Jews are predicted to see the hopelessness of fighting against the Lord. They will decide to abandon any effort to destroy God's precious spiritual city, and will draw from the Divine strength rather than attempting to resist it.

Zech 12:6 In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.

The time was to come when the leaders of the earthly Jews would accept the Lordship of Jehovah and would be like a consuming fire which would burn up those upon every side who attempted to ruin God's city.

When we are told that the city was to be inhabited again, we have a reference to the replacement of the earthly city of Jerusalem by the New spiritual Jerusalem which has indeed taken her own place in God's plan. This

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verse is not talking about the return of fleshly Jews to that city in Canaan. These inhabitants are the spiritual Jews who come to the New Jerusalem from every country in the world.

**Zech 12:7 The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.**

The gospel was first preached to fleshly Jews on the day of Pentecost. From there the gospel was to spread to every part of the globe. The Messiah from the fleshly house of David. The glory of the Lord would ultimately find the converted Jews united in their efforts alongside those of God's children throughout the nations.

**Zech 12:8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.**

Here were are again with that phrase "in that day." When the New spiritual Jerusalem replaces the old earthly city, the defenders of the spiritual city will be as strong in comparison to their enemies as was David when he defeated the giant Goliath.

**Zech 12:9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.**

Nation after nation, and empire after empire have found themselves crushed to pieces when they attacked

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the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The walls of the earthly city of old may lie in ruins. The walls of the New Jerusalem are impenetrable. Zechariah has revealed a truth that men thousands of years later still have not discovered. No nation nor any combination of nations can win a the final battle between Jehovah and Satan.

Zech 12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Do not make the mistake of applying this verse solely to the murder of the Son of God to the Jews who beat him on the back, pounded the nails through His hands and thrust that spear into His side. Most certainly the earthly Jews will have reason to repent and mourn over the death of God's Firstborn as if He were their own; but every sinner upon earth must come to realize the tears which should be shed as a result of our sins.

It would be delightful to find that a large number of fleshly Jews might someday take a leadership role in preaching the gospel of Christ. Let us pray that both Jew and Gentile will participate in this mourning and repentance.

Zech 12:11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

The only suggestion we may offer in explanation of this verse is that King Josiah was mourned by many

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when he lost his life in this earthly valley whose name sounds much like Megiddo which is mentioned in the last book of the Bible.

**Zech 12:12 And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;**

**Zech 12:13 The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;**

**Zech 12:14 All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.**

None of those who were responsible for the suffering of the Saviour will be excused from the shedding of tears over their part. From the time of Adam and Eve to the time of the final judgment, every family must face the sorrow over the sacrifice of the Son of God. Every man will gnash his teeth in agony that he has had a part in that horror.

## Chapter 13

Thirteen is thought by many to be an unlucky number. That is certainly not the case in the Biblical record. The thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians and this thirteenth chapter of Zechariah are both among the most hope filled chapters of the entire Bible.

It is a great pleasure to come across a chapter like this present one which forecasts the opening of a fountain which will make available to both Jew and Gentile the washing away of sin. Let us hasten on to enjoy the precious promises given through Zechariah.

**Zech 13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.**

“In that day” refers to the Christian age. The house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem speak of those of both the Jews and the Gentiles who inhabit the New spiritual Jerusalem, or Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fountain which has now been opened became available when the blood of Christ was poured out at the time of His death upon the cross. The blood of bulls and goats had been only a type of this fountain of blood from the side of the Saviour. Only the cleansing power of the blood of the Son of God is capable of washing away the guilt of sin.

**Zech 13:2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.**

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What land is this from which the names of the idols were to be cut off? Was it the entire earth? Was it the land of fleshly Israel? Was it the New Jerusalem and the Kingdom of God? It can certainly be seen as either the land of Canaan, or as the Kingdom of God. The Jews had been cured of idolatry when they returned from Babylonian captivity. The citizens of the Kingdom of God do not appeal to false prophets or the idols which were connected with them.

Zech 13:3 And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

This riddance of idols and false prophets was to be so definite that if a man claimed to be a prophet he would be disowned by his own parents. They would accuse him of telling lies in the name of the Lord. This may well narrow the view of the territory in which the false prophets were to disappear. These false prophets were pretending to speak in the name of Jehovah. A false prophet was worthy of death by stoning. In effect, the false prophet's own parents were condemning him to death by their accusations that he was lying in the name of the Lord.

Zech 13:4 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

Prophets often wore camelskin garments or other rough clothing to advertise their claims. John the baptist

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wore such clothing. Zechariah predicted that these false prophets would be come so fearful of injury or ridicule that they would throw away their rough clothing and cease to proclaim any super-natural visions.

**Zech 13:5 But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.**

The attitude of the people would become so harsh that such a man would try to deny that he had ever claimed to be a prophet. He would claim that he had been a keeper of livestock or a tiller of the ground, and not a prophet.

**Zech 13:6 And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.**

There is strong disagreement as to who it was that had the wounds in his hands. Was it the false prophets, or was it Jesus Christ?

Those who believe it was the false prophets point out that those false prophets often mutilated their bodies as a mark of their trade. Also it is claimed that the language translation of the Hebrew here is more accurately given as “between” the hands. This could have been on the back or the chest.

Those who believe the wounds were those which Jesus suffered as His hands were nailed to the cross place emphasis upon the last part of the verse which says the one spoken of was wounded in the “house of my friends.” That was obviously true of Jesus in that the apostles denied Him and Judas even betrayed him with a kiss.

The present commentator realizes that the verse may



be a continuation of verses five and six, or may be more closely connected with verse seven. He prefers the view that the one who was wounded was the Saviour.

**Zech 13:7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.**

There is no doubt as to the identity of the one who is called "My Shepherd." He is the fellow of God. He has the qualities of the Godhead and is contrasted with the false shepherds who would lead souls to the gates of hell.

The attention of the reader is called to Jesus words in Matthew 26:31-32.

*Matt 26:31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.*

*Matt 26:32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.*

Jesus' death came about through the determinate foreknowledge of the Father in heaven. God the Father knew that men would sin and come to need a sacrifice for those sins. He therefore made provision for His Only Begotten Son to open that fountain filled with blood.

God's Great Shepherd would then be able to reach out to the sheep who had been scattered and lead them home to heaven. This verse has application to the regathering of the apostles after the resurrection, and also to the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

**Zech 13:8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.**

The majority of those who heard the gospel would reject it. The fraction two thirds should not be taken as a precise figure. It only declares that more will follow the broad way than will follow the Shepherd on the strait and narrow path that leads to life everlasting.

**Zech 13:9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.**

Zechariah predicts that a remnant will be tested and tried to insure that those who receive the final heavenly reward will be eternally committed to loving and obeying the commandments of the Father. Those who pass through the trials successfully will be counted as God's people. In turn, they will proclaim by word and deed that the LORD is their God.

## Chapter 14

One of the major problems in the accurate understanding of the scriptures is the determination of what part of the meaning has to do with figurative language and types, what part has to do with the present situation at the time the prophet is writing.

This is particularly true in this book of Zechariah. Some of the material deals with the difficulties of his own day, while some of it reaches to the very end of the world. Bible students take very different views of this present chapter. It is difficult, but God expects us to search diligently for the truth. There are great riches in these last verses of Zechariah. Let us give them the best effort we can.

**Zech 14:1 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.**

The “day of the Lord” can apply to any time that God makes a reckoning with mankind. In the case before us it seems that He is discussing the manner in which mankind has dealt with Jerusalem, both in the sense of Zechariah’s time and reaching on to the end of time.

A constant battle has been ongoing between God’s faithful and the forces allied with the devil and his angels over the control of this important city. Both Jehovah and Satan know there are great advantages in winning this battle. The spoil is most attractive to both.

**Zech 14:2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity,**

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and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

As yet all the nations of the earth have not set their armies against the city of Jerusalem in an earthly sense. However, there has been continuing dispute over both the land of Palestine and the city of Jerusalem for century upon century. Over that long period of time all of the conditions described in this verse have arisen. The city has been captured several times. The houses have been plundered. The women abused and many of the people taken into captivity. At the same time, some of the inhabitants have been left in it's bounds.

But the battle discussed in this last chapter of Zechariah has a double application. The first is earthly. The second is spiritual. This will become more evident as we move on into the chapter.

Zech 14:3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

The Lord did not actually and literally stand in the midst of the raging battles between Israel and her neighbors in their conflicts with Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and the great empires of Greece and Rome. Nevertheless, He did lend His power in favor of His people when it was best to lead them to victory. Nation after nation has set themselves up against His city. Nation after nation has become almost insignificant in world affairs while the earthly city of Jerusalem still has a major role in world politics.

In just what sense will the Lord fight against those nations which attempt to destroy His spiritual city?

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**Zech 14:4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.**

The mount of Olives is located on the same range as that upon which the city of Jerusalem is found. God pictures that mount of Olives as being divided into two parts. This would result in a very great valley being created between the two halves of the mount of Olives.

Your present writer believes the picture to be of spiritual nature. The reason for the directions being given is not clear. The division of the one mountain into two is easier to see. Jerusalem itself would be divided in loyalty. This has been true with the earthly city and also with the spiritual city. Some have supported Jehovah. Others have turned away in periods of danger.

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

The valley of the mountains is that valley which was created by the cleaving of that one mount of Olives. The earthquake in the days of Uzziah is mentioned in Amos 1:1.

*Amos 1:1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in*

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the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Regardless of our appetite for more facts concerning the facts related to this earthquake, we have none. The fear which it provoked must have been very great for it to have been mentioned in the way it is presented here.

As the faithful flee to the valley God steps in with the help of His saints as He comes to their aid. Does this not sound like the picture given us in the book of Revelation as God oversees His 144,000 in the final battle between good and evil?

Zech 14:6 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:

As the battle rages over the control of the city of God, He takes control of the situation by extending the twilight until the conflict is decided.

Zech 14:7 But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.

In the midst of this haze God will bring about some spiritual changes. The devil, that prince of darkness will find himself overcome by the Light of the world, who is the Sun of Righteousness.

Zech 14:8 And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

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As a result of the advantage gained by the appearance of Christ and the gospel. See John 7:37-38.

*John 7:37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

*John 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

Very often in the scriptures the sea represents the masses of the people. In the present scene, the living water which flows from the fountain opened by the teachings of Christ will move out from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth. Nor shall there be an in season and an out of season. The fountain of living water will never run dry.

**Zech 14:9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.**

There is but one True God. As the living water flows throughout the earth He will be recognized as the Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth. All other contending false gods will be relegated to obscurity. Jehovah will be undisputed King.

**Zech 14:10 All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.**

The various power structures which have served Satan will be brought low. Spiritual Jerusalem will be elevated to her rightful place. There shall be no part of it that is left under the control of the Evil one.

When may man look forward to this heavenly outlook? Only when the victorious city is taken up into the presence of the Lord to be with Him forever.

**Zech 14:11 And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.**

Then there shall be no more war. Satan will have been consigned to the fire of hell. His angels will have found their place along with him. The city of God will have found peace.

**Zech 14:12 And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.**

Those who oppose God and His Holy City make a serious mistake. Blessings rain down upon those who love and obey the Lord. The rain turns to curses for those who fight against His will. There are large numbers of people who think the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life are freedoms which they are due. They participate to their heart's content in activities which feed these appetites. God did not condemn such a way of life simply because He desired to place restrictions on the free will of those who were made in His image.

The Lord knows full well just what the results of sinful



thoughts, words and actions will be. It is not in man's ability to foresee such results. We are to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and allow Him to direct our steps. When we ignore His commandments we find ourselves facing just such plagues as are presented in this verse. War, disease and bondage arise constantly. Ultimately the curses are suffered in hell fire.

**Zech 14:13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.**

“That day” is the day in which men have taken a position for or against the will of the Lord. Those who have opposed Him will find violence. Those who have obeyed Him will find peace. Selfishness causes envy and jealousy. Those who follow that way of life must keep a constant eye upon others who have like attitudes. Competition and hatred flare up constantly.

**Zech 14:14 And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.**

Does this verse teach us that Judah will fight at Jerusalem against the enemies of the city? Or does it teach that Judah will join the foes of Jerusalem and attempt to reap great wealth as a reward for their spiritual failure? God teaches that the meek shall inherit the earth. It seems that the statement here about the gathering of the wealth of the heathen is related to the victory which Judah, as a part of the soldiers of the cross will enjoy in heavenly places.

**Zech 14:15 And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.**

Even the livestock of the enemies of God and His people are to become diseased as a result of disregard for His directions.

**Zech 14:16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.**

Not all of the citizens of the nations which battle against New Jerusalem will share in the hatred of God. Those who have the good judgment to honor the Lord will keep His commandments. It is this writer's conviction that the meaning here is dual. Some of the literal and fleshly foes of the old Jerusalem were to do their best to worship God according to His will.

In addition, those who are spiritually converted will do their best to praise God in the church of Jesus Christ which is the New Jerusalem on earth. The feast of the tabernacles was a feast in memory of God's care for those who lived in tabernacles during the wanderings of the wilderness. God's faithful today are wandering in a wilderness as they proceed toward the heavenly Jerusalem. They live in fleshly bodies which are described as earthly tabernacles. They are proud to worship the Lord at any time He specifies.

**Zech 14:17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto**

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Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

Any throughout the entire earth who refuse to honor Jehovah will find themselves in a similar position to that Egypt when they wished to keep Israel in slavery. God sent one curse after another upon them until they let His people go.

Zech 14:18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Egypt and Babylon both tried to make profit at the expense of Israel. Satan does his best to hold those who serve him. If he and his supporters are so stubborn as to continue their fight against the New Jerusalem to the end, they will face not just one curse but many, until they meet utter ruin.

Zech 14:19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

The punishment which Egypt suffered is but a preview of that which will be poured out upon any nation or people who disdain the blessings which could be theirs if they acted like Moses and Aaron rather than like the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Zech 14:20 In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

The horses here are devoted to the service of God and not to the pulling of chariots of war. The bells on these horses proclaim their usage. Even the cooking pots in the New Jerusalem are placed in God's service. In the Holy City of New Jerusalem men and women understand the words of Solomon. "The whole duty of man is to keep the commandments of the Lord." Every possession and every talent is to be utilized in that way.

Zech 14:21 Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

A sloven housekeeper will allow filthy pots and pans to pile up in the kitchen. God does not intend for that to take place in His holy house. The Canaanite is the enemy of God's people. He will not be tolerated in the fellowship of the citizens of that New Jerusalem which will one day be lifted up to be with their Father in heaven.

As a closing note, the fact that Judah is named along with Jerusalem in this verse seems to be proof that Judah was not fighting against Jerusalem, but with her.

**The Book Of
MALACHI**

Introduction To Malachi

Author:

Almost nothing is known about the author of the book of Malachi. That which we do know is learned from the reading of the book itself. The name attached to the book could be either a personal name, or an anonymous name given because it could refer to anyone who was presenting an inspired message from the Lord. The title means, "My Messenger." The same word is often translated as "angel." Because of the indecision involved, we do not wish to dwell on the matter. The message is of greater importance than the identity of the messenger.

Date:

The date of writing is also unclear. Estimates have placed it from 470 B.C. to 200 B.C. The most commonly accepted date is around 450 B.C. It has been placed at the close of the old testament because it provides a link between the last of the old Testament writings and the beginning of the New.

Conditions:

Israel was discouraged. At the time of return from the Babylonian captivity, hopes had been high that the promised Messiah was about to appear, and that God's people would surpass the heights of glory which had been reached in the time of Solomon.

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That had not been the case. God was displeased with their level of moral values. They had intermarried with women who were not of Israel. They had often put away their Israeli wives in order to take the foreign women. The rich were taking advantage of the poor. Worship had become a matter of habit rather than a true and sincere approach to the throne of the Lord.

But God had not forgotten His promise to Abraham that through his seed a blessing would reach out of all the nations of the earth. It would take time for this to come into being.

### **The Message:**

The style of presentation is different from most of the Biblical material. The prophet gives us a statement of God's advice in the handling of a sinful condition. He then includes a "But ye say." The people had many excuses for not obeying the Word of God. After the "But ye say." Malachi goes on to support the need for observing the will of God if the situation is to be improved.

A new era is announced. A messenger will appear who will introduce a new and spiritual Kingdom of God. In spite of the dismal surroundings at the time of the writing, A brighter day was ahead. There was to be a time of triumph for the righteous and faithful followers of God. It would require patience, as God worked out His plans as He knew best. Any discomforts and discouragements which were being felt were a result of their own lack of fidelity to God's pattern for living. They must repent of their sins and wait for Him to bring the new order into being.

Verses 1 and 2 of chapter four are the heart of the message of God, as given to us through the prophet Malachi.



**Mal 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.**

**Mal 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.**

The Sun of Righteousness is Jesus Christ, who was announced by John the Baptist. Through following His teaching and example, the saints will see a brighter day. It was to be a day of triumph over the foes of holiness. We presently live in the dawn of that brighter day. Someday, the faithful will be caught up to dwell in the land where there is no night. That must be our goal.



## *Chapter 1*

### **Mal 1:1 The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.**

The Word of God carries a burden of responsibility. This book of Malachi makes that point abundantly clear. This first verse wastes no time. God has some important corrections to make in the lives of His nation of Israel. He expects them to listen and act accordingly.

### **Mal 1:2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,**

The Lord makes a very firm statement that He has loved the descendants of Jacob. The implication is that they should have returned that love by giving Him praise and obedience. They had not done that. Rather than giving God honor they were now ready to ask Him where the evidence of His love was to be seen.

The problem was that they had expected a much better life when they returned from Assyrian captivity than they had actually experienced. How could God make the statement that He had loved them when they were so miserable?

In answer, God pointed out that Jacob and Esau were brothers. He invited Israel to compare what had happened to Esau's descendants with what had happened to those of Jacob. Such a comparison would prove His point that He had loved them.

### **Mal 1:3 And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.**

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Some wish to say that “hated” is not the best choice of words, and that God only loved Esau less. That does not seem to be the case. That which had happened to the Edomites, who were Esau’s descendants was certainly vastly more unpleasant than what had happened to the Israelites, who were descendants of Jacob.

Instead of allowing the Edomites to prosper and build up their territory, it had become desolate and fit only for wild animals to inhabit.

Someone may ask if God does not all men and only hate the sin which is in their lives. And did God begin to hate the Edomites who had not yet been born in the lifetime of Esau? In answer to those questions, we must remember that God can see the end from the beginning. He knew the descendants of Esau would reject Him. He could not love those who hated Him.

Mal 1:4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

Forever has no end. Edom had said defiantly that if that which they had accomplished was to be turned to desolate wilderness, they would see that it was built back up again. The Lord disagreed. Others would know forever that when they crossed into Edomite territory, they had crossed into a land of wickedness. Any attempts that the Edomites made to rebuild would be useless. God would undo every effort. This was not partiality or favoritism on the part of Jehovah. It was a reaction to what He knew would be the attitude of this wicked people.

Mal 1:5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

In contrast, Israel would see the blessings of God, and would magnify, or spread His glory and honor from their border to all the world. It was not happening at the time Malachi wrote, but it would happen in the days to come. Remember dear reader that the gospel was first preached by the Jews. It began in Jerusalem and has now been extended to many nations.

Mal 1:6 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

The prophet feels that he has made his point. God has loved Israel. They should have honored Him. Since that is true, why had they not done so? An earthly father normally received honor from his family. The Lord had acted toward Israel as a father. They had not given Him the honor He deserved. An earthly servant normally obeyed his master. He was their heavenly Master, but had not been obeyed. What they had done was to despise His name.

He knew their reply would be “In what manner have we despised His name.” He would give them the answer.

Mal 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

The word “bread” here does not refer to the shewbread. It refers to the altar of burnt offering. If a housewife were

to place moldy bread upon her table, any visitor would be astonished. The Israelites had been placing blemished animals upon the altar of God. He was also astonished.

Mal 1:8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

The altar of burnt offering was a means of coming before God. Now, if a man were to offer gifts to a human dignitary, such as a governor, what would be the result if the gifts were “hand me downs?” The man who offered such gifts to a human governor might expect that he would be denied an invitation to make his pleas known. God is far greater in glory than any territorial or nation governor. They were acting in a ridiculous manner if they expected to be accepted by God when they offered the sick, the blind, the land and the stolen, and kept back the best for their own use.

Mal 1:9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.

Now, after insulting the Lord through their blemished gifts, they have the gall to come before Him and ask that He extend His grace to them. The prophet is pointing his remarks particularly toward the priests. Much of the misery of the nation had come upon them as a result of the carelessness of the priesthood.

Mal 1:10 Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye

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**kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.**

The priesthood was not truly ready to sacrifice for the Lord. Even such a small matter as closing the doors of the worship area after services was done with the expectation of a reward. Nor would they start a fire for offering the sacrifices. Yet, they would expect God to be gracious to them

**Mal 1:11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.**

Both the people and the priesthood should have been ashamed of their behavior. The time would arrive when the blessing promised through Abraham would come upon the Gentiles. Those whom the Jews looked at as heathen would offer proper sacrifices and magnify the name of Jehovah from one end of the world to the other.

**Mal 1:12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.**

When one treats that which is holy as if it were despicable, he has profaned it. When one uses the name of God, Christ or the heavens as a curse word, he has used profanity.

By offering blemished animals on the altar of God they had profaned the table of God. They had shown contempt for His service.

**Mal 1:13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.**

God could see very well through the sham of what they were doing. They were only going through their duties as a form of habit. They had no real desire to present the best they had. When they had turned up their noses at God's instructions, how could they possibly expect Him to treat them with the respect they desired? He would not accept their disrespect as true sacrifice.

**Mal 1:14 But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.**

Let us bring this lesson down to our own lives. That person who pretends to be making a sacrifice to God when he is only putting on a show for his fellowmen, is abominable in the sight of God's holy eyes.

Christians make up a royal priesthood in these latter days. We cannot afford to make a pretense of offering ourselves as living sacrifices, while at the same time using our bodies and our possessions solely for our own pleasure. There are those who do not even pretend to carry the name "Christian" who would put some Christians to shame by the way they provide help to their fellow man.

## *Chapter 2*

**Mal 2:1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.**

The commandment is not spelled out in the manner of most other commandments. However, it is very clearly implied. The priests are to live up to the covenant God made with them to teach and judge His people. They have fallen far short of His expectations and He is prepared to nullify their agreement.

**Mal 2:2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.**

Note the word “if” in this verse. He is giving the priests an ultimatum. A continuing failure to hold up His name before the people of Israel will result in drastic punishment. In the original agreement, They were to honor His will and give glory to His name. In return, He had promised to bless their work and give them respect among the people. Since they have failed to keep their part of the covenant, He is ready to turn their blessings into curses. The fact of the matter was that this process had already begun.

**Mal 2:3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.**

When sacrifices were offered by the priests, they were commanded to take the contents of the intestinal

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tract outside the gates of the camp and burn them. God's statement here is that they have treated His commandments as refuse. He will see that they are treated as garbage by those who would have respected them if they had lived up to their end of the covenant.

Mal 2:4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

The commandment which the Lord was now presenting was intended to show what He was disgusted with the priesthood and about to leave it without respect from the people. He desired the continuation of the Levitical priesthood, but this hinged upon their response to His call for improvement.

Mal 2:5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

God had intended for the descendants of Levi to enjoy a long life of service, and one that was filled with satisfaction and blessings. He had offered this arrangement as a result of Levi's respect for Him. Levi and his family had been especially faithful. This led to the privileges of the priesthood.

Mal 2:6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.

At first the priests had taught the law of God as He expected it to be taught. The truth had been

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presented as the Levites walked in His ways of righteousness.

**Mal 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.**

It was the duty of the priesthood to be students of the law. They were to seek out the truth and then transmit it to the people. God had two types of messengers. One was the prophets. The other was the priests.

Let us make a modern day application of the lesson God was declaring here. Christians are a royal priesthood today. Every true Christian is a priest who offers his body as a living sacrifice. The truth of God is to be learned and taught to others that they might live in paths of righteousness. If this is not done, we stand in danger of being disowned by the Lord.

**Mal 2:8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.**

The priests had failed miserably. Rather than teaching the people how to walk within the law, they had caused them to stumble and fall into wicked ways. They had caused the people to disrespect both Jehovah and the law which He had given.

**Mal 2:9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.**

Just as they had caused the people to look upon God's law with contempt, He would cause the people to look upon the priests with contempt.

One of the charges made against the priests was that in judging the disagreements among the people, they had shown partiality. They seem to have made decisions with their own profit in mind rather than to see that justice was done.

The priests were discharging some of the same duties which the law courts of our own days are assigned. We do not appreciate justice being warped in order that those in authority might be rewarded. Neither did God.

**Mal 2:10 Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?**

Who is the "we" in this verse? Is it all men on the face of the earth, or is it the more immediate family of God? It seems that these words are addressed to those who lived under the Old Testament law. In administering justice with partiality, the priests had caused disrespect among God's people for His laws.

**Mal 2:11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.**

Malachi will proceed to detail one of the ways in which the people have brought God's wrath down upon them. He had made it crystal clear when they entered the promised land that they were not to make marriages with the idolatrous people of the land.

His wisdom in making this demand upon them had been demonstrated more than once. As a prime example, Solomon married many strange wives. The result was that they turned his heart away from the Lord and Israel embraced the worship of some of those idols.

At the time Malachi was delivering God's message to the priests of Israel, he accused them of allowing marriages between His own people and those who worshiped gods made with men's hands. The result had been the same as it was in the day of Solomon. Many tears were shed.

**Mal 2:12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.**

God is not intending to excuse such actions. He promised to remove His blessings from both the master who taught that such was permissible, and the student who believed the error. It was not only the teaching process which was insolent. It was the priests who offered, and those who brought offerings to be offered.

**Mal 2:13 And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.**

The Lord was accusing them of mistreating one another and then coming to the altar with their sacrifices after they had caused weeping and anguish. Under those conditions they need not expect that God would honor their offering. He would not!

**Mal 2:14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.**

They replied to the Lord's accusation by asking just how they had brought tears to the altar. His answer to their question was that they had dealt treacherously with the Hebrew wife whom they had married in the bloom of youth. God considered the promises which had been made, with Him as a witness, that they would live together until death parted them. Regardless of their treatment of those wives, God still considered them as bound in marriage.

**Mal 2:15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.**

God had made the man and the wife of his youth to be one flesh. If the man had just a spark of the spirit of God within him, he would not forsake that wife. It was time for those who were putting away these wives to examine themselves and see if their spirit was in harmony with the Spirit of the Lord.

**Mal 2:16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.**

When a Hebrew man married a wife, he would often throw a garment over her to indicate his willingness to provide all that she might expect from a husband. This would mean affection, food, clothing, shelter and protection. Those who were putting away their wives to marry younger women, some of whom were worshipers of idols, had broken their vows to both the wife they had put away, and the God they pretended to worship.

**Mal 2:17 Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?**

The Lord was tired and fed up with their mistreatment of others. They pretended to have difficulty in understanding why He would have been angered. He replied that they were justifying those who worked wickedness and classifying them as good.

They were hardly alone in their attitudes. In our present day world sexual infidelity is excused as being “natural.” Divorce is expensive, but only because the lawyers charge high fees for their services. The cost in ruined lives is looked upon as something which will soon be forgotten. It is not so. God will remember until time comes to an end. The tears shed by a cast off wife may very well turn into tears shed by the soul of the unfaithful husband.

By the way, this matter of infidelity is not always due to lust on the part of a husband. It can also come about when a wife sets her sights on another man who courts her with attention and the promise of a higher life style. Either way, God will bring the abuser to account in the judgment. The marriage covenant is sacred. One wife for one husband for one lifetime.

## Chapter 3

**Mal 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.**

This first verse of chapter three is puzzling to some because of the use of the word messenger twice. These are two different messengers, and not just one. The first is John the baptist. The second is Jesus Christ. There is a serious need for the Jews to prepare for the final day of the Lord, when the righteous and the wicked will be separated forever. God is not willing that any perish, and that applies to the Jew as well as to the Gentile.

Proof that the first messenger which was to be sent was John the baptist is found in the words of Jesus himself. The Jews had been asking where the God of their salvation was. This is a reply to that question. He would appear unexpectedly to the temple and they needed to be prepared for His appearance. However, before He appeared as the Word of God, a messenger whom they had been anticipating would come to prepare the way for him. Note Isaiah 40:3-5.

*Isa 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Isa 40:4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:*

Now compare Matthew 17:11-13.

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Matt 17:11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

Matt 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Matt 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Thus we have the identity of the messenger who was to prepare the way of the Lord. It was John the Baptist.

Mal 3:2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

Now Malachi speaks of the messenger who was to be announced by John the Baptist. This messenger was the Christ. He would come as the fire of a refiner or the soap of a fuller. The fire of the refiner melts the ore and the pure metal is separated from the rest of the ingredients. The soap of the fuller separates the filth from the cloth and leaves it pure.

Mal 3:3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

In one sense, both John the baptist and Jesus served the purposes discussed. Israel was to be exposed to the truth of God in such clear terms that there would be no excuse for continuing in their wickedness.

Only after they had allowed themselves to be cleansed

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would their offerings be acceptable to God. The priests, who were the descendants of Levi would need to be an example for others. They were the ones who were taking the offerings and presenting them to God upon His altar and in His storehouse.

But let us not limit this need for cleansing to the priests of the tribe of Levi, or even to the Jews of that day. The chosen people of God at the time of this writing are Christians. They are priest of God. Their lives must be purified by the blood of Jesus. This can only take place when they have repented of their sins and purified their hearts.

**Mal 3:4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.**

As the warning here applies to the priests and the people of fleshly Israel, there was a need for them to abandon their selfish lust and pride. They needed to return to the loyalty which had been shown in the past. When that occurred, God would be pleased with them once more and their sacrifices would be accepted.

**Mal 3:5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.**

When God came into their midst, it would not be the pleasant experience that many of them anticipated. Christ, who was God in the flesh, would testify to their



sins and point out the need for a change. Among the sins of which they would be accused were sorcery, adultery, lying, oppression of servants, neglect of orphans and widows, and turning away the needy. All of these sins were a result of their failure to fear God and keep His commandments.

**Mal 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.**

God had made a solemn promise that through the seed of Abraham, the world would be blessed. If He had not made that promise, Israel would have been destroyed. Since, even though Israel had changed and broken their part of the covenant, God would still honor His part. The Messenger would be sent to give them every opportunity to return to godliness.

**Mal 3:7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?**

It was not just the present generation of Jews who had ignored God's will; the rebellion had begun long before. If not for the longsuffering of Jehovah, they would have been annihilated. If they would return to Him, He would favor them as His own. They did not accept His accusation of having departed from Him. He would be more specific. They had been robbers.

**Mal 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.**

They had robbed Him! All that they had in this world was made available to them by the hand of the Creator. It had been placed in their possession that it might be used for the glory of God and the welfare of others. By refusing to give back their tithes and offerings, they had used for themselves that of which God was the true Owner.

**Mal 3:9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.**

That which God had intended as a blessing in their lives had been turned into just the opposite. Instead of testifying to their love for Him, they testified of their disregard for His plan.

**Mal 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.**

Israel was given a challenge. They needed to bring their offerings willingly and cheerfully to God's storehouse. This was not because God could not provide for Himself. It was a part of His plan for the spiritual welfare of His people. By giving freely to His work, they would find that there would be blessings poured out upon them from heaven. They had complained that God did not reward the righteous. That was not true. They needed to be generous with Him and then watch to see just how much would be returned to them.

I must make one side remark here. God knows far better than I do just what is best for me. I have sometimes thought He had forgotten, only to find later that what he

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had denied me had worked to both my advantage and also to the glory of His kingdom. I believe millions of others have found the same to be true.

Mal 3:11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

We can look back upon the experiences of Egypt to see what is meant here. The plagues which came upon that nation were the result of fighting against the Lord. Some of those plagues had to do with insects that destroyed the crops.

When Israel loved God and stayed true to Him, their lives were blessed. When they turned from Him, the blessings were replaced by curses such as drought and insect plagues. They should have obeyed His commandments. Then all would be well.

Mal 3:12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

If Israel would call upon the Lord by obedience, the other nations of the earth would be forced to note that He was blessing them. While fleshly Israel has presently been replaced by spiritual Israel, which is the Church of Jesus Christ, the message of this verse still holds. God blesses those who love and obey Him. It may be that the blessings do not appear at the time we call for them, but we may rest assured that they will be poured out as He knows best.

Mal 3:13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?

Here is another accusation against Israel. They had saying things to one another about God not caring for His servants as He should. They denied that they had criticized Him. They wanted to know just what they had said that had offended Him.

Mal 3:14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

Yes, they most certainly had said things which were critical of the Lord. They had said that in spite of the fact that they had walked before Him mourning wickedness, and had kept His commandments, He had not responded with loving blessings.

Mal 3:15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

They claimed that the proud and the wicked were being blessed. Those who had defied God were said to be innocent. These words were not what God wanted to hear.

Mal 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

This criticism of the Lord was not an occasional thing. They were doing it often. In contrast, there were some who did fear God and spoke His praises to one another. God also heard these faithful servants. He would not forget their loyalty.

God does not have to jot down in a little notebook all the praises we offer in His name. His book of remembrance is only a way of saying there is a record of both our criticisms and our praises. These are an eternal record.

Mal 3:17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

God has a treasure chest. It is large enough to hold the souls of the faithful throughout the ages. They are more precious than diamonds and rubies to Him. When the day of judgment arrives, the jewels will be carefully collected and will be protected from the destructive fires of hell. They are like His own children. He is the heavenly Father and His children will be protected.

Mal 3:18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

It will be possible in that day for those who care, to know the difference between those who have hated God, and those who have loved Him.

Chapter 4

Mal 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

The darkness of despair would sweep over the Jews who did not respect the Lord. We have here a sharp contrast between the fate of those who walked in wickedness, and those who walked in the way of righteousness. It is also of interest that one does not usually associate fire and darkness. That is not the case here. In the midst of spiritual darkness the unrighteous will be consumed in the fires of hell.

Mal 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Just the opposite conditions will surround the righteous. They have loved the light. Therefore God will provide them with spiritual light. There is some difference of understanding as to the identity of the Sun of righteousness. Since Christ was perfectly righteous, with no sin found in Him, we see no difficulty in saying that when Christ came into the world, He was the One who arose with healing in His wings to become the "Light of the world." He is also called the Bright and Morning Star.

Those who walk in the light as He is in the light will find spiritual fulfillment. They shall have no reason

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to doubt the goodness of either the Father or the Son (Sun).

**Mal 4:3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.**

In the final judgment, when this earth shall be burned up, along with all that is in it, the righteous will not share in the horrible misery of the wicked. There will be a new earth, a new Jerusalem, a new body and joy beyond measure. Those of us who have watched young calves jump and gambol around can begin to understand the rewards promised by the prophet of God.

**Mal 4:4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.**

Until the Christian age began with a new covenant between man and God, the Jews were told to observe the statutes and judgments of the Law as given by Moses. This was the law received on Mount Sinai, which is also named Mount Horeb.

**Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:**

Jesus proclaimed that this promise referred to John the baptist, who was not actually Elijah reincarnated, but came in the fiery spirit of Elijah. Both Elijah and John the baptist condemned sin with great passion. John would prepare the minds of the Jews who would listen for the teachings of the Bright and Morning Star.

**Mal 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.**

In both cases; that of Elijah, and that of John, the world was in a state of spiritual chaos. When a society turns from God's truth, that society soon finds itself in the midst of misery and unhappiness. Fathers and son, mothers and daughters, employers and employees, nation and nation, find themselves opposing one another.

After some four hundred years of silence from the prophets John did arrive in the spirit of Elijah to announce Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the "Sun of righteousness."

### **A Precious Memory**

What a thrill and a pleasure it has been to live with God's Word as closely as has been the case in our commentary on the books of the Old Testament. It is our sincere prayer that those many hours of study and writing will prove to be an aid to many eager souls in the digesting of the "Bread of Life."

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