

**Supplemental Notes:**

# *Prophets to the Southern Kingdom*

*Joel, Micah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk*

*compiled  
by  
Chuck Missler*

## Acknowledgments

These notes have been assembled from speaking notes and related materials which had been compiled from a number of classic and contemporary commentaries and other sources detailed in the bibliography, as well as other articles and publications of Koinonia House. While we have attempted to include relevant endnotes and other references, we apologize for any errors or oversights.

The complete recordings of the sessions, as well as supporting diagrams, maps, etc., are also available in various audiovisual formats from the publisher.

## Audio Listing

### Joel 1

Introduction and background. A review of the Ten Plagues. The “Day of the Lord.”

### Joel 2

The “Day of the Lord.” Destruction of the invaders; repentance of Judah. Response of YHWH; effusion of the Spirit; return and establishing the Kingdom.

### Joel 3

Judgment of the Nations. Full Kingdom Blessing.

### Micah 1

Introduction and background. Micah’s ministry and place in history. Sins against God.

### Micah 2

Sins against each other. Wicked deeds of the rich.

### Micah 3

Sins by their leaders. Destruction of Jerusalem foretold.

### Micah 4

The Coming Kingdom. The Millennial reign. Ezekiel’s Temple.

### Micah 5

The location of the Messiah’s birth. The Magi. “The Assyrian.”

## Audio Listing

### Micah 6

The coming judgment. The predicament of Man.

### Micah 7

Review and final wrap-up. Trust in God's salvation; God's pardon and love.

### Zephaniah 1

Introduction and background. The Day of the Lord.

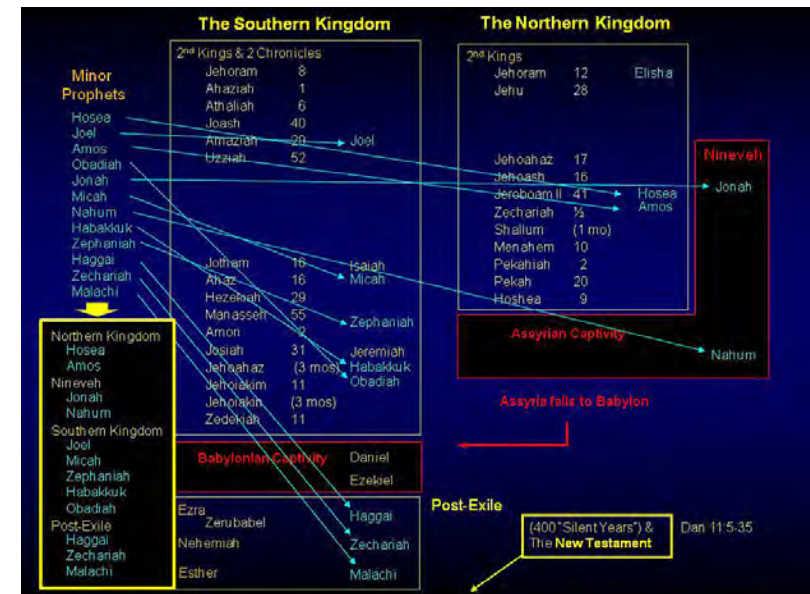
### Zephaniah 2-3

Judgment of the Nations. The Return. The Millennial Kingdom.

### Habakkuk 1-3

The just shall live by faith. Five-fold woe. Habakkuk's prayer.

## Joel Chapter 1



## Chronological Order of the Prophets

### • Before the Exile:

Obadiah	to Edom	887 B.C.
Jonah	to Nineveh	862 B.C.
Joel	to Judah	800 B.C. (835-756?)
Amos	to N. Kingdom	787 B.C.
Hosea	to N. Kingdom	785 - 725 B.C.
Isaiah	to Judah	760 - 698 B.C.
Micah	to Judah	750 - 710 B.C.
Nahum	to Nineveh	713 B.C.
Zephaniah	to Judah	630 B.C.
Habakkuk	to Judah	626 B.C.
Jeremiah	to Judah	629 - 588 B.C.

### • During the Exile:

Jeremiah	629 - 588 B.C.
Ezekiel	595 - 574 B.C.
Daniel	607 - 534 B.C.

- **After the Exile:**

Haggai	520 B.C.
Zechariah	520 – 518 B.C.
Malachi	397 B.C.

(Between the Testaments: Daniel 11:5-35)

## Dating

Most scholars duck the issue of dating, but it could have been written around 838-756 B.C.; or the early days of Joash 870–865 B.C.

Joel is quoted twice by Amos: Joel 3:16 is quoted in Amos 1:2; Joel 3:18 is quoted in Amos 9:13. This would place him before the Prophet Amos. Because he does not rail against idolatry the way Amos did, he probably prophesied around 835 B.C. during the reign of Joash.

## Arguments from Silence

There is no mention of either Assyrian (722 B.C.) or Babylonian (587 B.C.) invasions. The only enemies mentioned are the Philistines, Phoenicians, Edomites, and Egyptians (Joel 3:4, 19). Had he lived after Joash, he would doubtless have mentioned the Syrians among the enemies whom he enumerates since they took Jerusalem and carried off immense spoil to Damascus (2 Chr 24:23, 24).

No idolatry is mentioned; and the temple services, the priesthood, and other institutions of the theocracy, are represented as flourishing. This all answers to the state of things under the high priesthood of Jehoiada, through whom Joash had been placed on the throne and who lived in the early years of Joash (2 Kgs 11:17, 18; 12:2–16; 2 Chr 24:4–14).

There is also no king mentioned. Could Joel have been written during the period where there was no king in Israel? Queen Athaliah had the royal seed of Judah murdered. After the death of King Ahaziah, the queen had all of her grandchildren put to death, but the baby Joash was spared (the only surviving royal seed). He was hidden by his aunt, Jehosheba, and Jehoiada the high priest, in the Temple complex (2 Kgs 11-12; 2 Chr 23-24).

Seven years later, Joash was crowned king of Judah (2 Kgs 11:12) and Queen Athaliah was slain by her own people (2 Kgs 11:16). The

book of Joel could have been written just prior to Joash's coronation in 835 B.C.

Joel prophesied as one of the early prophets. Actually there were quite a few prophets—at least fifty—and it is generally conceded by conservative scholars that Joel prophesied about the time of the reign of Joash, king of Judah. Joel was apparently contemporary with and probably knew both Elijah and Elisha, who prophesied to the Northern Kingdom (Joel to the South). *It is remarkable that the earliest of the prophets included the fullest view of the consummation of all written prophecy.*

## Why Should We Study Joel?

The book of Joel is a neglected book among Bible scholars. It's surprising how many people who study prophecy have never studied the book of Joel in depth. It's an important book because it records Israel's place in God's program: from Babylon all the way through the Millennium.

Joel also has a lot to say about the Gentile nations and their collision course toward Armageddon. The primary theme in the book of Joel is *The Day of the Lord*.

## Order of Events

2:1-10	Gentile Invasion; Armageddon
2:11	Destruction of the Invaders
2:12-17	Repentance of Judah
2:18-27	Response of YHWH
2:28,29	Effusion of the Spirit
2:30-32	Return & Establishing the Kingdom
3:1-16	Judgment of the Nations
3:17-21	Full Kingdom Blessing

The Book of Joel makes two major points. 1) God is in control of world events. Nothing happens anywhere in the world that is outside of God's control; nothing that happens to a believer is outside of God's control. 2) God responds to repentance. Where there is true repentance, God will respond accordingly.

The name Joel means, "Yahweh is God." This is an inversion of the name Elijah, which means "God is Jehovah." There is no personal history available on the prophet Joel, but we do know he speaks to Judah from Jerusalem.

The Temple is mentioned four times, so it **was** standing when he wrote (Joel 1:9, 13, 14; 2:15). Joel is quoted in Amos 1:2, which means the book was already in existence when Amos wrote (Joel 3:16, 18). [Source: Fruchtenbaum, A. G. (1983). Vol. 74: The Messianic Bible Study Collection (3). Tustin, Calif.: Ariel Ministries.]

Joel's theme is "the Day of the Lord." He makes specific reference to it five times (Joel 1:15; 2:1–2; 2:10–11; 2:30–31; 3:14–16). Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel all refer to the Day of the Lord. Sometimes they call it "that day." Zechariah particularly emphasizes "that day." What is "that day"? It is the Day of the Lord, or the Day of Jehovah. Joel is the one who introduces the Day of the Lord in prophecy.

The Day of the Lord is a technical expression in Scripture which is fraught with meaning. It includes the Millennial Kingdom, which will come at the second coming of Christ, but Joel is going to make it very clear to us that it begins with the Great Tribulation Period, the time of great trouble. [??]

If you want to set a boundary or parenthesis at the end of the Day of the Lord, it would be the end of the Millennium when the Lord Jesus puts down all unrighteousness and establishes His eternal kingdom here upon the earth. James, at the great council of Jerusalem, more or less outlined the relationship between the church age and this period known as the Day of the Lord. He said:

*Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:*

Acts 15:14-16

James says, "After this"—after what? After He calls out the church from this world, God will again turn to His program with Israel, and it is to this time that the Day of the Lord refers.

*That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

Acts 12:17,18

Today God is calling out of the Gentiles a people; in that day, all the Gentiles who will be entering the kingdom will seek the Lord. I think there will be a tremendous turning to God at that time unlike any "the church" has ever witnessed.

Joel is quoted twice in the New Testament: 1) Joel 2:28–32 is quoted by Acts 2:17–21; and 2) Joel 2:32 is quoted in Romans 10:13.

## Joel 1

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

The Hebrew phraseology actually means "the Word of Jehovah took possession of Joel." Joel was a common name, and it means "Jehovah is God." This is an inversion of the name Elijah, which means "God is Jehovah."

"...son of Pethuel": His father was Pethuel (which means "the open-heartedness of God" or "the sincerity of God.")

- 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?

"...old men": There is value in traditions; elders who sat at the city gates were considered the best judges. Joel is going to tell about a devastation...more awesome than you can imagine...

"Tell ye your children..." This is the most unique invasion of locusts in all previous history.

Moses had instructed Israel to rehearse the works of God to their children (Deut 4:9; 6:6-7). Why? To remind them of God's *mercy and goodness* and to remind them that God *would judge sin if they became disobedient* (Lev 26; Deut 28).

Sometimes "natural" disasters are warnings of more to come... Joel uses this as a springboard to the "Big One": The Day of the Lord.

- 3] Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

[What has been the result of the absence of adequate focus on our heritage within our own families?]

- 4] That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.

"...locusts": The worst plague they'd experienced since the plague in Egypt (Ex 10:14). Locusts have been called the "incarnation of hunger."

Locusts are Orthopterans (along with cockroaches, mantises, grasshoppers, and crickets). There are 24,000 different species (282 in Arizona alone). Some can grow up to 10” in length! They multiply by parthenogenesis (if a male isn’t around the female can take care of it by herself).

Larvae go through 4-13 stages; sometimes taking 6-7 years to fully mature. Scientists have found a single hormone that, when activated, causes locusts to swarm. They become aggressive and gregarious; the hormone causes changes in coloration, physiology, metabolism and behavior.

When they swarm, they eat not only the plants but the roots below ground (you can actually hear their munching sounds at night). They travel in a compact, military-like march; they make a wind-like noise in flight—they can even darken the sun! They can fly 17 hours at a time; swarms have been spotted 1200 miles out at sea! (In 1889, a swarm in the Red Sea was spotted that covered 2,000 square miles.) Density in a swarm can be 120 million locusts/square mile!

Each female locust can lay 250-300 pods; with 70-80 eggs/pod. In Cyprus, 1881: 1300 tons of egg (Lev 1:22)?

- 1) *gazam*, Gnawing locust: *Emerges from egg (in spring); has no wings.*
- 2) *arbeh*, Swarming locust: *Most common winged locust.*
- 3) *chaciyil*, Licking locust: *“caterpillar.” Third phase; old skin; small wings.*
- 4) *yekeq*, Consuming locust: *“cankerworm”) 3” long; 1” antennae (Jer 51:27).*

Devastation to the community: not only the loss of subsistence, but the spread of disease and loss of trade followed, with the inevitable inflation, etc. could literally wipe it out. [McGee suggests a parallel to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse...]

Joel was not talking about four different kinds of locusts, he was speaking of four successive swarms of locusts eating what the previous swarm had left behind. Four is often used by the prophets to designate the totality of destruction (cf. Jer15:3; Ezek 14:21); four swarms of locusts, each swarm eating what the previous swarm had left behind.

## Ten Plagues of Egypt: A Review

Judgment was against the gods they worshipped (Num 33:4, Jude 10:14). It was a public display of power (Ex 9:16 ) and a warning to other nations: Rahab (Josh 2:8-9) and the Philistines (1 Sam 4:8; Gen 12:3).

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| • <b>Warning #1</b>                       | <b>Exodus</b> |
| 1) Waters turned to blood                 | 7:14-25       |
| • <b>Warning #2</b>                       |               |
| 2) Frogs on land, homes                   | 8:1-5         |
| • <b>(No warning)</b>                     |               |
| 3) Lice on persons                        | 8:10-19       |
| (this prevented worship by their priests) | 8:18          |

Magicians could not reproduce this one. Remember they *did* three other times:

- |                                   |      |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1) rods into serpents (2 Tim 3:8) | 7:12 |
| 2) water into blood; and          | 7:22 |
| 3) frogs                          | 8:12 |

Compare with miracles by enemies (Rev 16:14).

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| • <b>Warning #3</b>                     | <b>Exodus</b> |
| 4) Flies on homes (Beelzebub = Fly God) | 8:20-24       |
| • <b>Warning #4</b>                     |               |
| 5) Disease on Cattle                    | 9:1-7         |
| • <b>(No warning)</b>                   |               |
| 6) Boils, sores: man & beast            | 9:8-12        |
| • <b>Warning #5</b>                     |               |
| 7) Thunder, hail                        | 9:18-35       |
| • <b>Warning #6</b>                     |               |
| 8) Locusts; Pharaoh: “I have sinned.”   | 10:1-20       |
| • <b>(No warning)</b>                   |               |
| 9) Darkness (3 days)                    | 10:21-29      |
| • <b>Warning #7</b>                     |               |
| 10) Firstborn, Man and Beast            | 11, 12        |

Initially predicted (cf. Ex 4:22,23): Israel = “firstborn.”

- **Other Patterns:**

1, 2, 3	Rod of Aaron
4, 5, 6	(No rod?)
7, 8, 9	Rod of Moses
5, 6	Cattle involved

## Other Prophetic Patterns

- 1) Jacob's trouble; affliction: Isa 60:14; Jer 30:5-8
- 2) Cry to God; heard: Jer 31:18-20
- 3) God will command oppressors; let them go: Isa 43:6
- 4) Two witnesses, with miracles before enemies: Rev 11:3-6
- 5) Enemies will also perform: Rev 13:14,15
- 6) Sore judgments from God: Jer 25: 15, 6
- 7) God will protect His people: Rev 7:4; 12:6; 14-16
- 8) Water turned to blood: Rev 8:8; 11:6; 16:4, 5
- 9) Satanic frogs: Rev 16:13
- 10) Plague of locusts: Rev 9:2-11
- 11) Boils and blains: Rev 16:2
- 12) Hailstones from heaven: Rev 8:7
- 13) Darkness: Isa 60:2; Rev 16:10
- 14) Hearts hardened: Rev 9:20, 21
- 15) Death to multitudes: Rev 9:15
- 16) Israel to be delivered: Zech 14:3, 4; Rom 11:26
- 17) Judgment in "fours": Jer 15:3; Ezek 14:21

On the one hand, Joel's plague of locusts was clearly literal (Joel 1:3 ): Why ten? (cf. Ex 10:2-6; Deut 28:38-42). But there is also something else going on, something more sinister. See Prov 30:27; "locusts have no king." Compare with Rev 9:3-11; Amos 7:1

- 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.

The locusts have gotten to the grapes first. They have stripped all the vineyards, and there will be no more wine for the drunkards.

## "Drunkards"

Let's look at today's statistics:

- 20 million alcoholics
- 1 million traffic accidents:
- 28,000 deaths
- 500,000 injuries
- 55% highway deaths
- 31% homicides
- 36% suicides

- 31% non-auto accidents
- 75% all crimes
- 1974: 1 in 8 families affected... 1990: 1 in 4.

- 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.

"A nation"? I thought we were talking about locusts...

"...teeth" — like a lion, lioness (cf Rev 9:7-8). Both locusts and ants are often depicted as a military army (Prov 30:25-27).

- 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.

"...my vine"; "my fig tree" = God's own (House of Israel, Judah are represented by the vine and fig tree—usually mentioned together.) Fig to rule over others? Cf. Jotham's parable (Judg 9:10-11).

## The Parable of the Trees

- |              |   |                                |   |                    |
|--------------|---|--------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| • Olive Tree | — | Valuable oil                   | — | Genetic            |
| • Fig Tree   | — | Sweet Fruit                    | — | Political (cursed) |
| • Vine       | — | Wine                           | — | Spiritual          |
| • Bramble    | — | No fruit                       | — | Satan's Empire     |
|              | — | Too low for shade              |   |                    |
|              | — | Only good as fuel for the fire |   |                    |

- 8] Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

"...virgin": Young virgin: Betrothed; married (Deut 22:23 Mt 1:19). The term virgin here does not mean "virgin" as we think of it today, but a young widow who has lost her husband in the first year of marriage. The whole nation is to mourn as a bride who has lost her husband in the first year of marriage.

- 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 house of the Lord: One of the reasons we believe Joel was in Jerusalem. Why weeping? Offerings cut off; no remedy for sin. Where does Israel "offer" now? No altar today.

Joel again describes the totality of the devastation, resulting in a cessation of the joy of harvest in verses 10-12:



- 10] The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.

Joel has spoken to the drunkards, he has spoken to the priests, and now he will speak to the farmers:

- 11] Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.  
12] The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

“Apple”: *tappuwach*. The Hebrew is generic, including the orange, lemon, and pear tree.

- 13] Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God.

“...lie all night in sackcloth”: Ahab (1 Kgs 21:27).

- 14] Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD,

The previous spoke of the historic invasion of locusts. This will now give rise to a prophetic invasion: an invasion of demons. They are in desolation. Remember Nineveh. They were 40 days from “Ground Zero.” Jonah was reluctant, but finally relayed God’s message and repentance saved the land (Cf. 2 Chr 7:14).

- 15] Alas for the day! for the Day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

“...the Day of the Lord”: The Day of the Lord is at hand. During the Day of Jehovah, there will be an invasion that will prove to be even more unique than the locust invasion that had just occurred.

## “The Day of the Lord”

The Day of the Lord is one of the most misunderstood terms and yet one of the most important in Scripture. Joel was the first to use it, and he makes very clear what the Day of the Lord is.

After him, all the other prophets had to do was to speak of “that day,” and it was understood as to what they were referring.

How does the Great Tribulation Period open? It opens with the four horsemen of the Apocalypse: there is a false peace, then war breaks out, followed by a famine, and then finally the pale horse of death

A parallel between these four bands of locusts and the four horsemen of the Apocalypse: During the Great Tribulation Period it will not be literal locusts, but it will be something far worse that is going to ride, not just through that land, but through the entire world. The world will be totally devastated when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to the earth to set up His kingdom.

## Four “Days”?

- 1) Man’s Day (1 Cor 4:3). Dan 2: image of man; “judgment” = “day.” The Day of Man started in Daniel 2.
- 2) Day of Christ (1 Cor 1:7,8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16). The Day of Christ climaxes at the Rapture (Jn 14:1-3).
- 3) Day of YHWH; Day of the Lord (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). The Day of the Lord is also mentioned in the following books: Amos 5:18; Zeph 1:7, 14-2:2; Isa 2:1-21, and 13:9 (same?).
- 4) Day of God 2 Pet 3:12. The Day of God is the climax at the end of the Millennium.

“...destruction from the Almighty”: (wordplay: *Shod* = *destruction*; *Shaddai* = *Almighty*).

The Day of the Lord is mentioned 75 times in the Bible; 5 times in Joel...*Distinct from* “The Great Tribulation”?

Contrast with “Man’s Day”: The failure of humanism; the failure of “The Times of the Gentiles”: Climactic result: “The Great Tribulation.”

## “Day”: Hebrew *Yom*

• Day	2008
• Time	64
• Chronicles	37
• Daily	32
• Ever	17
• Year	14
• Continually	10



• When	10
• As	10
• While	8
• Full	8
• Always	4
• Whole	4
• Always	4
• (misc.)	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>2274</b>

## Ambiguities

KJV: purposefully inconsistent in rendering Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek phrases vs. purposeful repetition as significant stressing on behalf of original authors

- **“The Day of the Lord”**: 25 uses in the OT and NT (+ 26 synonyms); 196 total uses.
- **“Great Tribulation”**: 27 synonyms; *differentiated* from “Day of the Lord,” which begins when the Great Tribulation ends the “Day of Man.”

[Source: Thomas W. Adams, *The Day of the Lord*, PO Box 9481, Corpus Christi TX 78469, willie@cccorg.org.]

## Synonyms for Day of the Lord

- Day of Trouble
- Day of Vengeance
- Day of Wrath
- Day of Their Calamity
- Day of Christ
- Day of the Lord’s Anger
- His Day
- Day of Darkness
- Day of Clouds and Thick Darkness
- In the Wrath of the Lord of Hosts
- Day of His Fierce Anger
- Day of Distress
- Day of Indignation
- Day of Destruction
- Day of Battle and War
- Day of thy power
- Day of Grief and Desperate Sorrow

- Day of the Lord’s Sacrifice
- Day of Trouble and Distress
- Day of Trumpet and Alarm
- Day of Wasteness and Desolation
- Day of His Coming
- Day of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- Wrath of the Lamb
- Great Day of His Wrath

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer re: man’s day: “This theme, obscured at times by translators, is referred to but once in the New Testament, namely, 1 Corinthians 4:3, which reads: ‘But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.’ Now in this passage the phrase, ‘man’s judgment’ is really a reference to human opinion current in this age, which might properly and literally be translated, ‘man’s day.’” [Humanism]

- 16] Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God?
- 17] The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

This is a description of their predicament...*how about ours?*

- God is outlawed from our schools.
- Promiscuity and perversion the official policy of our nation’s administration.
- Teenage promiscuity promoted; tax-supported condoms.
- Murder of the unborn.
- 35,000 new VD cases each day.
- Sin-specific plagues: AIDS.
- We now live in a time where there is no longer a link between character and destiny.

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## Coming Up: Order of Events in Joel 2 & 3

2:1-10	Gentile Invasion; Armageddon
2:11	Destruction of the Invaders
2:12-17	Repentance of Judah
2:18-27	Response of YHWH
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## Joel Chapter 2

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

Joel 1:15

### Review: “Day of the Lord”

Joel introduces one of the most misunderstood terms and yet one of the most important in Scripture: “The Day of the Lord.” Joel was the first to use it, and he makes very clear what the Day of the Lord is. After him, all the other prophets had to do was to speak of “that day,” and it was understood as to what they were referring.

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• Always	4
• (misc.)	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>2274</b>

### Ambiguities

KJV: purposefully inconsistent in rendering Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek phrases vs. purposeful repetition as significant stressing on behalf of original authors

- **“The Day of the Lord”**: 25 uses in the OT and NT (+ 26 synonyms); 196 total uses.
- **“Great Tribulation”**: 27 synonyms; *differentiated* from “Day of the Lord,” which begins when the Great Tribulation ends the “Day of Man.”

[Source: Thomas W. Adams, *The Day of the Lord*, PO Box 9481, Corpus Christi TX 78469, willie@cccopus.org.]

## Synonyms for Day of the Lord

- Day of Trouble
- Day of Vengeance
- Day of Wrath
- Day of Their Calamity
- Day of Christ
- Day of the Lord’s Anger
- His Day
- Day of Darkness
- Day of Clouds and Thick Darkness
- In the Wrath of the Lord of Hosts
- Day of His Fierce Anger
- Day of Distress
- Day of Indignation
- Day of Destruction
- Day of Battle and War
- Day of thy power
- Day of Grief and Desperate Sorrow
- Day of the Lord’s Sacrifice
- Day of Trouble and Distress
- Day of Trumpet and Alarm
- Day of Wasteness and Desolation
- Day of His Coming
- Day of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- Wrath of the Lamb
- Great Day of His Wrath

All OT prophets connect the Day of the Lord with military action (Joel 3:9-12). Amos predicted that a foreign army would invade the country, etc. (Amos 6:14). Attacks are against Jerusalem (Dan 11:41; Zech 14:1-2, etc.).

In Joel, the Lord controls the locusts the same way He controls the armies... but he’s not limited to military incursions... [Similarities with Chapter 1, yet Joel 2:1-27 is future to Chapter 1, but anterior to 2:28-3:21.]

Chapter 2:1-11 is set apart from 1:15-20 as the prophet deepens the sense of gloom by moving away from the literal comparison between the disaster and the Day of Lord to a set of figures of speech in which the locusts *become the fearful army of Yahweh in the great day of His judgment*. Is there a way out? Verse 1:15 is near, but not yet present!

For the wicked:	Day of complete destruction.
For the Lord’s own:	Day of Deliverance!

## Joel 2:1-10 Gentile Invasion; Armageddon

- 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;

This is a call for action. Awake! Weep! Wail! Put on sackcloth! Fast! Proclaim a solemn assembly! Blow a trumpet!

Blowing of shofar, cry for alarm: judgment from the Lord (Jer 4:19; Hos 5:8; cf. Zeph 1:16). It was the duty of the priests to blow the trumpets (Num 10:1-9). Twice used; two trumpets of silver; to sound an alarm (1-14) and a call to assembly (15 to end). This was not a normal invasion: The Lord Himself is near, with the full fury of His judgment.

- 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”: An idiom that should be familiar to us—also found in Isa 5:30; 13:10; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph 1:15. In Obadiah the darkness is on all nations, esp. Edom (15). The Lord will judge sinners in an *unprecedented manner*.

Three terms: darkness, *hosek*; cloud, *anan*; thick darkness, *arapel*. These same terms describe His presence on Mt. Sinai (Deut 4:11).

“...morning = dawn”? Sense of suddenness; appearing quickly.

- 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.

A “scorched earth” policy? Fire: Ps 50:3; Zeph 1:18; Zech 11:1; 12:6; Mal 4:1; Joel 1:19. In front of the invasion it’s glorious; behind it, it’s desolate.

“as...Eden”: Joel’s “before/after” descriptive style.

- 4] The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

The head of locust is horse-like. Italian word for locust: *cavaletti*, *little horse*; *German*: *heupferde*, *hay horses*. [cf. locusts, Rev 9.] Here they’re also described as horse-like.

- 5] Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

Appearance → to motion → to sound. [A law of Mohammed: “Ye shall not kill the locusts, for they are the army of God Almighty.”]

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

Cf. Isa 13:8. God is saying here that from the lesser learn the greater and will be warned.

- 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: They shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks.

- 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.

- 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.

Like locusts...

- 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:

Upheavals in the sky are typical on the final Day of the Lord (Isa 13:10; Zeph 2:14-15; Rev 6).

## Joel 2:11 Destruction of the Invaders

- 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?

This is a personal appearance of the Lord. Later (Joel 3:16), He will roar like a lion from the midst of Jerusalem in wrath against those nations;

“His people” will find “refuge” in Him at that time. This is a period of unbearable stress cf Jer. 30:4-7; Zeph 1:14-18

*And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*

Revelation 14:20

Four feet deep. 1,600 furlongs = 180 miles (Megiddo to Bozrah, which is 20 mi SE of the Dead Sea).

*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.*

Isaiah 63:1-6

*And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.*

Revelation 19:14-19

*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my*

*king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

Psalm 2:1-12

## Joel 2:12-17 Repentance of Judah

- 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:

“...turn ye even to me with all your heart...”: A call for national repentance. Can the Lord’s purposes be altered? Even at this point, it is possible for the Lord to demonstrate His mercy (2 Chr 7:14!).

## What About Us?

Will God answer the repentant plea of a nation marked for judgment? The cynic says: “No!” The religionist says: “I hope so.” The believer, responding in faith: “God Will!”

- **Jeremiah to Judah:** “If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I (God) will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.” (Jer 18:8).
- **Amos to Israel:** “Seek ye me (God) and ye shall live.” (Amos 5:4).
- **Jonah to Nineveh:** “God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.” (Jonah 3:10).

## The Grand Exception

The Pagan Capital of the World 40 days from “ground zero!” Jonah was the reluctant prophet: “40 days and you get yours!” The Greatest Miracle in the OT! *A repentance on speculation!*

*If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves; and pray; and seek my face, and turn from their wicked way, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

2 Chronicles 7:14

- 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.

“...rend your heart, and not your garments”: God never commanded His people to rend their garments; but usually the action accompanied repentance (Gen 37:29,34; 1 Sam 4:12; 1 Kgs 21:27; 2 Kgs 22:11)—when Josiah heard the law (Ezra 9:3, 5; Isa 37:2; Jer 36:24).

“...for he is gracious nad merciful...”: Lovingkindness, *hesed*, demonstrating the Lord’s loyalty or faithfulness to His covenant with His people (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; Ps 86:15). He bound Himself with an oath to Abraham to bless the nation (Gen 22:16-17). His people forget the covenant; He doesn’t.

“...repenteth him of the evil”: “Evil” = calamity. The judgment that will come with the Day of the Lord can be turned back! God is not anxious to bring it; He would much prefer to bring a blessing.

Whole heart (Deut 6:5): The Great Commandment—if you really love the Lord, it will show in your conduct. Obey His Commandments (“not 10 suggestions”), Deut 11:13-15 (cf. Joel 2:18-27

The call to repentance bears within the seeds of hope (Joel 3:1-8, re: Deut 30:1). Our covenant-keeping God. Traditional language (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17).

Jonah’s perplexity upon Assyria’s (Nineveh was just the capital) repentance, 4:2. The greatest miracle in the OT was their repentance. (Jonah felt cheated.)

God is more ready to bless than to blast; to pardon than to punish; to win by love than to wound by lashing. This is the nature of God.

- 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?

“...behind Him” contrasts with “behind them” in verse 3.

- 15] Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly”: Joel is calling for national assembly; a national repentance.

- 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.



“...let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber...”: An extreme sense of urgency; every single person—also preempting normal priority commitments. Military duties normally exempt for a year after his wedding (Deut 24:5, etc.). [A call to actually leave their computer terminals, FAX machines and cellular telephones...]

- 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?

“...between the porch and the altar”: Priests to intercede...where?! Notice where they intercede: between the porch—point of choice—and the altar.

## Joel 2:18-27 Response of YHWH

- 18] Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

[vv.18, 19]: verbs change (*waw-consecutive* with the “imperfect”) to the forms normally used for narrating events that have *already taken place* in the past. Talking about the future with such certainty as to refer to them almost in the past tense.

The structure of the book of Joel is built on a comparison between what happened in the past and what will happen in the future. If the Lord had not responded, who would be present to hear Joel’s charge to teach these events to their children and grandchildren? (Joel 1:3).

The fact that God did respond to His people in their crisis becomes the pledge that in the future Day of the Lord all who call upon His name will be saved. The promise should be seen within the context of the covenant with Israel: to Abraham, then to David, now through Joel...a promise of an everlasting relationship.

- 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:

“...corn [grain], vine, tree”: Representative of the lost crops. Blessings from appeal found in vv. 24-27. The people contemporary with Joel must have responded, *but the invitation to call upon God and receive His grace remains open forever!*

- 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.

“...northern army”: A literal army? Foreign armies always invaded from the north, regardless of their origin. [cf Antonia Fortress, etc. The north is their **vulnerable side**.] Cf. Isa 14:31; Jer 1:14-15; 4:6; 6:1, 22; Ezek 38:6, 15; 39:2; Zeph 2:13. (Most locust plagues came from the south, from the desert.)

Military terms: *panayw*, its vanguard, its face; *sopo*, its rear guard, its end. This is not Ezekiel 38. What is in view here is Isa 10 and Dan 11. [vv.19, 21-27: contrasts Chapter 1...a foretaste of the Millennium Kingdom period.]

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

[Creation order: earth, beasts, man...]

- 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.

“...former rain moderately”: rain = *moreh*. (In isolation, it means “teacher.”) Bible scholars note that this is a strange, unexpected construction. Too many translations render the Hebrew word here *former rain in just measure* because that seems to make more sense in the text. *But this is not a valid translation because the Hebrew literally reads, “the teacher of righteousness.”* This Teacher of Righteousness is the Jewish Messiah Himself. So they are rejoicing because the Teacher of Righteousness, the Messiah, is in their midst. [Fruchtenbaum, A. G. (1983). Vol. 74: The Messianic Bible Study Collection (12). Tustin, Calif.: Ariel Ministries].

*Moreh* can mean “early rain.” *Gesem* is the more general word for rain. *Moreh* occurs in fall; *malqos*, “latter rain,” comes in the spring. [Remember the original Hebrew calendar!] These are all future blessings; they are in response to the appeals in vv. 18-19

Wordplay between teaching and rain: This wordplay can also be found in 1 Kgs 8:36; Isa 30:20-23; 45:8; Hos 6:3; 10:12.



- 24] And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.
- 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.

“...year(s)”...? Plural. When locusts strike, cities can be totally wiped out for years. [Reversed order from 1:4. Looking back? Compare the animals of Rev 13:2 with Daniel 7.]

“My great army”! Whose army? The Lord’s!

The renewal, restoration experience of those who repented: a reminder of God’s people: His possession...

- His protection v. 20
- His prosperity vv. 19, 23-24
- His presence... v. 27

How about *our restoration experience*?

- 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.

## Five Reasons for Thanksgiving

- 1) “The former rain in just measure”; “the Messiah is present” (v.23a).
  - 2) The rains will come in proper seasons (v.23b).
  - 3) Their crops will be plentiful (v.24).
  - 4) The locust’s damage restored (v.25).
  - 5) They’ll be satisfied and their reproach removed (v.26).
- 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.

This seems to vindicate Fruchtenbaum’s analysis. [Remember, these verses are future to Chapter 1; but anterior to 2:28-3:2]

## Joel 2:28,29 Effusion of the Spirit

[Hebrew Bible: Chapter 3:1-5]

Joel’s successful preaching in his own day foreshadowed a new era of fresh prophetic utterance. This section deals with the spiritual and physi-

cal phenomena that will accompany the end times—looking through the broad sweep of history to the day when the Lord Himself will establish His new kingdom for His people upon the earth.

- 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:

Peter’s citation, (Acts 2:17-21) in Greek, “and it shall be in the last days” [end times—we’ll cover this later.]

“I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh”: All Israelites? Num 18:15 (+ cattle); Jer 12:12; 45:5; Ezek 21:4,5; or all people on earth? Gen 6:12; Num 16:22; 27:16; Job 34:15; Ps 145:21; Zech 2:13.

Other OT verses, pouring out of the Spirit, esp. to Israel (Isa 32:15; 44:3-4; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Zech 12:10). One result: new prophetic revelation. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit results in:

- Justice, righteousness, and peace: Isa 32:15-16
- Obedience; new heart: Ezek 36:25-27
- Sorrow over previous rejection: Zech 12:10

[All three involve the regathering in His Land...]

- 29] And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

“...handmaids”: Menservants and maidservants would include Gentiles (Deut 20:10-14; Gen 30:3, 9; 1 Chr 2:34-35); women as well as men: Deborah (Judg 5); Miriam (Ex 15:20-21); Huldah to King Josiah (2 Kgs 22:11-20); NT (Lk 2:36).

Pouring out irrespective of: age (young and old); sex (sons and daughters); position (servants and handmaids)...no barriers nor hindrances to the gifts of the Spirit.

Three modes: dreams, visions, prophecy (Num 12:6). This is not the first mention of outpouring (cf. Isa 32:15; 44:3,4; Ezek 36:27, 28; 37:14; 39:29; Zech 12:10).

## Joel 2:30-32 Return & Establishing the Kingdom

- 30] And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

Has this happened yet? “Time of Jacob’s Trouble” (Jer 30:4-9; Zech 12:2-9; 14:1-2). Wonders, to inspire awe (Ex 4:21; 1 Kgs 13:3,5; 2 Chr 32:24; Zech 3:8; Rev 6:12-17).

- 31] The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Signs preceded the presence of the Lord Himself on the earth, and on the Day of Yahweh’s wrath proper (Cf. Isa 61:1,2).

- 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.

“...whosoever”: None need perish in the Day of the Lord! Those who escape: Petra (Isa 16:1-4; Rev 12:14-17; Obad 17; Isa 37:31-32).

*But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Acts 2:14-21

But notice that Peter does *not* say, “Joel’s prophecy is fulfilled.” Rather, he says, “This is that which was spoken.” In other words, “This is that same Holy Spirit that Joel spoke about.”

The full prophecy of Joel, with its dramatic signs in the heavens, will *not* be fulfilled *until* the last days. What happened at Pentecost was but the beginning of God’s blessing on Israel.

## Citation in Acts 2:17-21

Similarities: The Lord pours out the Holy Spirit on the community of regathered Israel. Dreams and visions; speak in tongues. Both to encourage the listener...Jews present from all over the Diaspora.

The NT came into existence through a new burst of revelation, unified around apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42).

## Similarities

- Prophetic sermons:
  - Peter Acts 3; 10:34-43
  - Stephen Acts 7
- Visions:
  - Risen Christ Acts 7:56; 9:3-7
  - Toward Cornelius Acts 10:9-20
  - Others in Acts: Acts 8:26-40; 12:7-10; 13:2, 9-11; 16:6-10; 21:11
- “Signs and wonders” (while different):
  - Peter stressed, Acts 2:22;
  - Astronomical Luke 23:44-45

## Differences

- The Sun did not darken; the moon did not turn to blood.
- The Lord didn’t appear with wrath against the nations.
- Peter knew well that the Day of the Lord had not come yet: He says so in 2 Peter 3:10.

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

2 Peter 3:10

Joel is telling us that during the last days of Israel’s history, during the Tribulation period, the Spirit of God will work in mighty power in the saving of both Jews and Gentiles, and there will be mighty wonders and signs in the heavens. These are recorded in the Book of Revelation.

## Role of the Gentiles?

It’s unlikely that Peter used the Joel passage in a Gentile context: Acts shows the early reluctance on this issue (for about 20 years!). Paul later explains the “grafting” of the wild branch into the cultivated olive tree (Rom 11:17).

God’s purposes for Israel will yet be accomplished. Meantime, Gentiles enjoy the unique blessings of the age of grace. “All families” (Gen 12:3).

## Summary

Pentecost was a fulfillment in miniature: Joel saw the end point of the whole process; Peter focused on the onset. This is a guarantee that He would complete the entirety; an inauguration; firstfruits.

## Doctrinal Note

There is no reason to restrict his statement about the gifts of the Spirit to one particular occasion. If the Spirit was given at Pentecost, and Joel described it to include the final Day of the Lord, *there is no basis to exclude the gifts today*—since we are certainly still between these two points of time!

## Order of Events

2:1-10	Gentile Invasion; Armageddon
2:11	Destruction of the Invaders
2:12-17	Repentance of Judah
2:18-27	Response of YHWH
2:28,29	Effusion of the Spirit
2:30-32	Return & Establishing the Kingdom

## Next Time

3:1-16	Judgment of the Nations
3:17-21	Full Kingdom Blessings

## Joel Chapter 3

## Order of Events

2:1-10	Gentile Invasion; Armageddon
2:11	Destruction of the Invaders
2:12-17	Repentance of Judah
2:18-27	Response of YHWH

2:28,29	Effusion of the Spirit
2:30-32	Return & Establishing the Kingdom
<b>3:1-16</b>	<b>Judgment of the Nations</b>
<b>3:17-21</b>	<b>Full Kingdom Blessing</b>

## [Hebrew Bible: 4:1-21]

No prophet of the Old Testament has a more important revelation of the end times than Joel in this third chapter. [Hebrew Bible: 4:1-21] The Day of the Lord is a period of time from the Tribulation to the passing away of the heavens and earth (2 Pet 3:10).

Key passages about the Day of the Lord: Ps 2; Zech 12, 14; Mt 25:31-46. Pre-millennial Judgment (Sheep & Goats) not to be confused with the Great White Throne Judgment of (Postmillennial) of Rev 20.

## Joel 3:1–17 The Judgment of the Gentiles

This subdivision deals with the judgment of the Gentiles following Israel’s national salvation:

vv. 1-8	Judgment of the Gentiles
vv. 9-13	Beginning and end of Armageddon

Joel will be dealing with a time where for Gentiles it’s a pouring out of His wrath; and for Israel it’s a restitution to glory and blessing.

Let’s look at Israel from Joel to today—**The Diaspora Jew:**

- The torture of the Spanish Inquisition;
- The stench of the European ghettos;
- The sword of the Russian pogroms;
- The heel of the Nazi annihilation...

Israel was warned of these if they were disobedient (Lev 26; Deut 4:25-31; 28:15-68; Jacob’s Trouble: Jer 30:7; Zech 14:2).

- 1] For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

“...in those days and in that time”: The regathering of Israel is a prerequisite of the end times (Jer 23:1-8; Ezek 37:15-22); 2/3 of population killed (Zech 13:8); 1/2 Jerusalem taken captive (Zech 14:2).

- 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.

“...Valley of Jehoshaphat”—untranslated word meaning “Yahweh judges”—only mention in Scripture (Targum: “plain of division”). This is idiomatic, not literal (Zech 12:1-3, 9; 14:2-4; Isa 29:1-8).

## “Valley of Jehoshaphat”?

**Beracah Valley?** W of Tekoa, E of the road to Hebron. Where God defeated the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Edomites on behalf of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah (2 Chr 20).

**Kidron Valley?** Tradition only from Eusebius’ time, 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. (Also, Fruchtenbaum.)

(Not necessarily near Jerusalem, despite Joel 3:16; cf Amos 1:2, roaring ref. Mt. Carmel.) Zechariah mentions opening a “very large valley” when the Lord’s feet touch the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4).

Nations are judged for the conduct during the Great Tribulation, et al. “My brethren” (cf. Mt 25:31-46; 24:29-31).

*Little do the nations realize how they incur the wrath of God when they lay violent hands upon His heritage and the plant of His choosing.*

Feinberg

Very personal relationship between The Lord and His (“my”) people: (3X); “*Ammi*” of Hos 2:23.

The Gentiles partition His Land? Cf. The Lord’s partitioning, and the institution of the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25). The Lord apportioned each tribe their *nahala*, or *portion*. The Gentiles’ heinous crime is their dividing it up for themselves.

- 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.

These were common atrocities in war (Obad 13-14; Zech 14:2). Romans chose “the tallest and most beautiful, and reserved them for the triumph; and as for the rest of the multitude that were above 17 years old, he put them into bonds; and sent them to the Egyptian mines . . . those that were under 17 years of age were sold for slaves.” [Josephus,

*Wars of the Jews*, VI. 9.2; *Antiquities*, XII, 7.3; also 1 Mac 3:41; 2 Mac 8:11, 25.]

- 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 recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head;

“...Tyre...Zidon...”: Lebanon today (controlled by the Hezbollah)

“...Palestine”: Philistia: Gaza Strip (controlled by the Hamas)

The lands of the Phoenicians and Philistines were given to Israel as an inheritance (Josh 13:1-7). They were instructed to drive these people from the land, but failed to do so (Judg 1:21-36). They’ve been a thorn in the side ever since (Judg 2:1-6).

Philistines warred against Israel from Samson’s day until the days of Joel. The last recorded invasion was against King Jehoram and his family; only Jehoahaz, the youngest son, survived (2 Chr 21:16-17).

God is saying, “What are ye to me?” (“What do we have in common?”) All the grievances committed upon God’s people He considers as done to Himself. Our God is Jewish. [How about you and me? What do we have in common with Him?!]

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

“...my” occurs three times (cf Hos 2:8; Hag 2:8). The treasures went to Babylon (2 Kgs 25:13-15). The Persians gave them back; they are presently in the Vatican.

- 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.

Ezekiel 27:13 highlights trade relations between Phoenicia and Greece (Javan), Meschech, and Tubal. Greece had acquired 1,330,000 slaves; it has been said that 10,000 slaves per day were sold at Delos. Prohibited by the “brotherly covenant” between Solomon and Tyre’s King Hiram (Amos 1:6, 9).

Tyre’s destruction (Ezek 26-28 ): It took Nebuchadnezzar 13 years (585-573) to besiege Tyre. He completely destroyed and enslaved this people (Ezek 26:7-14). A remnant of Tyre escaped to a small island offshore. For 240 years they survived, until Alexander the Great laid

siege for seven months and ultimately built his famous causeway to it from the mainland in 332 B.C.

Ezekiel's prophecy was fulfilled (Ezek 27:32). Rebuilt (Mt 15:21-28; Acts 21:3-6), it was ultimately destroyed by the Muslims in 1291. Sidon, the sister city (Ezek 28:21-28) and Philistine (Isa 14:28-31; Ezek 25:15-17) suffered the same fate as Tyre.

- 7] Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head:

Destroyed and sold into slavery by Alexander the Great (Greek).

- 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 reversal of the role of the Phoenicians and the Philistines (who sold Judah and Jerusalem to the Sabeans).

“Sabeans”: (Sheba) SW Arabia, near Yemen? Shem: Sheba, son Joktan; Sabeans? Abraham + Keturah: Bedouins? (Jer 6:20; Ezek 27:22; 38:13).

Do “Philistia and Phoenicia” prefigure Israel's enemies collectively? (As do Moab in Isa 25:10-12 and Edom in Obadiah).

At that time, God's people will gain ascendancy over their foes (cf. Isa 41:11-12; Amos 9:12; Obad 15-21; Micah 7:16-17; Zeph 2:6-7):

- Phoenicia = Lebanon (Syria)?
- Philistia = Palestine (PLO, UN, et al)?

Joel 3:4-8 is viewed by some as a “peak episode,” characterized by “rhetorical underlining,” “heightened vividness,” etc. It concentrates on the specific participants, in courtroom-like atmosphere, speaking *to* (rather than *about*) the nations, etc.

## Vengeance

Vengeance is a negative notion in Western thought, but a theme that runs throughout Scripture.

- OT: Ps 137:7-9; controlling idea in Obadiah and Nahum.
- NT: Rev 6:9-10.

The justice of God demands that the injustice of men and nations toward each other be redressed. However, vengeance belongs to God (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19; Gen 12:1-3). Cf. “Apple of His eye” (Zech 2:8).

- 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:

“Prepare war”: “Sanctify a war”: declare a holy war. A dare: a call to arms (cf. Obad 1; Hag 2:21). Same proclamation in Rev 16:12-16; Antichrist will be responsible for gathering these armies together in the Valley of Jezreel and calling for war against the Jews.

This parallels the summoning of the people of Judah to the Temple (Joel 1:13-14; 2:15-16). The destruction of the locusts led to a general call to come for fasting and prayer. When heeded, the Lord relented and healed the land. The Judeans came together for repentance and are delivered. The nations come together for war (with God) and are destroyed. A war to the finish.

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

“...let the weak say, I am strong”: Contrast with Isa 2:4 and Mic 4:3: “Swords into plowshares...” Hos 2:18. Hosea is *after* God's Kingdom is set up; Joel, before. Enthusiasm, not just necessity;

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

“...thy mighty ones”: *Gibborim*, “warriors” must refer to the angelic hosts who will assist God in the judgment (cf. Ps 103:20; Zech 14:5). Same “warriors” as in verse 9 (Ps 2:1-3). My bet is on His. Where is yours?

- 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.

“...Valley of Jehoshaphat”: Megiddo? Rev 16:16. *Megiddo—crush, kill, strike, massacre.*

[*Megiddo* is a real place. It sits on a tel (hill); 70 ft. high now as a result of being the site of 20 different cities over a 3000-year period. Megiddo sits at the SW end of the Carmel mountain range, bordering the Jezreel Valley, stretching 22 miles long, 16 miles wide.]



## Megiddo

It's at the crossroads of the Middle East, N & S: The two trade routes meet there—at the King's Highway and Via Maris. Egyptians, Persians, Crusaders, Druses, Turks, and Arabs have fought there.

- Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites (Judg 4, 5);
- Gideon defeated the Midianites (Judg 7);
- Ahaziah slew Jehu (2 Kgs 9:27);
- Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt (2 Kgs 23:29-30).

Also, Edom: Isa 34:6; 63:1-6; and Judah: Zech 12:2-11; 14:2. Holding court; cf. Dan 7:9-14; Mt 25:31-46; 24:29-31 "Harvest" of Rev 14:14-20.

- 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.

Idioms change from war to harvest (cf. Jer 51:33; Hos 6:11; Amos 8:1; Isa 63:1; Rev 14:14-20). The commands are in the plural, given to the "warriors" in v.11.

Agricultural imagery is unmistakable: locusts and drought prevented any harvesting; renewed harvest of plenty after repentance. For the nations, harvest time means that they are ripe for judgment...wickedness is great (cf. Gen 15:16), Amorites "full."

"Sickle": cf. Rev 14:14-16, 19, 20. Ripe...Blood will splash to the horses' bridles (five feet high?) for over 200 miles. (Megiddo to Bozrah!) [Zech 14:12 = neutron bomb?]

## "Reaping" vs "Treading"

Throughout the Scriptures, reaping is a symbol for salvation. Thus the reaping results in salvation the "sheep" Gentiles. This is also found in Rev 14:14-16.

The treading results in the destruction of the anti-Semites. This treading, taking place just outside the walls of Jerusalem, is described in Rev 14:17-20

This judgment of the Gentiles described by Joel 3:1-17 is the very same judgment as that described in Matt 25:31-46, the judgment of the Sheep and the Goats.

- 14] Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the Day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

"Multitudes": *hama*, to make a loud noise, tumult. "Crowds on crowds"... Is this a scenario of Dan 11? Drawn by demonic spirits; Rev 16:13-14? Satan's final shot. Rev 12...

"...valley of decision": Widely misunderstood and misused allusion: "The Valley of Decision." It is the Lord's time to "decide" not theirs!

*Harus*, "decision"; "sharpen or cut," "render a judgment" (1 Kgs 20:40). Also, "threshing," "winnowing," "separation." Isa 41:15 (cf Ruth 3!). Wordplay: Noun can also mean that which is dug out or excavated ("moat" in Dan 9:25); thus, "a deep valley." A fulfillment of Gen 12:1-3.

- 15] The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

"...sun and the moon": The same cosmic signs that accompanied the locusts (now on a more universal scale); Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24-25; Rev 6:12-13. This judgment to be distinguished from that held before "the great white throne," which will take place *after the Millennium* (Rev 20:4-15).

- 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.

Cf. Amos 1:2. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5). An earthquake follows, shakes the whole earth to its foundations and even sets the heavens tottering (Zech 14:4-5).

- 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.

Cf. Zech 12:10. For thousands of years the Jews have heard the tramping of foreign boots through their holy city. Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders... the UN, et al. What a welcome sound: no more foreigners!

## Foreigners vs. Strangers

*Zar* has a stronger meaning than "stranger"; for *ger* are always welcome because Israelites were strangers in Egypt (Lev 19:34). A stranger could



participate in the blessings of the Sabbath, etc. vs. “foreigners,” who sought to wrest the land from God’s people and enjoy its benefits for themselves (Isa 1:7; Ezek 7:21; Hos 7:9; Amos 5:11).

It was even possible for the Israelites themselves to become “aliens” (*zarim*) within their own nation by following after pagan cults (Hos 5:7). God hates wickedness.

“Holy City”: not until God dwells in her midst (Zech 14:20-21). The “Canaanite/merchant” will be excluded...as in the Temple precincts. [Cf. “Foreigners” in public office...?]

### Joel 3:18–21 The Messianic Kingdom

- 1) The Land will be well watered (v.18a).
  - 2) There will be a special Millennial River (v.18b; Cf. Zech 14:8; Ezek 47:1-12).
  - 3) There will be a desolation of Egypt and Edom, which is southern Jordan (v.19). The desolation of Egypt is limited to only 40 years, the first 40 years of the Messianic Kingdom, but Edom will be desolate throughout the 1,000 years of the Millennial Kingdom (Ezek 29:8-14).
  - 4) Israel will live in security (v.20).
  - 5) Israel will experience a national salvation (v.21).
- 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 of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

The Valley of Shittim is on the east side of the Jordan River (Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8).

### Millennial Blessings

...exceeding the splendor of David and Solomon...

Borders: Read Gen 15:18; West Bank *of which river?* Land redivided (Ezek 48:1-7; 23-27); 34 sq. mile middle section set aside for the priests, Levites, Temple, etc. (Ezek 48:8-22).

Mt. Olives split (Zech 14:4-5); like the “Arabah” (14:10); the rift from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. Site of the fourth (Millennial) Temple (Ezek 40-43) and His Throne (Jer 3:17; Ezek 43:7).

The Shekinah departed (Ezek 10:3-5, 18-19; 11:23) and will now descend through the East Gate (Ezek 43:1-5).

Why sacrifices? (Heb 9:12). None were directly efficacious (Heb 10:4) but representative, prophetic. These are assumed to be memorial, instructive.

The covenant with Israel includes the promises regarding the land; re: Jacob’s blessing for Judah (Gen 49:11-12).

Water from the house of God in Jerusalem (Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8).

Feast of Tabernacles worshipped globally (Zech 14:16-18).

Church leadership over Gentile cities? (Lk 19:17-19); Apostles over 12 tribes (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:28-30).

*Shittim, Hebrew term for acacia trees; re: the burning bush; tabernacle, etc. (Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8; Ps 46:4).*

The Valley of Shittim is on the border between Moab and Israel beyond the Jordan; last place Israel camped east of Jordan, before entering the land of Canaan (Num 25:1; Josh 3:1). Known for its dryness, it will be well watered (Isa 30:23; Ezek 34:26; Isa 35:1).

The curse is lifted for every creature except the serpent (Isa 11:6-9; 65:25; Gen 3:14).

- 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.

By way of contrast to v.18.

### Egypt

From Jacob’s descent into Goshen until today, Egypt has cast a long shadow over Israel’s history.

Egypt: Pharaoh Necho killed King Josiah at Megiddo (2 Kgs 23:29); invaded Judah (1 Kgs 14:25-26) or proved a false ally (Isa 36:6; Jer 2:36; Ezek 29:6-7). Egypt will be downtrodden and subdued by the Antichrist: Dan 11:43.

Yet she will experience restoration: Five major cities will speak the language of Canaan and be committed to the Lord of Hosts (Isa 19:18). Egypt will be called “my people”; Assyria, “the work of my hands”; while Israel is declared the “inheritance” of the Lord (Isa 19:23-25).

Egypt will suffer drought if they refuse to go to Jerusalem in celebration. Egypt will be called “my people”; Assyria, “the work of my hands”; while Israel is declared the “inheritance” of the Lord (Isa 19:23-25).

## The Everlasting Hatred: The Continuing Enigma

The “Everlasting Hatred” started in the womb, and now continues to drive events throughout our entire world today. *The Judgment against this protagonist is mentioned in more Old Testament books than it is against any other foreign nation.* And yet, few observers can identify its proponents in their contemporary forms.

*And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.*

Genesis 25:19-24

*And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them. And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.*

Genesis 25:25-28

*(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

Romans 9:11-13

*And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pot-*

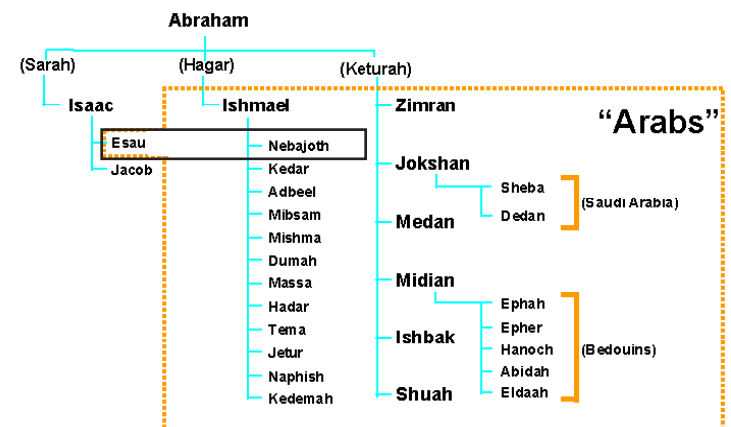
*tage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.*

Genesis 25:29-34

## The Coveted Covenant

- Sarah vs. Hagar Gen 16:4-6; 21:8-14;
- Isaac vs. Ishmael Gen 16:10-12; 21:17-18;
- Jacob vs. Esau Gen 25:29-34; 27:41.

## The Descendants of Abraham



Esau took wives including Nebajoth's sister; his descendants, Ishmael's, and Keturah's, all intermarried... no tribal distinctions were maintained...

## Edom

The name “Edom” derives from Esau, “red” (Gen 25:30; 36:1). It is the name of the land occupied by Esau's descendants; formerly the land of Seir. It stretched from the Wadi Zered to the Gulf of Aqabah, extending to both sides of the Arabah, the great depression connecting the Dead Sea to the Red Sea.

Esau had already occupied Edom when Jacob returned from Haran (Gen 32:3; 36:6-8; Deut 2:4, 5; Josh 24:4).

## Israel Denied Passage

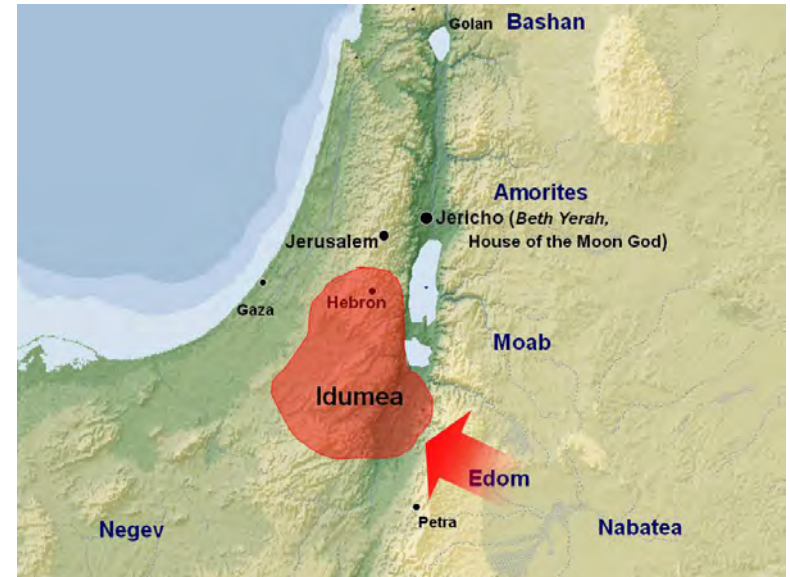
Edom refused Israel passage by the King's Highway (Num 20:14-21; 21:4; Judg 11:17-18). When the King of Edom refused to allow the children of Israel to pass through his land on their way to Canaan, they detoured around the country because of his show of force and because God ordered them to do so rather than wage war.

## Summary of OT History

- Israel was forbidden to abhor his Edomite brother (Deut 23:7-8).
- Balaam predicted the conquest of Edom (Num 24:18).
- Joshua was allotted the territory of Judah up to the borders of Edom, but did not encroach on their lands (Josh 15:1, 21).
- Two centuries later King Saul was fighting the Edomites (1 Sam 14:47).
- David conquered Edom and put garrisons throughout the land (2 Sam 8:13-14).
- Solomon built the port of Ezion-Geber.
- In Jehoshaphat's time, Edomites joined Ammonites and Moabites in a raid on Judah, but the allies fell to fighting one another (2 Chr 20:1).
- Under Jehoram, Edom rebelled, but he could not reduce them to subjection (2 Kgs 8:20-22; 2 Chr 21:8-10).
- Edom had a respite of some 40 years.
- Amaziah later invaded Edom, slew 10,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt, captured Sela their capital and sent 10,000 more to their deaths by casting them from the top of Sela (2 Kgs 14:7; 2 Chr 25:11-12).
- Uzziah, Amaziah's successor, restored the port at Elath (2 Kgs 14:22).
- But under Ahaz, when Judah was being attacked by Pekah and Rezin, the Edomites invaded Judah and carried off captives (2 Chr 28:17).
- Judah never again recovered Edom.

## The Destruction of Jerusalem

The time: 586 B.C. The place: Jerusalem. The event: the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies. We see the angry soldiers as they wreck the walls, slay the people, and burn the city. But we see something else: we see a group of neighboring citizens as they stand on the other side and encourage the Babylonians to ruin the city. "Raze it!



Raze it!" they are calling. "Dash their little children against the stones and wipe out the Jews!"

*Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.*

Psalm 137:7-9

"...Raze it": עָרָה 'arah. Heb. Make bare.

## Emergence of "Idumea"

The nomadic Nabateans migrated out of Arabia into Edom and drove the Edomites westward. Directly west of Edom were established routes of passage. Land was historically more prosperous and resourceful than the land of Edom, which was made up of unfertile deserts and jagged mountains. The land bore a family association: Esau with Jacob.

The land was being vacated due to the Jews being exported into captivity. At the Babylonian captivity Edomites seized on the Amalekite territory, so that Idumea came to mean the region between the Arabah and the Mediterranean (see graphic on next page). Hebron, 19 mi S of Jerusalem, began their new frontier. At 3400 ft. above sea level, unlike Jerusalem, Hebron was left intact as prime real estate.

## Forced Conversions to Judaism

Hebron remained under Edomite control until Judas Maccabeus retook the city under Jewish control in 164 B.C. Thirty-eight years later, 126 B.C., they had to be reconquered by the Jewish Army under prince and high priest John Hyrcanus. Idumeans were forced to die, flee or be *proselytized into Judaism*. [1 Macc. 10:84–89; 11:60–62; Josephus *Antiquities*, 13.17; 12.11.]

## Rise of Idumeans

In 47 B.C. Julius Caesar promoted Idumean Antipater as procurator over Judea, Samaria and Galilee. In 37 B.C., the Romans named Herod, son of Antipater, as King over Israel. His mother was Nabatean. The Idumeans had 5 centuries of prior history in Israel by the time of arrival of the Messiah Jesus (Mk 3:8).

## The Everlasting Hatred: עולם איבה *olam eybah*

The struggle between Esau and Jacob runs all through the Bible. The Herods of the NT were Edomites. One of them killed the Jewish babies in his attempt to destroy Christ (Mt 2:16-18); another Herod murdered John the Baptist; another one killed James the brother of John (Acts 12). The struggle between the Israelis and the Arabs today is but a continuation of this same battle that started in Gen 25:21-26.

## Fall of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.

At the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., there was civil turmoil among the Zealots, the Idumeans, and the Orthodox Jews—20,000 Idumean infantry slaughtered many of the Orthodox Jews. Many fought with the Jews against the Romans, and many were killed, sold into slavery, or enjoined among the 40,000 set free by Caesar.

## The Renaming of the Land

Bar Kokhba had about 200,000 men at his command, and had recaptured Jerusalem and many strongholds throughout the country. Emperor Hadrian called legion upon legion to crush the Jewish insurgents. Over 580,000 lost their lives.

Hadrian purposed to stamp out Jewish nationalism entirely. Traditions such as circumcision, the Sabbath, and reading the Torah was forbidden under penalty of death. In their choice of the Jews' worst enemy,

the Romans had two choices: Idumea and Philistia. Idumeans were viewed as practitioners of Judaism, and not as great an enemy as were the Philistines. (There are many who still appear today as “Jews” but are really not...Rev 2:9; 3:9).

Maps until 135 A.D., after the Bar Kokhba revolt, still displayed Idumea. After the Romans chose to name the Land “Palestina,” Idumea disappeared from future maps and history. The Edomites, later known as Idumeans, became assimilated into the “Palestinians” of today.

## Judgment Upon the Nations

Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon and Egypt—all are Muslim. (Why seven? Completeness?)

## The Judgment against Edom

The Judgment against Edom is mentioned in more Old Testament books than it is against any other foreign nation (Isa 11:14; 34:5-17; 63:1-6; Jer 9:25-26; 25:17-26; 49:7-22; Lam 4:21-22; Ezek 25:12-14; 35:15; Amos 1:11-12; 9:11-12; Obad 1:1-21; Mal 1:4; Joel 3:19).

- 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.  
20] But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

Cf. Zech 12:10; Rom 11:26 (after 25). **When God establishes His kingdom**, none will ever destroy it (Dan 7:27). At that time the Lord Jesus Christ will sit on His throne to fulfill the promise to David of an everlasting dynasty (Ps 2:6; 2 Sam 7:13,16; Isa 9:7; Rev 20:4; Lk 1:32-33).

His rule will be:

- Global;
- Absolute (“rod of iron”), Ps 2:8, Rev 12:5, 19:15;
- Righteous & Just, Isa 11:3-4 and Truth, Isa 25:2;
- With Holiness, Ezek 36:20-23;
- and Universal Peace, Isa 2:3-4, 65:18-19.

- 21] For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.



The Lord will wipe away the blood-guilt of the nations in their persecution of God's people.

[Niphal, or passive pattern? To be free from an oath or obligation (Gen 24:8, 41): "And after I have judged the nations I will be free from my obligation concerning the blood of Judah," Ps 132:13-14; Zech 8:20-23.]

Yahweh dwells in Zion; the eternal covenant between Israel and the Lord (Rev 21).

## So What Do We Do?

Watch and wait; be spiritually ready. "Occupy" (Lk 19:11-27). He will call His servants to give an account. Exploit every spiritual opportunity (1 Cor 4:2).

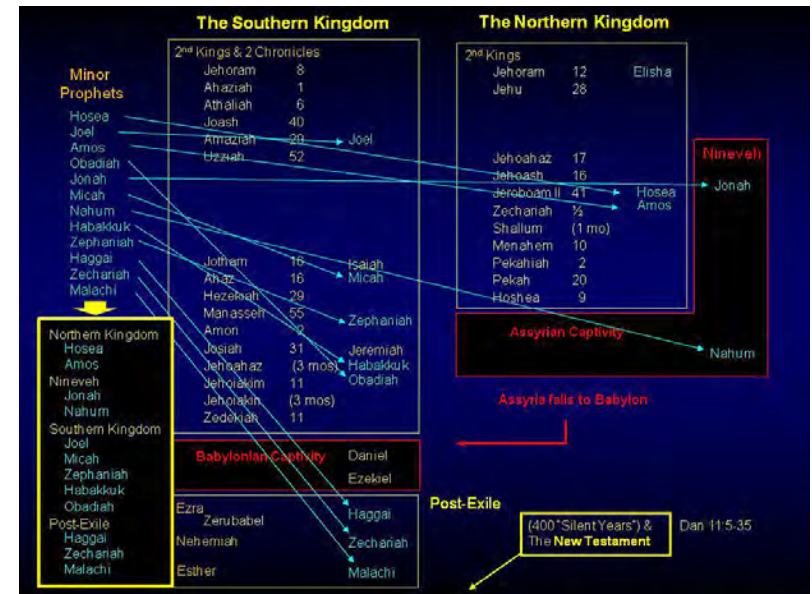
## Next Session

Study Micah Chapter 1.

\* \* \*

<b>Northern Kingdom</b>
Hosea
Amos
<b>Nineveh</b>
Jonah
Nahum
<b>Southern Kingdom</b>
<del>Joel</del>
Micah
Zephaniah
Habakkuk
Obadiah
<b>Post-Exile</b>
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

## Micah Introduction and Chapter 1



## Introduction

There are many Micahs in the Bible:

- 1) A man of Mount Ephraim, whose history is introduced in Judg 17:1, apparently for the purpose of leading to an account of the settlement of the tribe of Dan in Northern Palestine, and to illustrate the lawlessness of the times in which he lived (Judg 18:1; 19:1-29; 21:25);
- 2) The son of *Merib-baal* (Mephibosheth), cf. 1Chr 8:34, 35;
- 3) The first in rank of the priests of the family of Kohathites (1Chr 23:20);
- 4) A descendant of Joel the Reubenite (1Chr 5:5);
- 5) "The Morasthite," so-called to distinguish him from Micaiah, the son of Imlah, in the reign of Ahab (1Kgs 22:8).

Micah was a prophet of Judah, a younger contemporary of Isaiah (Micah 1:1) and a native of Moresheth of Gath (Micah 1:14, 15), a place about 20 mi. SW of Jerusalem, near Lachish. He prophesied in the latter half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

This was no accidental name: Micah = (as shortened form of Micaiah, of Micaiahu): “Who is like *YHWH* (*Yah*)?” Cf. Michael = “Who is like God (*El*)?”

## Tenure

Micah prophesied during the reigns of: Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah over the Southern Kingdom (“Judah”) and Pekahiah, Pekah and Hoshea over the Northern Kingdom (“Israel”). This covers a period of 40 years.

Micah is concerned over the failure(s) of the Northern Kingdom, especially for their implications for the plight of the Southern Kingdom.

## What Makes Micah Different

If you study Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, you discover that their messages went *unheeded*. *Their warnings were rejected; judgment* came. It is interesting that the nearer God’s judgments were at hand, the more obstinately the false prophets denied that they would come. False prophecy was a gainful occupation, and they had a marketing advantage: the false prophets had man’s wishes on their side.

Hosea and Amos were ignored. Jeremiah was imprisoned. In Micah’s case, the message was heeded, repentance followed, and disaster was postponed for a century. Here was a prophet (like Jonah) that changed history! One man *can* make a difference. [*You might be just such a person!*]

## Historical Setting

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, Hosea and Amos. He probably was a friend of Isaiah, and his book has been called a miniature Book of Isaiah: There are many striking similarities between the two. In fact, Isaiah prefixes his second chapter with three verses from Micah’s prophecy.

[Source: E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI, 1950, p. 7.]

Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah; it bore fruit during the reign of Hezekiah (cf. 2 Kgs 18 - 20). [No kings of the Northern Kingdom are mentioned by the prophet; *only prophets of Israel make mention of the kings of Israel.*]

The capital of the Northern Kingdom was Samaria. The city was built originally by Omri, King of Israel, and was the seat of idolatry. It was

made infamous by Ahab and Jezebel, who built a temple to Baal. God sent Elijah, Elisha, and Amos to turn them from their practices.

Hosea, Micah’s contemporary, also prophesied against the Northern Kingdom. His warnings went unheeded. God used their enemies as His instrument of judgment. (See *Hosea, Can You See?, our* briefing package on the parallels with America.)

In 734 B.C., the Assyrians carried away all of north Israel; in 721 B.C., Shalmanezar of Assyria attacked the northern capital of Samaria and overthrew it, and deported the remaining people of the Northern Kingdom (“House of Israel”). Eight years later, Sennacherib, Shalmanezar’s successor, attacked the Southern Kingdom (“Judah”).

(“Sin-ecerib” = “sin multiplies his brothers”; they worshiped the moon god, “Sin.”)

At one point, the field commander appeared before the walls and challenged them for surrender; Sennacherib sent a letter to the same effect (2 Kgs 19:10-12). Hezekiah spread this letter before the Lord and received confirmation through Isaiah that the city would be spared; Sennacherib would fail. Hezekiah organized a revival, and smashed the idols of his predecessors; even the original brazen serpent (Num 21:8,9), which, after almost 1,000 years, had become a fetish to which they were burning incenses (2 Kgs 18:3, 4).

## The Hidden Hero?

However, Micah isn’t mentioned. Isaiah is the well-known prophet of that period, with direct access to the king. But we know from an incident a century later that it was actually because of Micah’s preaching that the people repented and Jerusalem was spared.

Jeremiah, 120 years later, was prophesying over the impending destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 26:4-6). His message offended the priests and the false prophets, so they seized him and brought him before the officials, demanding his death. Jeremiah gave his defense, citing the previous experience of Micah:

*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. 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.*

Jeremiah 26:19

As a result, Jeremiah was spared: 120 years later, Micah's words were remembered and used by God to spare Jeremiah. In fact, it appears Micah lived to see the beginning of Hezekiah's revival...

## Who Was He?

Comparatively little is known of Micah's life. He was a rural prophet like Amos, not of the city or the palace like his contemporary, Isaiah. His writing is pungent and personal; he is touching and tender. Many of the passages will prove familiar to most Christians. Micah was the authority referred to by Herod's advisors during the visit of the Magi (Mt 2:1-6). Jesus quotes Micah 7:6 in Matthew 10:35,36.

## Urban Focus

Micah pronounced judgment on the cities of Israel and on Jerusalem: the urban centers of the nation; he can be labeled "the prophet of the city": condemning its violence, corruption, robbery, covetousness, gross materialism, spiritual bankruptcy, and illicit sex. Yet, through the gloom of impending judgment, Micah clearly saw the coming glory of the redemption of Israel, which makes this book especially relevant to our time! His grand question is, "Who is like unto Thee?"

*Perhaps the Deity can forgive sins, but I don't see how.*

—Socrates, to Plato 360 B.C.

## Key Verses

*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?*

Micah 6:8

*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.*

Micah 7:18

God hates sin, but loves the sinners and wants to save them (us). But His holiness requires Him to deal with any rebellion. He wants to save sinners, and He will save them if they come to Him in faith.

## Introduction

- Chapter 1: Sins against God.
- Chapter 2: Sins against each other.
- Chapter 3: Sins by their leaders.

## Micah 1 - Sins Against God

- 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.

Moresheth was a small country village about 20 miles SW of Jerusalem. Archaeologists have identified it with the ruins of Tell-el-judeideh, near Gath, which was on the Philistine border.

"...Samaria and Jerusalem": Although Micah prophesied from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, his prophecy also concerns the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the time that it was under attack by Assyria. It would ultimately be carried away by the Assyrians.

- 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.

"Hear": These focus on three prophetic strains (Micah 1:2; 3:1-5; 6:1-7:20).

"...O earth, and all that therein is": Us, too. We had better pay close attention!

- 3] For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

"...high places": Locations of idol worship (Cf. 2 Kgs 12:3; 14:4; Ezek 6:6).

- 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.

Similar language is found in the Scriptures from Judges to Habakkuk (cf. Psalm 18:7-10). It is sobering to reflect on the fall of great cities of the past that were once the lifeblood of ancient empires are now lying in ruins...Ephesus, Pergamos, Rome... et al. Washington DC?

- 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?

Both Northern and Southern Kingdoms are in view here. (Samaria and Jerusalem were the capitals of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.) Both had become corrupt. They both had abandoned their heritage after 200 years... [Are there *today* similar capitals that have become corrupt? ...that have abandoned their heritage after two centuries? ...!]

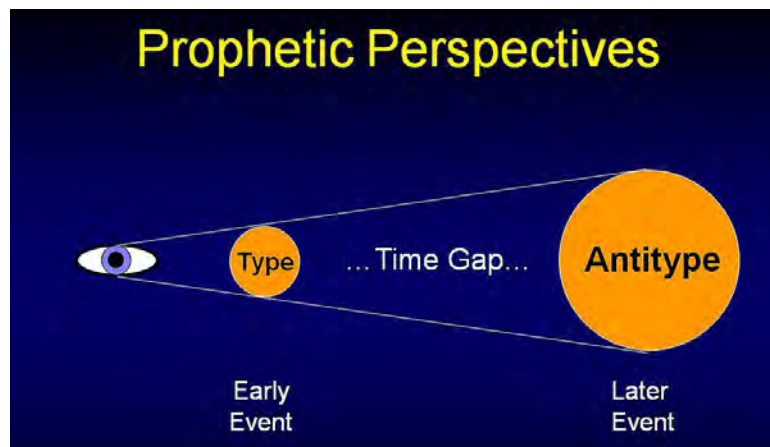
“...high places”: Mountains and hills where pagan altars were erected (2 Kgs 12:3; 14:4; Ezek 6:6). (The reformation of the godly king Hezekiah in the fifth year of his reign had not taken place yet.)

- 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.

Micah focuses on the Assyrian invasion (2 Kgs 17:1-18). Although Micah’s primary target will be his own Southern Kingdom, he first highlights the plight of the Northern Kingdom (vv.4-9).

This was the same approach that Amos used: his opening chapters pronounced judgments on a number of nations: Syria (NE), Philistia (SW), Tyre (NW), Edom (SE), Ammon (E), Moab (E), *and then* Judah (S) and, finally, Israel. (The fall of the capital of the Northern Kingdom actually occurred in the memory of Micah’s listeners.)

This local disturbance (vv.6-16; cf. 2 Kgs 17:1-18) gives rise to the prophecy of the greater invasion in the last days (Micah 4:9-13), and of the Lord’s deliverance at Armageddon (Rev 16:14; 19:17).



“...vineyard”: It probably *was* a vineyard originally (1 Kgs 16:24). Today it lies in ruins as Micah so aptly describes. What the Assyrians began was fulfilled by John Hyrcanus (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xii.28.1).

- 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.

Amos, too, had denounced the Northern Kingdom for their sexual immorality, cultic prostitution, etc. (Amos 2:7, 8. Cf. Deut 23:18; Hos 9:1; Isa 23:17; et al.).

Our “new morality” is little more than a return to these pagan practices of antiquity. For another example of what “religion” has done, examine India—impoverished and bound by the fetters of religion. Christianity is not a religion: it is a *person* (John 8:36). *Thus: A Call for Repentance...*

- 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.

Micah is not asking them to do anything he isn’t doing himself.

“...stripped and naked”: (barefoot?) a sign of mourning (2 Sam 15:30).

“...wailing like the dragons”: Wailing like jackals and ostriches (cf. Job 30:29).

- 9] For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.

“...incurable”: אִנָּשׁ *‘anash* (cf. Jer 17:9).

## Early Origin

Important note: Enosh, Seth’s son, was the first to indulge in idolatry: Gen 4:26 is often mistranslated:

- *Targum of Onkelos*: “...desisted from praying in the name”;
- *Targum of Jonathan*: “surnamed their idols in the name...”;

Kimchi, Rashi, and other ancient Jewish commentators agree. Jerome indicated that this was the opinion of many Jews of his day. [Maimonides,

*Commentary on the Mishna* (a constituent part of the Talmud), A.D. 1168, ascribes the origin of idolatry to the days of Enosh.]

The evils of the north have infected the South. (The South had a entire century to learn from the judgment that fell on the North: 722 B.C. - 606 B.C.; cf. Isa 10 & 36). The rest of the book will now focus on Judah and Jerusalem. (We, too, need to realize that the Bible is not always talking about “other people.” The most important target is always *ourselves*. *We, too, should* regard the judgments of the past...)

One of the reasons that Micah’s ministry reaped results was his *specificity*: he applies six (of the 16) verses of this chapter to list the very cities that will participate in the coming disaster (including his own home town; v.14).

The cities listed in vv.10-15 were in west Judah, Micah’s home territory, and were devastated by the Assyrians, along with the overthrow of the Northern Kingdom. Micah’s flow was from Samaria to Jerusalem. [Ezekiel 38 & 39 will have this role for the current nation of Israel. We, too, need to keep an eye on Isaiah 17:1! Cf. Ps 83.]

- 10] Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.

“...Gath”: Wine press; “weep-town.” Weep not at weep-town... Micah sets the tone for this section by an introductory quotation from David’s elegy over Saul and Jonathan after the Israelite defeat on Mount Gilboa:

*The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*

2 Samuel 1:19,20

“...house of Aphrah”: בֵּית לְאַפְרָח *Beth le-`Aphrah* “house belonging to Aphrah” or “house to (i.e. of) dust.” *The citizens will cover themselves with dust* as a traditional rite of mourning.

*Names are treated as omens which, once observed, haunt the localities until they are fulfilled. They are revealed as clues to the curse that is to come upon the country.*

—Leslie C. Allen

[Source: Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids MI, 1976, p.278.]

Micah’s intense dismay, and the sinister destinies of these cities, is reflected in their names: these puns were viewed as omens. [Puns are homonyms—deliberate connotative transfers—which can be used to imply an editorial comment. See *Cosmic Codes, Appendix A, for examples of over 200 rhetorical devices used in Scripture*.]

- 11] Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Bethzezel; he shall receive of you his standing.

**Saphir**: Sounds like the word for “beautiful,” yet not for long: Their citizens will be marched away naked and in shame...

**Zaanan**: Sounds like the Hebrew word for “exit,” “march,” or “go out.” Again, in contrast, they will be shut up inside their city like animals until it falls.

**Beth Ezel**: Means “*the nearby city*.” But it will not be near in that day: it will be taken up with its own mourning that it will be of no help to the others..

- 12] For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.

**Maroth** (“*bitterness*”) will writhe in bitterness.

- 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 a well-known military city about 30 miles SW of Jerusalem, famous for chariot horses. They are being harnessed up to flee, not to fight. This town first introduced idolatry in Judah as Jeroboam the son of Nebat had in Israel; it was the link of idolatry between Israel and Judah.

This important city was taken years later at the time of Sennacherib’s invasion. He considered its conquest significant enough to have scenes of its encirclement and fall decorate his great palace at Nineveh. These reliefs are now in the British Museum.

- 14] Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-Gath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel.

**Moresheth-Gath**, Micah’s home town, sounds like *me’oreshet*, “be-throthed”; so he speaks of giving the city wedding gifts as she passes

from the rule of her own family to the authority of her cruel new husband, the invader.

**Achzib**, sounds like *'aksab*, “deceitful, disappointing.” Micah says she will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel. *Achzabim are brooks that are dry in the summer, deceiving the thirsty traveler* (cf. Jer 15:18).

- 15] Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel.

**Mareshah**, is related to the word *yoresah*, “possessor, heir” and she will be possessed by someone else.

**Adullam** was the place of refuge to which David had gone during the dismal days when he was in flight from King Saul (cf. Josh 15:35; 1 Sam 22:1). It will happen again, says Micah, for the aristocracy of Israel will be forced to take refuge in this area.

- 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.

“...children”: The chapter closes with an appeal to Jerusalem as the parent of her children: the outlying villages. They were instructed under Mosaic law to not trim their beards (Deut 14:1); nevertheless, this was an ultimate form of shame, grief, and remorse (cf. Isa 15:2; Jer 16:6).

“...baldness as the eagle”: They are to shave their heads in mourning for they are to be taken away into captivity: Exile!

“...captivity”: This is the climactic word that all has been leading up to: Exile. Slavery. [Is this the same judgment that God has in store for America? ...and for the same reasons?]

*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.*

Obadiah 1:4

Edom was a small nation, but she boasted of her achievements. The eagle has been the traditional insignia of Israel's enemies: Herod, Rome, Nazi Germany, British, Russia (...and now, America?)

## Eagle as Ensign

Micah's rhetorical *tour de force* is intended to dispel their complacency and arouse in them a sense of their own sin and their liability to punish-

ment. The Northern Kingdom was taken into captivity by the Assyrians and deported. The “ten lost tribes” is, however, a myth which has emerged from careless scholarship. The faithful of *all 12 tribes* had migrated to the Southern Kingdom (cf. 2 Chr 11, et al.).

The Southern Kingdom, a century after Micah's ministry, did ultimately also go into exile—but for a definitive period of time: 70 years (to the day!); cf. 2 Chr 36:21.

They were regathered in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Then they were dispersed throughout the world as a result of their rejection of their Messiah; the “Diaspora” from 70 A.D., et al. When they are regathered “*the second time*,” (Isa 11:11) *it begins the final consummation*.

## Analysis

Why was Micah's ministry successful?

- 1) He identified himself personally with his people. He didn't ask them to do something that he refused to do himself (cf. v.8 with v.16).
- 2) He was specific. Town by town...
- 3) He was persistent. He didn't give up. He preached through three succeeding reigns: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The first two each reigned 16 years each; it appears that he may have preached for 20 years without any apparent signs of success.

*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Galatians 6:9

Churchill's reason for success?

*Never give up. Never give up. Never give up. Never, never give up.*

—Winston Churchill

## Next Session

Study Micah Chapter 2. Review the Palestinian Covenant of the Land: conditions of obedience (Deut 28-30).

Review the Six Woes of Isaiah 5 (v.8ff); cf. Deut 27:17; 1 Sam 8:11, 14-17; Neh 5:1-3; Prov 23:10,11.

# Micah

## Chapter 2

### Introduction

- Chapter 1: Sins against God.
- **Chapter 2: Sins against each other.**
- Chapter 3: Sins by their leaders.

### Review

Micah was sent to them because their “State of Soul” was in desperate need of repair. God would deal with them the way they had been dealing with their fellows...*Whenever the rights of God are lightly treated, the rights of man can fare no better.*

Chapter 1 boldly assails the sins of God’s people *against the Lord*. Chapter 2 rebukes the crimes *against his fellow man*.

God’s intention is that those with whom He has taken into a covenant relationship with Himself should be overcomers. If it be otherwise, the fault is in them—not with Him. But where unbelief and disobedience hold sway, spiritual paralysis must necessarily ensue.

The prophet’s allusions to other portions of Scripture are many: In addition to the Torah, he refers to:

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| • Joshua’s divisions of the promised land | Micah 2:4; 6:5         |
| • David’s lament over Saul and Jonathan   | Micah 1:10             |
| • His predecessor’s challenge             | Mic 1:2; 1Kgs 22:28    |
| • With references to                      |                        |
| – Psalms                                  | Micah 2:1; 3:2; et al. |
| – Proverbs                                | Micah 4:9, 11          |
| – and, of course, Amos                    | Micah 2:3, 6, 11; 3:6  |

### Review: Six Woes of Isaiah 5 (v.8ff)

- 8] Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!
- 9] In mine ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.
- 10] Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.

- 11] Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!
- 12] And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.
- 13] Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.
- 14] Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.
- 15] And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:
- 16] But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.
- 17] Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.
- 18] Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:
- 19] That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!
- 20] Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
- 21] Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!
- 22] Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink:
- 23] Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

Review also the Land Covenant: conditions of obedience (Deut 28-30).

### The Law of Love

The key decision: to love God so wholeheartedly that they will live in accordance with God’s revealed will as outlined in His written revelation.

- |          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|
| • Moses: | Deuteronomy 28-30 |
| • Paul:  | Romans 10         |
| • Jesus: | John 3            |

- 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 are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.*

Proverbs 19:21

They are not led into these sins by others: they themselves conceive their evil purposes. For them, might is right.

There is nothing wrong with prosperity, but these people were increasing their wealth through force and fraud. *The root of the problem is that power is in the hands of the ungodly.*

There is no greater tragedy for the future of our republic than for it to have fallen into the hands of the godless rich...The *Torah* forbade the alienation of landed property and the transfer of estates from tribe to tribe (Lev 25:23-28; Num 36:7).

There is a theological reason for prohibiting land grabbing: not only was it a sin of coveting, but the land was considered one of God's gifts to His people (Gen 12:7). The abandonment of righteousness weakens the seat of any government and the stability and security of the nation:

*It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.*

Proverbs 16:12

The abandonment of truth and loyalty to covenants undermines the leadership of a ruler:

*Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.*

Proverbs 20:28

The issue of bribery is at root the issue of private truthfulness and acting on principle as opposed to being driven by expediency. When integrity is forsaken, justice is overthrown.

*The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.*

Proverbs 29:4

The minimizing of truthfulness corrupts others so that the entire government becomes corrupt.

*If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.*

Proverbs 29:12

*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

Galatians 5:9; 1 Corinthians 5:6

- 2] And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.

“...covet”: A key word—covet. The last of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:17). To be dissatisfied; materialistic; greedy. A sin of the heart. A form of idolatry. Dominant today.

“...oppress”: עָשָׂה *ashaq*: the Hebrew word involves the use of violence.

This was similar to the situation that Amos confronted in Samaria: They had built winter and summer houses (Amos 3:15); their furniture was the finest quality (Amos 6:4); they had lush vineyards (Amos 5:11); they ate the best food and wine (Amos 6:4-6)...but all was acquired by fraud, oppression, and corruption (cf. Amos 2:6, 7; 5:7, 10, 12; 8:4-6).

We have a telling example in Ahab and Jezebel with respect the Naboth's vineyard (cf. 1 Kgs 21). This is also essential to understand Revelation 2:20.]

All fraudulent methods—extortion, naked force, manipulation of the legal system, or other forms of dishonesty are condemned (Isa 52:4; Jer 50:33; Lev 6:2, 4; 19:13; Deut 1:17; 17:8-13). Jesus told the parable about the self-indulgent fool (Lk 12:16-21).

- 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.

The punishments will fit the crimes.

*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*

Galatians 6:7

- 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.

“...lament with a doleful lamentation”: The three Hebrew words נָהַי נִהַי נִהַי *nahah, nehi, niheyah* are an emphatic expressive play on words—a monotonous wail: “lament with a lament of lamentation.”



They had taken the fields and possessions of the poor; now they would suffer the same fate. In seizing the portion of others, they would lose their own. God will impose a yoke in the form of an enemy invasion and the exile of the people into captivity.

- 5] Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD.

“...cord”: Their ruin would be so complete that when the time came for the land to be redistributed, there would be no one to represent them and their place in the nation would be lost forever.

## chebel

Meaning: 1) a cord, rope, territory, band, company; also 2) pain, sorrow, travail, pang.

## The Definition of the Gospel

*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Where (in the Old Testament) does it indicate that “he (would) rise again the third day *according to the Scriptures*”?

*Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.*

Joshua 2:15,16

“...cord” = *chebel*.

*Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.*

Joshua 2:18

“...line” = *tiqvah*.

“...cord” *chebel* --- 3 days --- “line” *tiqvah*.

## Hidden Word Play?

*chebel*: 1) a cord, rope, territory, band, company; 2) pain, sorrow, travail, pang.

*tiqvah*: 1) cord; 2) hope, expectation; things hoped for, outcome.

Three days *between* the pain, sorrow, travail *and* hope, expectation, things hoped for...!

Why did Rahab instructs them to hide for “three days”? Is this just a “coincidence”? Or is it *intentional* word play by the Holy Spirit?

“We report. You decide.”

- 6] Prophesy ye not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame.

This is a difficult translation. Better: “Prophesy not! [say they; but] they shall prophesy: they shall not prophesy [indeed] to them, that reproach may not overtake them.”

Silence the messenger and forget the message (cf. Isaiah 30:10; Amos 2:12; 7:16). As might be expected, Micah's preaching aroused opposition. Religious leaders spoke up to defend their rulers and rich influentials, and denounced God's spokesmen.

Similarly, Amos was oppressed by Amaziah, the priest in the cult city of Bethel, who attempted to accuse him of treason and conspiracy against King Jeroboam.

Amos pronounced a terrible judgment against Amaziah: his sons and daughters would be killed in the invasion; his wife would become a prostitute in the city; and, he would die an exile in a foreign land (Amos 7:10-17).

Amaziah had told Amos, “Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the house of Isaac” (Amos 7:16). The prophets of Judah were telling Micah the same thing.

[The responsibility for the Holocaust can be laid at the silent pulpits in Germany...America's fate may also lay forfeit because of its own silent (or ineffectual) pulpits...]

- 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?

Surely this was not due to any lack on the part of the Spirit of the Lord! Has His compassion been any less than it has been in the past? Surely He would have recognized any repentance (if manifested) and would shown Himself strong on their behalf.

[Unless the Laodicean church wakes up and repents, the soon-coming doom of haughty Christendom will fare no better...]

The Lord will always “do good to him that walketh uprightly.” There is always a way to escape to those who seek it:

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

1 Corinthians 10:13

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:6, 7

- 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.

“...robe”: אֶדֶר *eder*, was a wide cloak, a mantle sufficient to wrap the whole person and which was often of very costly material.

“...garment”: שַׁלְמָה *salmah*, was the principal inner garment or tunic.

This may be an allusion to the prohibiting of a creditor retaining the pledged garment during the night (Ex 22:26, etc.).

God’s people were so gross it was as if they had “risen up as an enemy” against Him! They would rob those who were peaceably disposed as they pass quietly along the road, as if they were prisoners of war... [Does that describe any you know?]

- 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.

They had robbed men of their clothes, women of their homes, and children of their inheritance.

“...forever”: No contrition apparent. Widows and orphans are special charges of the Lord (Ps 68:5; Isa 10:2; Jer 49:11; James 1:27; et al.).

We often make the mistake that we can have one relationship with God and a totally different relationship with other people. God declares that this is impossible. Jesus refuted this in His sermon on the Mount of Olives (Mt 25:31-46).

*Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Matthew 25:40

- 10] Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.

Canaan was meant to be a resting place for God’s people (Deut 12:9, 10; Josh 1:13; Ps 95:11). In times of obedience and blessing it was such (cf. the Palestinian Covenant: Deut 28-30), but now because of the pollution of the land by their infamous deeds, the land was to cast out its inhabitants (cf. Lev 18:25, 28; Num 35:33; Jer 2:7).

Those who have ruined it by taking away the rest others should have enjoyed are now to suffer restlessness themselves. They are to be driven out of Judah to become exiles in a foreign land. Cf. Our *spiritual rest* (Heb 3:11 - 4:11).

- 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.

When men turn a deaf ear to the Word and revelation of God, they turn to downright fables (cf. Jer 5:31; Ezek 13:3; Hos 9:7).

Micah makes a final point—a throwback to the false prophets. The people of Judah would not listen to the true prophets; the only one fit for them is one who foretells an abundance of alcohol: oblivion until disaster comes.

## Hope for the Hopeless

No matter how absolute the message of judgment, the prophets usually conclude with a balancing note of promise of restoration (Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Obadiah also all end this way).

- 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.

“...all of thee”: This presupposes the dispersion among the heathen. With emphatic language, Micah predicts the restoration of Israel after her dispersion (“all” => all 12 tribes).

Notice that when God speaks of them in the flesh, it is “Jacob.” Here it is an indication that He is going to show mercy to them, not because of their worthiness or because of their merit, but entirely of His grace (cf. Ezek 36:19-24). Note: This was *not fulfilled after the Babylonian captivity* (“all of thee”).

Nor is it fulfilled yet: there are more Jews in New York than in the whole land of Israel. But it *is in progress*. When God speaks of the faithful remnant, it is “Israel.” It is for the sake of the remnant that God was gracious to the nation.

“...Bozrah”: One who rules the future is coming! And the faithful remnant will be gathered and defended—*specifically at Bozrah!* (Isa 63:1-6).

*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.*

Isaiah 63:1-6

## Bozrah

*Bozrah in Hebrew; Petra in Greek: “Sheepfold.” A protected enclosure, with a narrow entrance. Additional key passages:*

- The country where all nations will be smitten is identified as the land of Edom, in the city of Bozrah (Southern Jordan); cf. Isaiah 34:1-7.

The ancient city of Bozrah is located in the region of Mount Seir (“hairy mountains”), in the wilderness section on the western side of ancient Edom, extending southeast from the Dead Sea down to the city of Akaba. Petra is located in a basin within Mount Seir and is totally surrounded

by mountains and cliffs. The only way in and out of the city is through a narrow passageway (the “Ciq”) that extends for about a mile and can only be negotiated by foot or horseback. Its surrounding high cliffs make it easy to defend (cf. Isa 33:16).

Isaiah 63:1-6: Only one man has the power that is “mighty to save”: Jesus, the Messiah. “Day of Vengeance” (Isa 61:1,2 vs. Lk 4:19-21!; cf. Ps 2). Teman and Mount Paran are in the vicinity of Bozrah, located in the same mountain range of Mount Seir (Habakkuk 3:3).

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

Hosea 5:15

“...return to my place” indicates He had left it!

Their “offence”: singular and specific: their rejection. The purpose of the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble” (Jer 30:7) is their repentance.

*And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*

Revelation 14:20

Jordan appears to escape the reign of the Antichrist and thus makes this refuge possible.

*He [the Antichrist] shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. [Modern Jordan today]*

Daniel 11:41

These passages are also linked with the second coming in Micah 2:12-13. “*For wheresoever the body is, there will the vultures be gathered together.*” (Matthew 24:22). The “body” here may refer to the remnant of Israel; the “vultures” may be the Gentile nations coming against them.

- 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.

This passage is clearly Messianic. 3X: The Lord will go “*before*” them (cf. Ex 13:21; Deut 1:30, 33; Isa 52:12). Under a siege by the forces of

the Antichrist, the siege is broken by The Breaker, the King, and YHWH. He will, once again, “go before” them.

The main target of the Armageddon campaign is the annihilation of the Jews, and so the armies of the world will move southward from Jerusalem to Bozrah (Jer 49:13-14).

For a detailed study of the events at the Second Coming, see also our *Expositional Commentary on the Book of Revelation* and our Briefing Packs: *The Next Holocaust and the Refuge in Edom* and *The Antichrist: an Alternative View*.

## Next Session

So far we have explored: Micah Chapter 1: Sins against God; and Micah Chapter 2: Sins against each other. For next time, study: Micah Chapter 3: Sins by their leaders. Review the Six Woes of Isaiah (Isa 5:8-23; cf. Deut 27:17; 1 Sam 8:11, 14-17; Neh 5:1-3; Prov 23:10,11).

## Micah Chapter 3

### Organization

- Chapter 1: Sins against God;
- Chapter 2: Sins against each other;
- **Chapter 3: Sins by their leaders.**

### “Justice”?

How do you define “justice”? “Protect the innocent; punish the guilty.” Injustice is when the guilty go free and the innocent are found guilty.

What do we really mean by “justice for all”? *Injustice is a major theme in literature:* *Count of Monte Cristo*, Alexander Dumas; *Ben Hur*, (Governor) Lew Wallace are examples. A real-life drama: *The Trial of Alfred Dreyfus*.

### The Trial of Alfred Dreyfus

In 1894, Dreyfus was accused of selling secrets to the German military attache; he was convicted and sent to Devil’s Island. The press, *La Libre*

*Parole*, used Dreyfus to symbolize the supposed disloyalty of the French Jews. Lt. Col George Picquart found evidence that Maj C.F. Esterhazy was the *real* guilty party and had incriminated Dreyfus. Major Hubert Joseph Henry was discoverer of the letter attributed to Dreyfus, and a conspirator in subsequent falsification of evidence.

On Jan 13, 1898, the novelist Emile Zola wrote a open letter published on the front page of *Aurore*, “J’Accuse.” Over 200,000 copies *were* distributed. Zola was put on trial and found guilty of libel. Major Henry committed suicide, leaving a confession. Esterhazy fled the country.

A new minister took office and resolved to clear up the entire matter: Dreyfus was brought back from Devil’s Island, cleared, and reinstated in 1904 and given the Legion of Honor.

## Theodr Hertzl

One of the observers of the Dreyfus debacle was a gentleman by the name of Theodr Hertzl, who became convinced that a Jew will never get justice without a country of his own. He published a landmark treatise, *Der Judenstadt (The Jewish State)*. He organized the First Zionist Congress in 1897. He became regarded as the “Father of Zionism.”

Micah was also shocked by the conditions in the capital city of Jerusalem: The corruption of their *leadership*...evil among all the ruling classes: the courts; the palaces; and the Temple. (And how they work hand-in-hand among themselves...*just as we are when we visit our own capital!*).

Have you ever wondered why governments always seem to tend *toward corruption*? Why are we surprised? They never miss an opportunity to exploit a crisis of some kind. Governments have always loved crises: they provide the rationale for increasing budgets and bureaucracies, and subjugating the population. Most new dictators create *external* crises to consolidate their *internal* powers.

In our country, they learned long ago that *social* crises serve as well as military ones. Here is one insight that supplies a major key that many overlook: *Immorality* results in social crises. Is it any surprise to learn that governments have an compelling incentive to *promote* immorality?!

The only potential offset—in a representative republic—is an electorate that shares a *God-fearing* worldview as a restraining influence...

There are three steps (re: Judges; Isaiah) to the downfall of a nation:

1) Spiritual apostasy; 2) Immorality; 3) Political anarchy.

The primary problem wasn't political anarchy...even immorality was simply *only a symptom*: It all begins with spiritual apostasy: a turning away from the true and living God.

## The Lifecycle of Nations

- Alexander Tyler
- Edward Gibbon
- C.E.M. Joad
- C. Northcote Parkinson
- Jim Black

## When Nations Die (Jim Nelson Black)

- **Social Decay**
  - Crisis of Lawlessness
  - Loss of Economic Discipline
  - Rising Bureaucracy
- **Cultural Decay**
  - Decline of Education
  - Weakening of Cultural Foundations
  - Loss of Respect for Traditional Values
- **Moral Decay**
  - Rise of Immorality
  - Decay of Religious Belief
  - Devaluing of Human Life

## Lifecycle of Democracies

*A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse...from the public treasury... The average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years.*

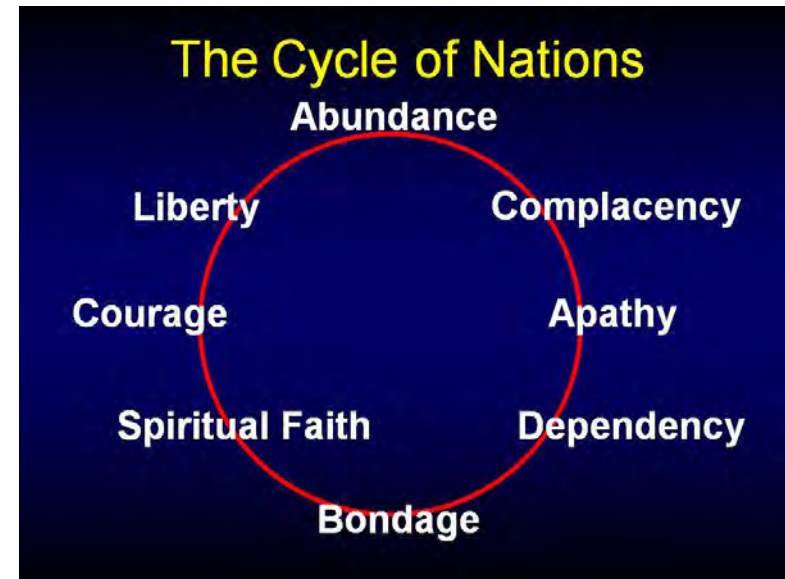
—Alexander Tyler, 1750

## The Cycle of Nations

*from bondage to spiritual faith;  
from spiritual faith to great courage;  
from courage to liberty;  
from liberty to abundance;*

*from abundance to complacency;  
from complacency to apathy;  
from apathy to dependency;  
from dependence back again into bondage."*

—Alexander Tyler, 1750



*My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?*

Proverbs 24:21,22

In a democracy, the fault lies with the electorate...

## The Separation of Powers

Balance of Power: Our three branches—the legislative, executive and judiciary—were inspired by Isaiah 33:22:

- “The Lord is our judge,” establishing our judiciary;
- “The Lord is our lawgiver,” establishing the legislative;
- “The Lord is our King,” establishing the executive.

Micah Chapter 3 has three sections:

- 1) Judges and the corruption of the courts; vv.1-4
- 2) Prophets market-driven; vv.5-8
- 3) Politicians for hire. vv.9-12



Corrupt leadership: with emphasis on these three: Judges; Prophets; and, Politicians (Cf. Isaiah 5:8-23).

## Group 1: The Judges (cf. Moses' appointments, Ex 18)

- 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?

“Hear”: Second of three major messages (Micah 1:2; 3:1-5; 6:1-7:20). These are the judges and magistrates; the same as Isaiah had in view:

*Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.*

Isaiah 1:10

“...is it not for you to know judgment?”: Was it not their special duty and responsibility to know justice? They were not unknowledgeable: they were *deliberately perverting justice*. They were, thus, inexcusably aware of the judgment that awaits *them* for their deeds.

*Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.*

Romans 2:1

Their condemnation is the greater when their deliberate failure lies in the very realm of their special duty.

- 2] Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;

“...hate the good, and love the evil”: Their attitudes (hate... love...) were *habitual* (so the Hebrew verbs).

- 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.

“...eat the flesh of my people”: Like cannibals, feeding on those whom it is their responsibility to defend. This is far worse than the issues in Chapter 2: here they are attacking the people themselves, feeding on the lifeblood of the nation.

Every variety of cruel oppression seems to have been resorted to in order that these ungodly judges might rob their fellowmen of their goods.

Only when God's judgment is upon them will they perceive the extent and enormity of their abominable ways. [Has our own electorate yet awakened to the realities that surround us?]

*Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.*

Psalms 14:4

*There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.*

Proverbs 30:14

What a contrast to the Shepherd of Micah 2:12, 13! This same theme is carried in the other prophets: Cf. The condemnation of Ezekiel 34:1-10 and the glorious prediction of Ezekiel 34:23-24. These offenders are not left to speculate on what the judgment of God will be:

- 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 again sees the poetic justice in the day when the Lord will not hear them. This cry which God refuses to hear is the cry for deliverance from anguish only, not the cry that arises from true repentance over sin. Since they refused to heed the cries of the needy, the Lord will recompense them in like kind.

*Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.*

Jeremiah 11:11

*Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*

Proverbs 21:13

[This is the essence of “*hell*”: God hiding His face from them...]

## Group 2: The Prophets

The conduct of the false messengers was no better

- 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.

“...that make my people err”: The prophets misled the people by not denouncing their sins which call forth the displeasure of God. They lulled the people of God into complacency and carnal security instead of declaring fearlessly the truth and will of God.

“...and cry, Peace”: They fed a “feel good” message. They knew better. They were not prophets for Baal; they were prophets of the Living God, who knew the truth and preferred to speak lies.

- 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.

Since they have outraged the office of the prophet, there are several different ways that calamities will fall on them. Darkness was a common figure for calamity and distress.

*And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.*

Isaiah 8:22

*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.*

Amos 5:18

*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...*

Amos 8:9

And Amos also prophesied a famine of the Word:

*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: 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.*

Amos 8:11-12

Those who blinded the eyes and minds of the people would also be smitten with night and darkness.

- 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.

“...cover their lips”; Their end would be with shame. Like a leper, they would “cover their lips”:

*And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.*

Leviticus 13:45

*And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them.*

Jeremiah 5:13

*Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!*

Ezekiel 13:3

Jesus expressed this with extreme gravity:

*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*

Matthew 18:6, 7

Micah, however, is put in contrast to them:

- 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.

“...full of power by the spirit”: How, then, could Israel ever have failed to recognize the spurious from the genuine? Their luxurious living, their low moral conditions, and their unconcern for the things of God blinded their eyes and dulled their sensibilities to these vital issues. *The hour in which we live is a tragic commentary on the same conditions here!*

Cf. Paul’s charge to Timothy:

*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*

2 Timothy 4:1-4

### Group 3: Corrupt Politicians

“...The insolence of office...” *Hamlet, Act III, Scene 1*

## “Politics”

*A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles; the conduct of public affairs for private advantage.*

—Ambrose Bierce *The Devil's Dictionary*

- 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.

Again, “Hear this...” Cf. v.1. Micah now puts v.8 into practice...Here he also shifts from the Northern Kingdom to the South: “the House of Jacob.”

- 10] They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

By their hatred of justice and perversion of all that's right, the heads and rulers were building Zion with extortion and robbery, at the cost of human misery, woe, and murder.

Wealth gained from the rightful owners was used to entrench the self-ish and wicked interests of the leaders (cf. Jer 22:13; Ezek 22:27; Hab 2:12).

- 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.

In a grand indictment of all three classes: judges, priests, and leaders—he nails all three for their unbridled greed.

Judges were making judicial pronouncements for reward. This was distinctly forbidden in the Torah (Ex 23:8; Deut 16:19). Impartial meting out of justice is impossible when once a bribe has been received (Prov 29:4).

Priests were no better: they tailored their messages to the market. (The word “divine” is never used in the OT in a good sense.) Like Balaam and the other heathen prophets, they were willing to make favorable pronouncements for a price.

Hired by Balak, King of Moab:

Rebuked by his donkey	Num 22
Refused to curse Israel	Num 23, 24
Taught how to defeat Israel	Num 31:16

## The Prophet Balaam

- “Doctrine of Balaam” (Rev 2:14)
  - Spiritual unchastity; marriage with the world.
- “Way of Balaam” (2 Peter 2:15)
  - Hireling = making a “market” for his gift.
- “Error of Balaam” (Jude 11)
  - Sacrificing eternal riches for temporal gain.

Their leadership was prostituted to materialism: reward, hire, money. “They had the best leadership money could buy!”

The justices were going to cry for mercy and not get it. The prophets were going to call for a word from God and God was going to be silent. The rulers were going to seek order but find chaos. And, worst of all, they all had a proud and unfounded confidence in the presence of the Lord.

*Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD ... Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.*

Jeremiah 7:4, 8-11

They boasted that God was blessing them despite their wicked ways. Consider how offensive this was to Him! Their pretense was a cloak for their wicked ways and interests.

Note: There is no word against the king himself (so also in the prophecies of Isaiah). The king at this time was the God-fearing Hezekiah, but he was evidently powerless to curb the greedy and rapacious leaders.

The cup of their wickedness was full and God must pour out His wrath and judgment upon them.

- 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.

“...Jerusalem shall become heaps”: This is a prediction that for their sins there will be a *complete desolation of the city of Jerusalem*.

Jeremiah quotes Micah as having said this, which is a confirmation of the prophecy (Jer 26:18). This destruction did take place when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem.

In the first chapters of the Book of Nehemiah, Jerusalem was nothing but debris, ashes, rubble, and ruin. The Talmud records that at the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A.D. 70, Rufus, an officer of the Roman army actually plowed up the foundations of the temple with a plowshare. (The Jewish historian Jerome, and the Jewish philosopher Maimonides, also noted it.)

Other passages indicate the literal fulfillment of these words of Micah (Neh 2:17, 4:2; Lam 5:18; et al.). The invasion and destruction by Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled Micah's prophecy with sad accuracy. Truly the wages of sin is death, *and death in every realm and sphere of life.*

## Historical Setting

In 734 B.C., the Assyrians carried away all of north Israel; in 721 B.C., Shalmanezar of Assyria attacked the northern capital of Samaria and overthrew it, and deported the remaining people of the Northern Kingdom ("House of Israel").

Eight years later, Sennacherib, Shalmanezar's successor, attacked the Southern Kingdom ("Judah"). ("Sin-ecerib" = "sin multiplies his brothers"; they worshiped the moon god, "Sin.")

At one point, the field commander appeared before the walls and challenged them for surrender; Sennacherib sent a letter to the same effect (2 Kgs 19:10-12). Hezekiah spread this letter before the Lord and received confirmation through Isaiah that the city would be spared; Sennacherib would fail. Hezekiah organized a revival, and smashed the idols of his predecessors; even the original brazen serpent (Num 21:8,9) which, after almost 1,000 years, had become a fetish to which they were burning incenses (2 Kgs 18:3, 4).

## The Hidden Hero?

However, Micah isn't mentioned. Isaiah is the well-known prophet of that period, with direct access to the king. But we know from an incident a century later that it was actually because of Micah's preaching that the people repented and Jerusalem was spared.

Jeremiah, 120 years later, was prophesying over the impending destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 26:4-6). His message offended the priests and the false prophets, so they seized him and brought him before the officials, demanding his death. Jeremiah gave his defense, citing the previous experience of Micah:

*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. 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.*

Jeremiah 26:18,19

As a result, Jeremiah was spared: 120 years later, Micah's words were remembered and used by God to spare Jeremiah. In fact, it appears Micah lived to see the beginning of Hezekiah's revival...

## What Makes Micah Different?

Hosea and Amos were ignored. Jeremiah was imprisoned. In Micah's case, his message was heeded, repentance followed, and disaster was postponed for a century. Here was a prophet (like Jonah) that changed history! Why? What made his message so different?

## Organization

- Chapter 1: Sins against God.
- Chapter 2: Sins against each other.
- Chapter 3: Sins by their leaders.
- Chapter 4: The Coming Kingdom.

After the indictments and stern punishments of these first three chapters, Chapter 4 now focuses on the "last days" and the Millennial Reign.

## Next Session

Read: Chapter 4, the coming Kingdom and Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar's Dream.

# Micah

## Chapter 4

### Introduction

- Chapter 1: Sins against God.
- Chapter 2: Sins against each other.
- Chapter 3: Sins by their leaders.
- **Chapter 4: The Coming Kingdom.**

After the indictments and stern punishments of these first three chapters, Chapter 4 now focuses on the “last days” and the Millennial Reign.

### Essential Preamble

One of the most fundamental controversies in eschatology is the issue of the Millennial reign of Christ: literal or figurative? Unlike many of the other differences of opinion among scholars, this one attacks the very character of God: faithfulness to the unconditional covenants in the Old Testament.

### The Davidic Covenant

In the New Testament, this was confirmed as early as the commitments expressed to Mary that her child was destined to sit on the Throne of David (Lk 1:32, 33). That throne did not exist during the duration of Christ’s earthly ministry: an Idumean (Edomite) appointed by Rome ruled instead.

Most of what we know about the Millennium comes from Isaiah 65 rather than Revelation 20. *This passage in Micah is among those that militate against any allegorical or “spiritualized” rendering of the Millennial passages.*

### The Millennial Reign

The first three opening verses of Chapter 4 are practically identical to Isaiah 2:2-4. Experts are divided as to who quoted who (or whether they both quoted another previous source). We recognize that the Holy Spirit was in charge in any case!

- 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.

“But...” Micah is now moving beyond the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the destruction under Titus the Roman, and beyond all other destructions, to the last days.

“...the mountain of the house of the Lord”: This is the “mountain” that is profiled in the famous dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2).

### Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream: Daniel 2

*Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together; and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.*

Daniel 2:34,35

*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

Daniel 2:44

### Unconditional Covenants

- |                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| • <b>The Abrahamic Covenant</b>   | Genesis 12     |
| – Challenged by the world         |                |
| • <b>The Land Covenant</b>        | Genesis 15     |
| – Challenged by Islam             |                |
| • <b>The Davidic Covenant</b>     | 2 Samuel 7     |
| – Challenged by the Church        |                |
| • <b>The Everlasting Covenant</b> | Jeremiah 31:31 |

*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. 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.*

Luke 1:31-33

*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his*



*father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Luke 1:31-33

But did Jesus ever actually sit on David's Throne? He couldn't have. It didn't exist at that time. Jeconiah, was the last of David's line to sit on the Throne. Remember the blood curse on his line.

*When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.*

Acts 1:6,7

*And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the Tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

Acts 15:15-18



*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

Daniel 2:44



- 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.

“Mountain” of mountains: often as an idiom of government (cf. Dan 2:35, 45) from the “stone cut without hands”: the Rock of offense, the stone which the builders rejected that becomes the headstone of the corner” (Ps118:22; Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7).

Zion will be the governmental and spiritual center of the whole world. The Temple (or a palace?) will be rebuilt. The “tabernacle of David” (Amos 9:11).

There will also be dramatic physical changes in the region (cf. Zechariah 14:9-10). The prophet that received the most revelation regarding the mountain of YHWH's house was Ezekiel (cf. Ezek 17:22-24; 20:40-41; 40:1-4; 45:1-8; 48:8-20).

The “flow” of the people will be spontaneous (meaning of the Hebrew original). Cf. Zech 8:20-23 for a similar prophecy of the same time.

- 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.

All nations. The source of all truth, guidance, and jurisprudence. Disputes will be crisply resolved: The Law will be enforced “with a rod of iron” (cf. Ps 2:9; Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). *The Temple will only be open on Shabbat and the New Moon!?* (Ezek 46:1; Isa 66:23).

- 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.

His rule is quite literal and effective. Peace; finally. Weapons will be converted to peaceful uses. Military science courses will be unattended...

The inscription of these words on the UN building is ironic. This pagan, anti-Jewish affiliation may prove to be the precursor to the realm of the Coming World Leader, commonly called the Antichrist. See our briefing package, *Behold A White Horse* or our *Commentary on the Book of Revelation*

- 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.

This verse is not found in the corresponding Isaiah passage, but it continues the thoughts of peace, prosperity and security (cf. 1 Kgs 4:25; 2 Kgs 18:31; Zech 3:10).

Both the vine and the fig tree were native to the area and common fruits (cf. Ex 23:11; Lev 19:10; 25:3-4; Deut 20:6). The vine was often a symbol of the nation of Israel among the prophets and psalmists (Isa 5:1; Jer 2:21; Hos 10:1; Ps 80:8; et al.). It was even used on some later Jewish coins.

The fig tree is also a frequent reference (Deut 8:8; 2 Kgs 8:31) and was used idiomatically by Jesus Himself (Mt 21:19-21; 24:32; Lk 13:6,7; Rev 6:13).

## The Parable of the Trees

*And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go*

*to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.*

Judges 9:7-15

## The Parable of the Trees

• Olive Tree	–	Valuable oil
• Fig Tree	–	Sweet Fruit
• Vine	–	Wine
• Bramble	–	No fruit
	–	Too low for shade
	–	Only good as fuel for the fire

- 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.

A verse easily misunderstood: although heathen peoples worship their own particular gods now, Israel will be worshipping the Living God.

On January 6, 1941, Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave his famous speech on the “four freedoms”: Freedom of speech, Freedom of religion, Freedom from want, Freedom from fear.

Micah’s list is similar, but begins with:

– Freedom from ignorance (of the law of God)	v.2
– Freedom from war	v.3
– Freedom from want	v.4
– Freedom from fear	v.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;

Before Israel can enjoy the glories of the Messianic Kingdom, she must be regathered from her worldwide dispersion and settled in her own land. [The figure of the scattered flock resumes the image of the restoration in 2:12-13.] This is another passage with the perspective of the Great Shepherd (Ps 23:1-4; 100:3; Isa 40:10,11; Jn 10).

- 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.

The remnant is a key focus of Scripture (Isa 9:6, 7; Dan 7:14, 27; Lk 1:33; Rev 11:15). It was only a remnant that came out of Egypt; virtually an entire generation died in the wilderness.

Even in Elijah's day, 7,000 had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kgs 19:10, 18). Even in Christ's day, there was a remnant that received Him. Even today, there are but a remnant that are "real..." How sure are *you that* you would be included? The Throne of David (Cf. Lk 1:32).

- 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.

"...tower of the flock...stronghold": Micah focuses on two places:

**מִגְדַּל-עֵדֶר Migdal-Eder, Tower of the Flock, Shepherd's Tower:** Genesis 35:21 mentions the Tower of Eder as near Bethlehem. According to Jerome (who lived in Bethlehem in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) it was about a mile from Bethlehem, the birthplace of David. (The next chapter will also identify it as the birthplace of the Messiah.)

**עֶפְלָי Opheh, fort or stronghold:** on the SE slope of the Temple hill, *opposite* to the Mount Zion, separated by the Tyropean valley. It was fortified by Jotham (2 Chr 27:3 ) and Manasseh (2 Chr 33:14), the place from which David ruled.

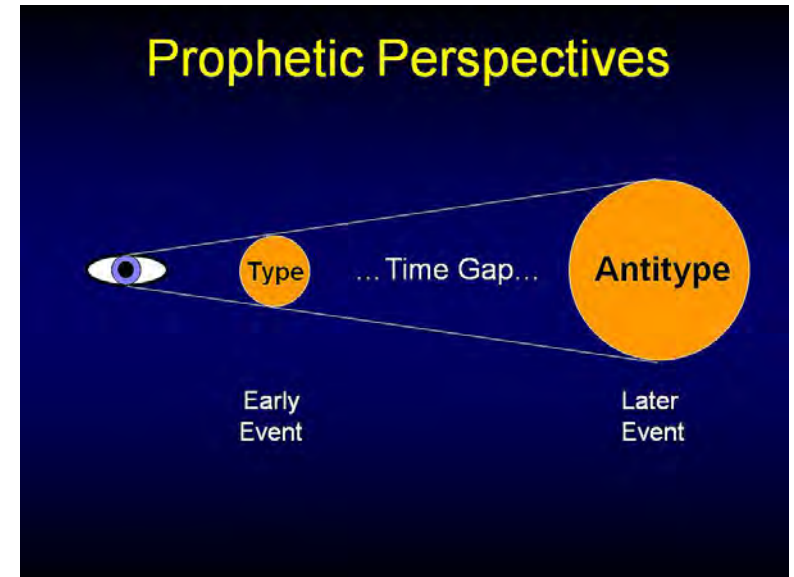
David was both shepherd and king. These two places will be restored and magnified in the Messianic reign.

## The Babylonian Captivity

Micah now turns from the ultimate glory of the Millennium to the dark future immediately before them: the Babylonian invasion and the captivity of Judah. (Yet this would not come until *a century after Micah's* day! See graphic on the next page.)

- 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.

They have been "crying aloud" over the approach of the Chaldeans. Why don't they turn to their king and counsellor?



"...cry out loud": This is viewed by some as a taunt in her distress. It may simply be an indication of her helpless condition when her king is taken captive by the Babylonians (Jer 52:9; Lam 4:20; Ex 12:13). Judah would lose all kingly rule. The repetitive comparison to the birthpangs of a woman in travail—a frequent metaphor regarding the end times, too (Mt 24:8; 1 Thess 5:3; et al.).

- 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.

Micah, like Isaiah, looks beyond the then current power of Assyria to the subsequent coming rise of Babylonia. Isaiah, also, prophesied of the Babylonian captivity (Isaiah 39:3-8) when King Hezekiah foolishly flaunted his treasures to the Babylonian emissaries.)

"...there shalt thou be delivered": They will be delivered in that place—Babylon—through the hand of Cyrus (Isa 43:14; 44:28; 45:1-4; 48:20). They would be cured of idol worship in the caldron of Babylon.

## The Final Siege

Many commentators assume that the following is a continuation of the Babylonian siege. Others, that the Assyrians are in view. We believe that

this looks ahead to the final siege rather than the siege of v.9. The Holy Spirit looks ahead to the last great attack *by the nations of the world* against Israel. These subsequent events are those of Joel 3, Zechariah 12 and 14, and other portions of the OT Scriptures.

- 11] Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.

“...many nations are gathered”: The great confluence of peoples and nations to Jerusalem summarized in v.2 will be preceded by a final onslaught of nations against Jerusalem and the people of God.

Their purpose is to defile Zion. They will look with delight on the calamities of the Jews. The Holocaust in Germany took one Jew in three. The next holocaust will take two out of three (Zech 13:8, 9).

The Armageddon campaign will be targeted on Jerusalem; but they follow with the pursuit of the remnant which had fled (under Christ’s instructions, cf. Mt 24:16ff) to Bozrah/Petra.

- 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.

“...the floor”: This gathering of nations is nothing less than the Lord’s assembling of them as sheaves to the threshing floor. The threshing floor is often seen as an idiom referring to the Great Tribulation (Isa 41:15, 16; Jer 51:33).

(If so, it is significant that Ruth—the eventual bride of Boaz, the Kinsman-redeemer—is at Boaz’s feet during the threshing floor scene in Ruth 3:9ff.)

Some suggest that Micah was writing about the threat by the armies of Sennacherib of Assyria, which caused King Hezekiah to seek the Lord. A revival followed, and God delivered Jerusalem by having an angel kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. When Sennacherib saw the carnage, he was appalled and withdrew (2 Kgs 18, 19; 2 Chr 32; Isa 36, 37). He and his successors never again attacked Jerusalem.

- 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.

All this will be done for the glory of God (Isa 60:1-9). He will then be known as “the Lord of the whole earth.”

[The Hebrew text divides the verses differently: Chapter 5:1 is the last verse of Chapter 4 in the Hebrew text.]

There now appears to be a return to thought in 4:9, the forthcoming Babylonian siege.

*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.*

Micah 5:1

This would seem to be a reference to the shameful treatment of King Zedekiah at the time of the Babylonian invasion of Judah.

Some view the “judge of Israel” as the Messiah, and this verse as a foreshadowing of the humiliation of Christ. However, He was not smitten in a “siege,” etc. He was, however, smitten in the face (Isa 50:6; Mt 26:67-68; 27:30). It was the stripping off of the beard that may have contributed to the apparent difficulties in recognizing Him after the resurrection (cf. Jn 20:14; Lk 24:16; Jn 21:12).

The degradation of the “judge of Israel” will be contrasted with the greatness of the future ruler of Israel: The Messiah is highlighted in the most famous verse in Micah 5:2 which follows, and which many regard as the most significant prophetic verse in the entire Bible...and this will be reviewed in our next session.

## Next Session

Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem? Why was Bethlehem known as the “city of David”? Who owned the fields where the shepherds encountered the angels? The next session, Chapter 5, has several passages which are deemed, by many, to be among the most significant prophetic passages for our times!

## Micah Chapter 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.

[The Hebrew text divides the verses differently: Chapter 5:1 is the last verse of Chapter 4 in the Hebrew text.]



“...rod upon the cheek”: This would seem to be a reference to the shameful treatment of King Zedekiah at the time of the Babylonian invasion of Judah.

The degradation of the “judge of Israel” will be contrasted with the greatness of the future ruler of Israel which will be highlighted in the next verse.

Jeremiah had predicted that his “eyes should see the eyes of the king of Babylon” (Jer 32:4; 34:3), yet Ezekiel foretold that he should “not see Babylon,” though he would die there (Ezek 12:13).

Josephus indicates that Zedekiah thought the two prophecies so inconsistent with each other that he believed neither; yet both were exactly fulfilled, and the enigma of Ezekiel explained, when Zedekiah was brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, where he had his eyes put out, and was then carried to Babylon, and there he died (Jer 39:6; 52:10, 11).

- 1] 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 be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

“But”: The word (adversative conjunction) puts the following in contrast to the previous passage. Another in David’s line is still yet to come...

This is a well-known verse, especially around the Christmas season, but richly abundant in far more significance than geography alone! It is so familiar to most of us that we might miss some of the astonishing implications included in this famous passage.

“...Bethlehem Ephratah”: There were other Bethlehems (Josh 9:15). Ephratah makes it specific to the one 6 miles SW of Jerusalem and the birthplace of David (Cf. Ruth 1ff). It means “House of Bread,” and it would bring forth “the Bread of Life” (Jn 6:33-51).

“...little among the thousands of Judah”: It was too insignificant to be mentioned among the cities of Judah in (Josh 15) or in the list of cities in Nehemiah 11. It was a little hamlet.

## The Location of the Messiah’s Birth

Clearly, it is astonishing to realize that the birthplace of the Messiah was specified so precisely *700 years before the event!* (It was undeniably part of the Septuagint Translation of the OT in 270 B.C. and thus well documented centuries in advance.)

The Scriptures *appear to be full of “contradictions”*: He was prophesied to be a Nazarene (Mt 2:23; Isa 11:1).

“Branch” = נֶצֶר *netser*. He would be called out of Egypt (Hos 12:1); He was to be born in Bethlehem (here); He would be *all three!*

Caesar Augustus signed a tax bill which forced Mary out of her native Nazareth to travel to Bethlehem. (*God had the entire Roman world migrate to the towns of their registry in order to get Joseph and Mary to relocate 30 miles!*)

When Herod died, God called them “out of Egypt” to resettle in their original home town, Nazareth.

“...out of thee [Bethlehem] shall he come forth unto me”: the words “unto me” indicate that this One was coming to do the will of the Father. This was a plan committed to before the foundation of the world itself (Eph 1:4; Acts 2:23; et al.).

“...have been from old, from everlasting”: His existence preceded His birth! The Preexistent One—The Creator Himself! His “genealogy” is in John 1:1-3; cf. Col 1:16, 17. The phrases of the text are the strongest possible statement of infinite duration in the Hebrew language

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God*  
Psalm 90:2; cf. Prov 8:22-23ff.

“...whose goings forth”: His “goings forth” were in the creation, in His appearances to the Patriarchs, and throughout the OT. He came forth from the Father (Jn 16:28). He told the Pharisees, “Before Abraham was, I AM” (Jn 8:58). *His was the voice from the burning bush!* (Ex 3:14).

## His Incarnation

The Preexistent One clothed Himself with humanity when He came to Bethlehem. Isaiah, a contemporary of Micah, verified this: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa 7:14).

(Some quibble about the specific Hebrew word אַלְמָה *almah*, which can admit to alternative renderings; however, the ultra-precise Greek of the *Septuagint* specifies παρθένος *parthenos*, which clearly requires an undefiled virgin.)



*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.*

Isaiah 9:6

“A child is born”—His humanity. “A Son is given”—His Preexistent Divinity. The “child” was born in Bethlehem, but the “Son” was “from everlasting” (Cf. Ps 90:2; Prov 8:23-25).

*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.*

Isaiah 9:7

## His Reign

“...upon the throne of David”: He “is to be ruler in Israel.” Fulfilling God’s promise to David (2 Sam 7:16). Yet His rule from Zion will be worldwide (cf. Ps 2:8; 72:8; Mal 1:11, 14). Has that happened yet? Hardly. But it was promised throughout the OT ...and reconfirmed to Mary at Gabriel’s annunciation:

*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Luke 1:31-33

But did Jesus ever actually sit on David’s Throne? He couldn’t have.

## Who Were the “Magi”?

- Eastern tradition: 12 days of Christmas; Jan 6.
- 3rd century: “Kings” bearing gifts (Ps 72:10, 68:29).
- Western tradition: 3 of them, Epiphany: Jan 6.

## Magi Traditions

- 6<sup>th</sup> century chronicle, *Exerpia Latina Garbari*
  - Bithisarea, Balthasar
  - Melichior, Melchior
  - Gathaspa, Gasper
- Bede (673-735): three sons of Noah?
  - Shem: Asia

- Ham: Africa
- Japheth: Europe
- 14<sup>th</sup> century Armenian tradition:
  - Balthasar: King of Arabia
  - Melchior: King of Persia
  - Gasper: King of India



## The Magi of Medo-Persia

Magi is the Latinized form of *Magoi*, the ancient Greek transliteration of the Persian original (*Herodotus*, I:101). רַב־מָגִי *Rab-Mag*, Chief of the Magi in Nebuchadnezzar’s Court (Jer 39:3,13); Daniel’s title (Dan 4:9; 5:11). Oneiromancy, not astrology, was their key skill (*Herodotus* I.107, 120; VII.19).

The Magi were established as the state religion of Persia by Darius the Great, after some Magi who were considered to be expert in the interpretation of dreams had been attached to the Median court. (They were *not* originally followers of Zoroaster; *Encyclopedia Britannica* 7:691).

(Later: Philo of Alexandria, Cicero, and Philo, and others record that the Magi were attached to senior Roman courts with acknowledged gifts and standing.)

## Magian Religion vs. Judaism

Each had its monotheistic concept of one beneficent creator, author of all good, who in turn was opposed by a malevolent evil spirit; each had its hereditary priesthood which became the essential mediator between God and man by virtue of a blood sacrifice; each depended upon the wisdom of the priesthood in divination; each held concepts of clean and unclean forms of life; and, each involved a *hereditary* priesthood, serving several religions—the Magi were the priestly caste during Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian periods.

The subsequent syncretistic Magian religion of Archaemenid days had much in common with the religion of the Jews: [Cf. The Urim and Thummim of the Levite; the Barsoms, small bundles of divining rods of the Magian priest]

## Political Background

Since the days of Daniel, the fortunes of both the Persian and the Jewish nations had been closely intertwined: both nations had in their turn falling under Seleucid domination in the wake of Alexander's conquests. Both had regained their independence: the Jews under Maccabean leadership, the Persians as the dominating ruling group within the Parthian empire.

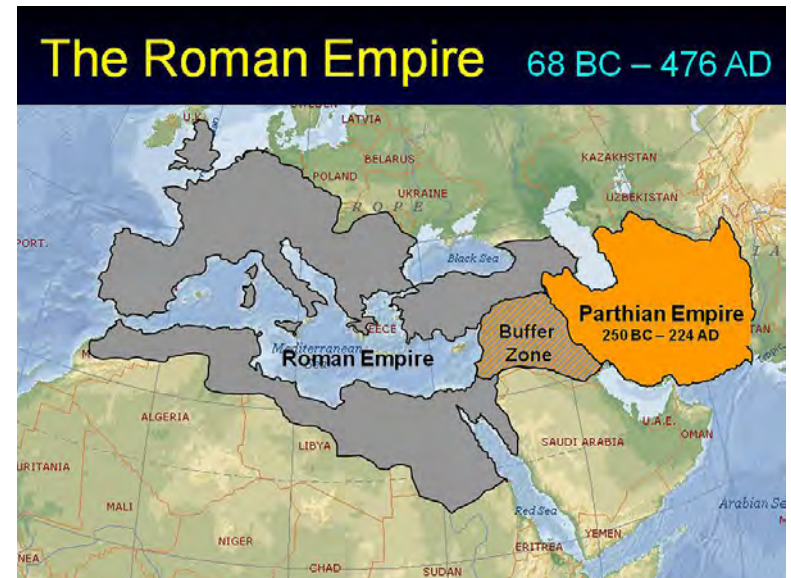
It was at this time that the Magi, in their dual priestly and governmental offices, composed the upper house of the council of the Megistanes ("magistrates") *whose duties included the absolute choice and election of the king of the realm*. It was in a dual capacity of priest and counselor whereby civil and political counsel was invested with religious authority. Thus, the Magi became the supreme priestly caste of the empire.

## The Inscription of Behistun

By Darius I (The Great) (522-486 B.C.), written in three languages: Elamite, Akkadian/Babylonian, and Old Persian/Aramaic. The inscription speaks of his speedy and final triumph over a revolt of Magi in 522 B.C.

## The Parthian Empire

Parthia, ancient empire of Asia in what are now Iran and Afghanistan. The Parthians were of Scythian descent, and adopted Median dress and



Aryan speech. Parthia was subject successively to the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, and Macedonians under Alexander the Great, and then the Seleucids. 250 B.C., the Parthians succeeded in founding an independent kingdom. During the 1st century B.C., it grew into an empire extending from the Euphrates River to the Indus River and from the Oxus (now Amu Darya) River to the Indian Ocean.

## Judea: a Buffer Zone

After the middle of the 1st century B.C., Parthia was, thus, a rival of Rome, and several wars occurred between the two powers. Pompey, the first Roman conqueror of Jerusalem, in 63 B.C. had attacked the Armenian outpost of Parthia.

In 55 B.C. Crassus led Roman legions in sacking Jerusalem and in a subsequent attack on Parthia proper. The Romans were decisively defeated at the Battle of Carrhae with the loss of 30,000 troops, including their commander. The Parthians counterattacked with a token invasion of Armenia, Syria, and Palestine.

Nominal Roman rule was reestablished under Antipater, the father of Herod, who in turn retreated before a Parthian invasion in 40 B.C. Mark Anthony reestablished Roman sovereignty in 37 B.C., and like Crassus before him, also embarked on a similarly ill-fated Parthian expedition.

His disastrous retreat was followed by another wave of invading Parthians, which swept all Roman opposition completely out of Palestine (including Herod himself who had to flee to Alexandria and then to Rome). With Parthian collaboration Jewish sovereignty was restored and Jerusalem was fortified with a Jewish garrison.

Herod, by this time, secured from Augustus Caesar the title of “King of the Jews.” However, it was not for three years, including a five months’ siege by Roman troops, that the king was able to occupy his own capital city.

## Herod’s Slippery Rock

Herod had thus gained the throne of a rebellious buffer state situated between two mighty contending empires. At any time his own subjects might conspire in bringing the Parthians to their aid.

## Roman Tensions

Augustus was also aged; Rome, since the retirement of Tiberius, was without any experienced military commander. Pro-Parthian Armenia was fomenting revolt against Rome (which was successfully accomplished within two years). (At the time of the birth of Christ, Herod may have been close to his final illness.)

## Parthian Instability

The time was ripe for another Parthian invasion of the buffer provinces, except for the fact that Parthia itself was racked by internal dissension: Phraates IV, the unpopular and aging king, had once been deposed and it was not improbable that the Persian Magi were already involved in the political maneuvering requisite to choosing his successor.

## A Precarious Visit?

At this time that the Magi, in their dual priestly and governmental office, composed the upper house of the council of the Magistanes (“magistrates”) whose duties included the absolute choice and election of the king of the realm. It was a group of *Persian-Parthian king makers* who entered Jerusalem in the latter days of the reign of Herod.

It was conceivable that the Magi could have taken advantage of the king’s lack of popularity to further their own interests with the estab-

lishment of a new dynasty, if a sufficiently strong contender could be found... The Magi, likely traveling in force with unimaginable oriental pomp and adequate cavalry escort to insure their safe penetration of Roman territory, certainly alarmed Herod and the entire populace of Jerusalem (Mt 2:3).

Herod’s reaction was understandably one of fear when one considers the background of Roman-Parthian rivalry that prevailed during his lifetime. It would seem as if these Magi were attempting to perpetrate a border incident which could bring swift reprisal from Parthian armies.

Within two years Phraataces, the parricide son of Phraates IV, was duly installed by the Magi as the new ruler of Parthia. (Later: Philo of Alexandria, Cicero, and Philo, and others, record that Magi had become attached to senior Roman courts with acknowledged gifts and standing.)

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.*

Matthew 2:1-6

- 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 be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

*Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.*

Matthew 2:7-12



## Gifts

Not necessarily all mentioned. These mentioned because they are prophetic: Gold = deity; Frankincense = priesthood (mixed into the shewbread by the priests); and, Myrrh; when crushed, an ointment for burial. Prophet; Priest; and King.

In the millennium, we find from Isaiah that Jesus is given gifts: gold and frankincense (but no myrrh because His death is behind Him; Isa 60:6).

*And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.*

Matthew 2:12

The Magi “being warned in a dream” (a form of communication most acceptable to them) departed to their own country with empty hands.

## “Star” of Bethlehem?

Balaam’s prophecy? *not* quoted by Matthew (Num 24:17).

Conjunctions? (Isa 60:3). Kepler suggested the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7 B.C. from an erroneous inference from *Josephus* (wrong date: 2 B.C. - 4 B.C.) This was not a “natural” phenomenon: it settled over a specific location...

## Shekhinah?

- The Creation Gen 1
- The Abrahamic Covenant Gen 15
- Burning Bush Ex 3
- Pillar of fire by night Ex 13
- Flames at Pentecost Acts 2
- *Why not here?*

*And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.*

Matthew 2:13-15

Matthew is implying that there is a symbolic validity to the history of Christ in terms of the history of Israel. As Israel was driven into Egypt and then called out, and that concept is tied up with the Passover Lamb, likewise, Jesus Christ, as a babe, was sent to Egypt for a while is called out and then goes into the wilderness (like Israel). Jesus fasted 40 days in the wilderness; Israel was in the wilderness 40 years.

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

Hosea 11:1

*Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*

Matthew 2:16-18

Rachel is being used by Jeremiah, idiomatically, as mother Israel. But Rachel is specifically linked to Bethlehem.

*Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.*

Jeremiah 31:15

*But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*

Matthew 2:19-23

## Nazarene

“Nazarene” implies an ignorant man. Partly due to being a Gentile area, it was a figure of speech which implied contempt.

נֶזֶר *netzer*: branch, sprout, shoot; a sprout that grows out from a stump (Isa 11:2). These were intended puns (Jer 33:15; Zech 6:12).

## The Branch צֶמַח *tsemach*

- “The Branch of the Lord” Isa 4:2
- Royal King from line of David Jer 23:5
- (Repeat of above) Jer 33:15
- Servant of Jehovah Zech 3:8
- Will build the Temple Zech 6:12

Of the 20 Hebrew words translated “branch,” only one of them—*Tsemach*—is used exclusively of the Messiah!

## Why We Accept the Bible

- The authentication *of* Christ: LXX: over 300 detailed specifications; Daniel “70 Weeks” undeniable
- The authentication *by* Christ: The Torah; Daniel, et al
- Integrated Design: Transcendental Origin.

## Specifications Fulfilled

- He would be born of a virgin Isa 7:14  
– And He was Mt 1:18-25
- He would be born in Bethlehem Mic 5:2  
– And He was Mt 2:1-6
- He would be taken into Egypt Hos 11:1  
– And He was Mt 2:15
- He would heal the sick and make people whole Isa 53  
– And He did Mt 8
- He would be crucified Ps 22:14-17  
– And He was Mt 27:31
- He would die for our sins Isa 53  
– And He did Jn 1:29; 11:49-52
- He would be raised from the dead Ps 16:10  
– And He was Mt 28:1-10

## Back to Micah 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.

“...she which travaileth hath brought forth”: This goes far beyond the travail of Mary; it is the travail of “the woman” whose “Seed” was

predicted in Gen 3:15 and is summarized in Rev 12:4-6 (cf. Isa 66:7-9). It includes the “Diaspora” and climaxes in the Great Tribulation (Dan 12:1, Mt 24:21ff; cf. “The Time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7). “Then the remnant of his brethren shall return”...

- 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.

Here the Lord Jesus is depicted as the Great Shepherd who feeds and cares for His flock. There is no more expressive designation of Christ in the OT or NT than that of Shepherd of His Flock (cf. 2 Sam 5:2; 7:7; Isa 40:11).

## The Shepherd Trilogy

- He is the Good Shepherd of Psalm 22, laying His life down for the sheep;
- He is the Great Shepherd of Psalm 23, who keeps His sheep even today;
- He is the Chief Shepherd of Psalm 24, who is coming in glory.

Jesus Himself summarizes His role in John 10. There are two primary aspects:

- 1) He laid down His life for the sheep (vv.11, 15, 17, 18);
- 2) He knows His sheep and is known by them (v.14); [Do *you really know Him?*]

- 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.

“...the Assyrian”: It was an *Assyrian that oppressed Israel during their sojourn in Egypt*: the Pharaoh (a title of the ruler) of that day was *not* an Egyptian! (Isa 52:4). [That was why the Pharaoh was so insecure with the growth of the non-Egyptian population, thus rendered into slavery; Ex 1:8-10.]

## “The Assyrian”

“The Assyrian”: a title of the Antichrist? Sennacherib was but a type; this could be but a generic reference, or it could be a hint more specific (cf.



Isa 10:5, 24; 14:25, 26). The final climax will a *confederated movement on the part of the nations* of the earth to blot out God's chosen people Israel (Joel 3, Zech 12 & 14, et al.).

"...this man shall be the peace"? A false peace? (Dan 8:25)!

"...raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men": Could be a Hebraic rhetorical device (cf. Prov 6:16; Eccl 11:2; et al.). However: "Principal" = נִסֵּךְ *neseek* poured out, molten image, one anointed; prince, anointed one.

Compare:

*And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*

Revelation 17:11

- a clone? (Dan 2:43);
- a *Nephilim*? (Gen 6; Num 13:33; et al.).

- 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.

The confederation of nations that will come against Israel in the Tribulation period.

"...waste the land" = literally, "eat up."

"...land of Nimrod": Nimrod was the original founder of both Babel (Babylon), and Assyria (Gen 10:10).

"...thus shall He deliver us": Yet, the Chief Shepherd will deliver them when He, once again "treadeth within their borders." His shall bring peace in a threefold sense:

- 1) He will defend Israel against her enemies (vv.5 & 6);
- 2) He will empower her to overcome her enemies (vv.7-9);
- 3) He will destroy weapons of warfare and idolatry (vv.10-15); so that warfare will no longer be a possibility (cf. Isa 9:4-6; Zech 12:1-13:1).

- 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.

"...remnant": The dew and rain refer to the blessing of the blessing the people of Israel will be among the nations. Since rain does not fall in Israel from the beginning of May to the latter part of October, the dew, the night mist of the summer months, is essential to the summer crops.

- 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.

This passage certainly does not depict the Israel of today: in a precarious predicament continually. But God has a destiny for them.

Their situation derives from their attitude toward the will of God: when contrary to that will, she is in distress and oppression and humiliation; when in the center of that will, she is a source of refreshing, power and blessing in the hand of God.

## "Head" and "Tail"

*And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:*

Deuteronomy 28:13

But first:

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

Hosea 5:15

Then:

- 9] Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

Ultimate victory is assured.

- 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:

To be usable in the hand of the Lord, He will remove all carnal supports in which she trusted.; for a contemporary parallel passage, cf. Isa 47:6-22. Horses and chariots were forbidden even in the time of Moses (Deut 17:16).

In case an amillennialist attempts to apply this to some other time, Micah emphasizes that this will come to pass “in that day,” which is yet future.

- 11] And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds:
- 12] And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers:
- 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.
- 14] And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities.

“...groves”: *Asherim* (trees carved as phallic symbols for pagan rituals, etc.): places of idol worship. They were prohibited (Deut 16:21) and to be destroyed (Ex 34:13), but persisted among the ungodly in Israel **nonetheless** (2 Kgs 13:6; 23:6; et al.).

God’s purification will include giving up:

- Foreign alliances vv. 10, 11
- The occult v.12
- False gods vv. 13, 14

- 15] And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

“The heathen”: the nations arrayed against Jerusalem in the “Day of the Lord,” the Great Tribulation period. Cf. Psalm 2! Joel 2, et al.

“...such as they have not heard”: They haven’t been listening!

*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 1:5

## Next Session

We will deal more about the “Great Tribulation” when we get to Chapter 7.

But first, in the next session, Chapter 6, will deal with their more immediate horizon and the practical application of what has gone before...

## Micah Chapter 6

### Organization

- Chapter 1: Sins against God
- Chapter 2: Sins against each other
- Chapter 3: Sins by their leaders
- Chapter 4: The Coming Kingdom
- Chapter 5: The Coming King
- **Chapter 6: The Coming Judgment**
- Chapter 7: Final Wrap-up

- 1] Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.

“Hear ye now”: The language implies that this third and final message of Micah (6:1-7:20) is to all the nations of the world, with Israel center stage. God’s contention is with His people Israel, but we can all learn important lessons...

“...mountains” = kingdoms (cf. Daniel 2:35, 44). *Many don’t recognize that the “Kingdom from Heaven” is the 5<sup>th</sup> in a list of 5!*

- 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 is calling Israel to court, with the nations as spectators. And then God does an astonishing thing: instead of lodging a charge against them, He asks, “What am I guilty of?” *What condescension of Almighty God Himself!*

- 3] O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

This is similar to the situation before the prophet Malachi: after their return from captivity, they became prosperous *and complacent!* God lays out the record of His dealings with them. Had He wearied them by excessive demands? (Cf. Isa 43:23,24.) Or by unfulfilled promises? (Jer 2:31).

- 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.

“...Miriam”: It is interesting to notice how often God points to the Exodus from Egypt as one of His most conspicuous demonstrations... Miriam is also included as a leader sent by God.

## Miriam

- The sister of Moses and Aaron (Ex 2:4-10; 1Chr 6:3).
- Her name is prominent in the history of the Exodus.
- She is called “the prophetess” (Ex 15:20).
- She took the lead in the song of triumph after the passage of the Red Sea;
- She also almost led a rebellion against Moses because of his Cushite wife, but God Himself straightened that out; Num 12:1-15.
- She died at Kadesh during the second encampment at that place, toward the close of the wanderings in the wilderness, and was buried there (Num 20:1).

- 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.

“...Balak (“empty”; “spoiler”): A son of Zippor, and king of the Moabites (Num 22:2, 4). From fear of the Israelites, who were encamped near the confines of his territory, he applied to Balaam to curse them; but in vain (Josh 24:9).

“...Balaam (“lord of the people,” foreigner or glutton): The son of Beor, he was a man of some rank among the Midianites (Num 31:8; 31:16). He resided at Pethor in Mesopotamia (Num 23:7 Deut 23:4).

## Balaam

Though dwelling among idolaters, he had some knowledge of the true God and was held in such reputation that it was supposed that he whom he blessed was blessed, and he whom he cursed was cursed.

When the Israelites were encamped on the plains of Moab, on the east of Jordan, Balak sent for Balaam “from Aram, out of the mountains of the east,” to curse them, but by the remarkable interposition of God he was utterly unable to fulfil Balak’s wish, however desirous he was to do so. God used his own donkey to rebuke the prophet (Num 22:21-34). The apostle Peter refers to this as an historical event, and the “way of Balaam” as selling his gift for profit (2 Pet 2:15, 16).

But God did not permit them to be cursed (Num 22-24). Balak took Balaam on four mountain tops, one by one, but Balaam could not curse Israel. God will not allow any man to curse His people (Ps 105:14, 15).

[As Balaam looked down upon the camp of Israel from a mountain top, he would have seen the encampment as *a cross!* (Cf. *Signs in the Heavens*, or “Hour 5” of *Learn the Bible in 24 Hours*, for details.)]

Though Balaam could not curse Israel, yet he suggested a mode by which the divine displeasure might be caused to descend upon them (Num 25:1). If you can’t fight them, join (and corrupt) them!

The “doctrine of Balaam” (Rev 2:14) is an allusion to the fact that it was through this teaching of Balaam that Balak learned that the way by which the Israelites might be defeated: leading them into sin.

Balaam was constrained to utter prophecies regarding the future of Israel of wonderful magnificence and beauty of expression, Num 24:5-9 including a “star out of Jacob” (Num 24:17). In a battle between Israel and the Midianites Balaam was slain while fighting on the side of Balak (Num 31:8).

“If you can’t lick them, join them”: Here are several other examples: The marriage of the church with the world after Constantine; Cf. Pergamos (Rev 2:12-17):

*Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.*

Revelation 2:13, 14

This led to Thyatira, and, ultimately, to Laodicea. (Review *Letters to Seven Churches for a detailed study of these critical passages of Revelation 2 & 3.*)

The insertion of psychology into the counsel of God. Peter warns us to “desire the unadulterated milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet 2:2). Psychology acknowledges the corrosive aspects of guilt *but has no way to deal with its cause*: sin.

“User friendly” churches that present a social gospel rather than *the* Gospel as defined: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Empty head trips: intellectualizing rather than really trusting in God the Word of God.

*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Colossians 2:8

- 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.

“...Shittim unto Gilgal”: The Israelites were forced to go all the way around Edom and then they came to Moab. Shittim was the last camping spot before they entered Moab. Gilgal was the first camping spot when they entered the Promised Land.

## The “Pure Religion” Passage

Now we come to that wonderful passage that is so widely misunderstood and abused by the liberals. God has pleaded with these people to come back to Him, to repent of their negligence and sins, and to turn to Him. He has cited His redemption of them in the past, how He redeemed them out of the land of Egypt (typifying “the world”), and provided for them through the wilderness. Now the people have four questions they ask—and they are good questions.

- 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?

“...shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?: Every person who believes in God asks this question: “How am I going to approach Him?” In Leviticus a series of offerings are specified; will they be adequate? Nothing reveals a proud heart more than man’s insistence on “doing something for God.” *This has it all backwards:*

*Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.*

John 6:28, 29

And the Philippian jailer asked the same question:

*And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

Acts 16:30, 31

- 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?

The Lord doesn’t need our generosity. We can’t add to the completed work of the cross. *It is blasphemy to even try!*

In Leviticus, the presentation of the meal offerings, and the peace offerings *had to be preceded by the burnt offering*. The presentation of ourselves and our substance could only be made *after* the sins had been dealt with and *a relationship* had been established.

Shall I give my firstborn *for my transgression, the fruit of my body* for the sin of my soul? This was an understandable question since they were surrounded by pagan people who offered human sacrifices to Molech and Baal (Jer 19:5; 32:35).

Two of the most godless kings of the Southern Kingdom indulged in human sacrifices: Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:3; 2 Chr 28:3) and Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:6). Child sacrifice was expressly prohibited (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut 12:31; 18:10).

The worshipers hypothetically wonder whether sacrificing their firstborn children would atone for their sins. This, in fact, is what King Ahaz did (2 Kgs 16:3; 2 Chr 28:3). The Ammonites sacrificed their children to their god, Molech (Lev 20:2-5; 1 Kgs 11:5).

This detestable practice spread to Phoenicia, Canaan, and even to the Israelites themselves on occasion. For God’s people to engage in child sacrifice would only increase their sins because God expressly prohibited it (Lev 18:21; Deut 18:10). Jeremiah condemned such a horrible ritual (Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:32). For the Biblical teaching on redeeming the “firstborn” see Ex 13:2, 13; 22:29; 34:20

Since the people of God’s covenant community were willing to bring any of these sacrifices to the Lord, they doubtless believed that he was bringing unjust charges against them. What the Lord really wanted most of all, however, was not the offerings but the hearts, allegiance, and obedience of the offerors (cf. Rom 12:1; Heb 10:4).

The truth taught in this passage is basically the same as that expressed in (1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6-8; 50:8-15, 23; 51:16-19; Isa 1:11-15; Jer 6:19-20; 7:22-23; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Zech 7:4-10).

God did require that they give Him the firstborn male of everything that was born to them: a cow, sheep, ox, or their son. However, anything that was *unclean, they were to redeem* (Ex 13:2; Num 18:15f). Man, too, was unclean, and thus could not be offered! He, too, was to be redeemed—both locally and ultimately!

Redemption: the purchase back of something that had been lost, by the payment of a ransom. The idea running through all these texts is that *payment must be made* for our redemption. The debt against us is not viewed as simply cancelled, but is fully paid.

Christ's blood or life, which he surrendered for them, is the "ransom" by which the deliverance of His people from the servitude of sin and from its penal consequences, is secured. It is the plain doctrine of Scripture that:

*Christ saves us neither by the mere exercise of power, nor by his doctrine, nor by his example, nor by the moral influence which he exerted, nor by any subjective influence on his people, whether natural or mystical, but as a satisfaction to divine justice, as an expiation for sin, and as a ransom from the curse and authority of the law, thus reconciling us to God by making it consistent with his perfection to exercise mercy toward sinners...*

*Hodge's Systematic Theology*

Note: The only firstborn ever requested to be offered was Isaac, the prophetic type "offered" on the very spot that our Father offered His Son 2,000 years later. Even here, God intervened, having made His point.

## The "Sermon on the Mount of the OT"

- 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?

This verse stands as the motto of the alcove of religion in the reading room of the Congressional Library in Washington." Numerous accolades have been showered on it. Politicians have quoted it often in their election campaigns (if only more would practice it!). The rabbis who commented on this verse called it a one-line summary of the whole law.

A joy and delight of both liberals and legalists because they think that it presents a works religion! What Micah is doing is answering the questions of sincere people who had not been taught the Word of God.

None of the foregoing assumptions embodied in their questions does God require. External religion without an internal experience is absolutely without value. Classic passages: 1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:11-20; Jer 7:21-23; Hos 6:6; Amos 4:5; 5:15, 22-23. We must be "born again."

*And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve*

*the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?*

Deuteronomy 10:12, 13

Micah 6:1-8 is a divine indictment, containing the further charges of dishonest business practices, lying, and acts of violence. The sentence is a life of futility, frustration, scorn, and destruction. Here is an outline of the next section:

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1) Opening statement                     | v. 9      |
| 2) Catalog of commercial and social sins | vv. 10-12 |
| 3) Announcement of punishment from God   | vv. 13-15 |
| 4) Summary statement                     | v. 16     |

[Source: Barker, K. L. (2001). Vol. 20: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (116). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.]

You are not saved by good works *because you do not have any good works!* It is addressed to "O Man"; that includes 21st century Man—Mr. and Mrs. Man. God requires three things:

- 1) To do justly—that is, to have a righteousness to present to God; that will pass muster before God. You are to be honest and true.
- 2) To love mercy—to be merciful in your dealings with others.
- 3) To walk humbly before thy God.

How are you going to do these things? By your own strength? Do you think you can do them without God's help? These are the fruit of the Holy Spirit:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Galatians 5:22,23

Remember Peter's summary of "the Law" in at the Council of Jerusalem:

*Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.*

Acts 15:10, 11

Paul also made it clear:

*For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded*



*is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Romans 8:5-9

How does the Spirit of God come to dwell in you? *Ye must be born again* (Jn 3:7).

*But as many as received Him, to them gave He the power [the right; the authority, the exousian power] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.*

John 1:12

“...sons of God”: This is a technical term that emphasizes a direct creation of God: in the OT, other than Adam, it always refers to angels (Gen 6, Job 1, et al.).

## The Predicament of Man

The condition of man is summarized in Rom 3:9-18: His clinical analysis is that he is sick, nigh unto death: “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1).

*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

Romans 3:10

This is not just a “NT concept”:

*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

Psalm 14:1-3

## The “Fool”

“Fool”: from a Latin word, “bellows”: suggesting full of hot air.

כֶּסֶל *kesyl*: dull, stupid fellow, simpleton, arrogant one.

עוֹיֵל *ewiyl*: foolish; of one who despises wisdom; of one who mocks when guilty; one who is quarrelsome, licentious.

נָבִל *nabal*: lacking moral sense (Nabal: one who refused to help David (1 Sam 25); not necessarily lacking normal intelligence; a lack of moral sense in the heart, not a mental problem in the head.)

*They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD. There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous.*

Psalm 14:3-5

Righteousness is what God requires, but both the OT and NT makes it obvious that we cannot present our righteousness to God *because we don't have any!*

If you can get to God by the route of Micah 6:8—by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God—and you can do that on your own, then when you get to heaven you can tell God to move over: now there's two of you! [This was one of Walter Martin's favorite “irreverences”...]

Bypassing God's way was Cain's big problem: Attempting sanctification without prior justification. Micah will now demonstrate how far they all have fallen short of the righteousness God requires:

- 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.

(Unlike Amos, Micah is an urban prophet writing to the city dwellers...)

“The Rod” is an emblem for judgment (Cf. Ps 2:9; Isa 10:5, 24). Our country is ripe for judgment:

*I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever.*

Thomas Jefferson, 1781

- 10] Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?

“...treasures of wickedness” = wealth accumulated through their unjust dealings.

- 11] Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?

Dishonest business dealings (cf. Lev 19:35, 36; Deut 25:13-16; Amos 8:5). [I must confess that in my previous 30-year career in the world's boardrooms, I found the standards higher than I have since encountered in my subsequent 20 years among “professional Christianity...”]

- 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.

We have lost the sanctity of a commitment—in our business dealings and in our marriages...

Could you find any better example of depravity, abuse of power, and violence than in the several recent administrations? Can you find any real credibility in the news media today? ...Among politicians (of either party)? It is significant that the United States is not mentioned in Bible prophecy. I do not expect us to be a major power in the final countdown.

- 13] Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.

See our briefing packs, *The Twilight's Last Gleaming*, or *Hosea Can You See* for a perspective of the state of our union...

- 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.

Shortages and famine ahead. Amos predicts a “famine of the Word of God” (Amos 8:11).

- 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 next chapter will make it clear that God would give ample opportunity to turn to Him. The people were going through the externalities of religion, but they were far from God. There was dishonesty in their dealings. There was impurity in their lives. There was violence, lying, and deceit...every flagrant sin a barrier to blessing.

- 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...house of Ahab”: Omri was the father of Ahab; both were bad news. Their evil influence was still impacting Micah’s day almost *200 years later!* One should study the prophetic book along with the historical book covering the same period. Micah should be studied along with the historical account of Hezekiah in the Southern Kingdom and Ahab and Jezebel in the Northern Kingdom (1 Kgs 16).

## Omri

**Omri** : When Elah was murdered by Zimri at Tirzah, Omri, his captain, was made king, in 931 B.C. (1 Kgs 16:15-27). For four years there was continued opposition to his reign. Tibni, another claimant to the throne, led the opposing party; but at the close of that period all his rivals were defeated, and he became king of Israel, “Tibni died and Omri reigned” (927 B.C.).

By his vigor and power he gained great eminence and consolidated his kingdom. He fixed his dynasty on the throne so firmly that it continued during four succeeding reigns.

Tirza was for six years the seat of his government; then he moved the capital to Samaria, where he died, and was succeeded by his son Ahab. “He wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him.”

Beth-omri, “the house” or “city of Omri,” is the name usually found on Assyrian inscriptions for Samaria.

In the Stele of Mesha (the “Moabite stone”), which was erected in Moab about twenty or thirty years after Omri’s death, it is recorded that Omri oppressed Moab till Mesha delivered the land: “Omri, king of Israel, oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab” (2 Kgs 1:1 3:4,5).

## The Moabite Stone

It was discovered on August 19, 1868, by a German missionary. It was 3 ft. 10 inches high and 2 ft. broad. With the exception of a very few variations, the Moabite language in which the inscription is written is identical with the Hebrew. It records that “Omri took the land of Medeba, and occupied it in his day and in the days of his son forty years.”



It consisted of thirty-four lines, written in Hebrew-Phoenician characters. It was set up by Mesha in about 900 B.C., as a record and memorial of his victories. It records 1) Mesha’s wars with Omri, 2) his public buildings, and 3) his wars against Horonaim. This inscription in a

remarkable degree supplements and corroborates the history of King Mesha as recorded in 2 Kgs 3:4-27

“...works of the house of Ahab”: Ahab and Jezebel made the worship of Baal the religion of Israel. [How about our own enforced paganism?]

There are tragic parallels to our own country. The immorality at the highest offices of the land, in the Congress, and in Washington in general, is deplorable. In a representative republic, the responsibility is even more widespread: they are all *our employees!*

I believe God is going to hold us all accountable before the Throne for our stewardship of the mandate and heritage that had come to us at such a high price...

Robert Bork, in his book, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, insists that only a spiritual revival can save America... The freedoms we enjoy are slowly eroding to the pressures of global terrorism, and the exploitation of the pagan left towards a “new world order.” Being a “Biblical Christian” is becoming increasingly “politically incorrect.”

## Next Session

The Final Chapter of Micah: Chapter 7. Re-read Micah 6 & 7 as a unit. Review your notes on the entire book... Mark the portions of the book which focus on:

- The Southern Kingdom: “Judah”
- The Northern Kingdom: “Israel”
- The Nation Israel (in the corporate sense)

Refresh yourself on the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12, 15, & 17).

## Micah Chapter 7

### Review

Micah prophesied during the reigns of: Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah over the Southern Kingdom (“Judah”) and Pekahiah, Pekah and Hoshea over the Northern Kingdom (“Israel”). This covers a period of 40 years.

Micah is concerned over the failure(s) of the Northern Kingdom, especially for their implications for the plight of the Southern Kingdom.

## What Makes Micah Different

If you study Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, you discover that their messages went *unheeded*. *Their warnings were rejected; judgment came.* It is interesting that the nearer God’s judgments were at hand, the more obstinately the false prophets denied that they would come. False prophecy was a gainful occupation, and they had a marketing advantage: the false prophets had man’s wishes on their side.

Hosea and Amos were ignored. Jeremiah was imprisoned. In Micah’s case, the message was heeded, repentance followed, and disaster was postponed for a century. Here was a prophet (like Jonah) that changed history! One man *can* make a difference. [**You might be just such a person!**]

## Historical Setting

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, Hosea and Amos. He probably was a friend of Isaiah, and his book has been called a miniature Book of Isaiah: There are many striking similarities between the two. In fact, Isaiah prefixes his second chapter with three verses from Micah’s prophecy.

[Source: E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI, 1950, p. 7.]

Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah; it bore fruit during the reign of Hezekiah (cf. 2 Kgs 18 - 20). [No kings of the Northern Kingdom are mentioned by the prophet; *only prophets of Israel make mention of the kings of Israel.*]

The capital of the Northern Kingdom was Samaria. The city was built originally by Omri, King of Israel, and was the seat of idolatry. It was made infamous by Ahab and Jezebel, who built a temple to Baal. God sent Elijah, Elisha, and Amos to turn them from their practices.

Hosea, Micah’s contemporary, also prophesied against the Northern Kingdom. His warnings went unheeded. God used their enemies as His instrument of judgment. (See *Hosea, Can You See?, our* briefing package on the parallels with America.)

In 734 B.C., the Assyrians carried away all of north Israel; in 721 B.C., Shalmanezar of Assyria attacked the northern capital of Samaria and

overthrew it, and deported the remaining people of the Northern Kingdom (“House of Israel”). Eight years later, Sennacherib, Shalmanezar’s successor, attacked the Southern Kingdom (“Judah”).

(“Sin-ecerib” = “sin multiplies his brothers”; they worshiped the moon god, “Sin.”)

At one point, the field commander appeared before the walls and challenged them for surrender; Sennacherib sent a letter to the same effect (2 Kgs 19:10-12). Hezekiah spread this letter before the Lord and received confirmation through Isaiah that the city would be spared; Sennacherib would fail. Hezekiah organized a revival, and smashed the idols of his predecessors; even the original brazen serpent (Num 21:8,9), which, after almost 1,000 years, had become a fetish to which they were burning incenses (2 Kgs 18:3, 4).

## The Hidden Hero?

However, Micah isn’t mentioned. Isaiah is the well-known prophet of that period, with direct access to the king. But we know from an incident a century later that it was actually because of Micah’s preaching that the people repented and Jerusalem was spared.

Jeremiah, 120 years later, was prophesying over the impending destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 26:4-6). His message offended the priests and the false prophets, so they seized him and brought him before the officials, demanding his death. Jeremiah gave his defense, citing the previous experience of Micah:

*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. 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.*

Jeremiah 26:19

As a result, Jeremiah was spared: 120 years later, Micah’s words were remembered and used by God to spare Jeremiah. In fact, it appears Micah lived to see the beginning of Hezekiah’s revival...

## Who Was He?

Comparatively little is known of Micah’s life. He was a rural prophet like Amos, not of the city or the palace like his contemporary, Isaiah. His writing is pungent and personal; he is touching and tender. Many of the passages will prove familiar to most Christians. Micah was the authority referred to by Herod’s advisors during the visit of the Magi (Mt 2:1-6). Jesus quotes Micah 7:6 in Matthew 10:35,36.

## Urban Focus

Micah pronounced judgment on the cities of Israel and on Jerusalem: the urban centers of the nation; he can be labeled “the prophet of the city”: condemning its violence, corruption, robbery, covetousness, gross materialism, spiritual bankruptcy, and illicit sex. Yet, through the gloom of impending judgment, Micah clearly saw the coming glory of the redemption of Israel, which makes this book especially relevant to our time! His grand question is, “Who is like unto Thee?”

## Key Verse

*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?*

Micah 6:8

## Analysis

Why was Micah’s ministry successful?

- 1) He identified himself personally with his people. He didn’t ask them to do something that he refused to do himself (cf. v.8 with v.16).
- 2) He was specific. Town by town...
- 3) He was persistent. He didn’t give up. He preached through three succeeding reigns: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The first two each reigned 16 years each; it appears that he may have preached for 20 years without any apparent signs of success.

Micah was shocked by the conditions in the capital city of Jerusalem: the corruption of their *leadership* and evil among all the ruling classes: the courts; the palaces; and the Temple (and how they work hand-in-hand among themselves) ...*just as we are when we visit our own capital!*

Is it any surprise to learn that governments have an compelling incentive to *promote* immorality?! The only potential offset—in a representative

republic—is an electorate that shares a *God-fearing* worldview as a restraining influence... There are three steps (re: Judges; Isaiah) to the downfall of a nation:

- 1) Spiritual apostasy;
- 2) Immorality;
- 3) Political anarchy.

The primary problem wasn't political anarchy... Even immorality was simply *only a symptom*: It all begins with spiritual apostasy: a turning away from the true and living God.

## The Lifecycle of Nations

- Alexander Tyler
- Edward Gibbon
- C.E.M. Joad
- C. Northcote Parkinson
- Jim Black

## When Nations Die (Jim Nelson Black)

- **Social Decay**
  - Crisis of Lawlessness
  - Loss of Economic Discipline
  - Rising Bureaucracy
- **Cultural Decay**
  - Decline of Education
  - Weakening of Cultural Foundations
  - Loss of Respect for Traditional Values
- **Moral Decay**
  - Rise of Immorality
  - Decay of Religious Belief
  - Devaluing of Human Life

## Lifecycle of Democracies

*A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse... from the public treasury... The average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years.*

—Alexander Tyler, 1750

## The Cycle of Nations

*from bondage to spiritual faith;  
from spiritual faith to great courage;  
from courage to liberty;  
from liberty to abundance;  
from abundance to complacency;  
from complacency to apathy;  
from apathy to dependency;  
from dependence back again into bondage.*

—Alexander Tyler, 1750

## The Separation of Powers

Balance of Power: Our three branches—the legislative, executive and judiciary—were inspired by Isaiah 33:22:

- “The Lord is our judge” establishing our judiciary;
- “The Lord is our lawgiver” establishing the legislative;
- “The Lord is our King” establishing the executive.

Micah Chapter 3 has three sections: 1) Judges and the corruption of the courts (vv.1-4); 2) Prophets market-driven (vv.5-8); and 3) Politicians for hire (vv.9-12).

Corrupt leadership: with emphasis on these three: Judges, Prophets, and Politicians (cf. Isaiah 5:8-23).

## “Politics”

*A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles; the conduct of public affairs for private advantage.*

Ambrose Bierce *The Devil's Dictionary*

## The Prophet Balaam

- “Doctrine of Balaam” (Rev 2:14): Spiritual unchastity; marriage with the world
- “Way of Balaam” (2 Pet 2:15): Hireling = making a “market” for his gift
- “Error of Balaam” (Jude 11): Sacrificing eternal riches for temporal gain.



*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

Daniel 2:44

*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.*

Micah 4:1

Zion will be the governmental and spiritual center of the whole world. The Temple (or a palace?) will be rebuilt. The “tabernacle of David” (Amos 9:11).

## Unconditional Covenants

- **The Abrahamic Covenant** Gen 12
  - Challenged by the world
- **The Land Covenant** Gen 15
  - Challenged by Islam
- **The Davidic Covenant** 2 Sam 7
  - Challenged by the Church
- **The Everlasting Covenant** Jer 31:31

*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. 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.*

Isaiah 9:6,7

*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Luke 1:31-33

*When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power..*

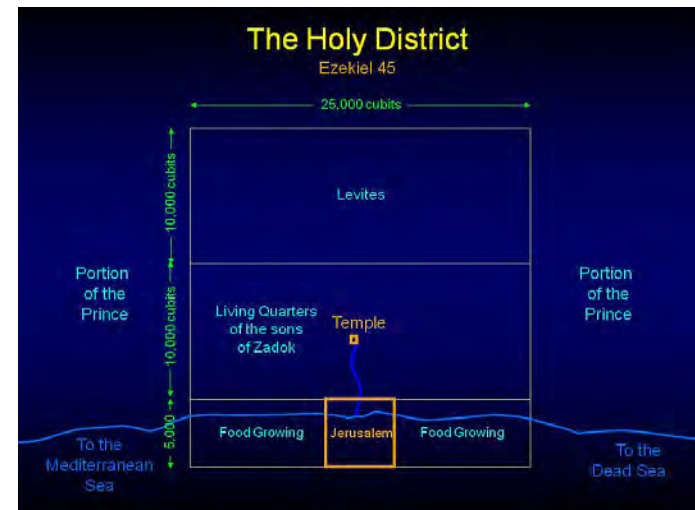
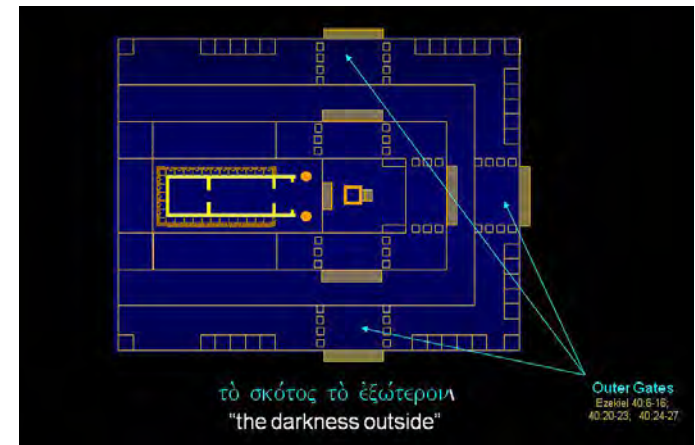
Acts 1:6,7

*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.*

Micah 4:2

*And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again **the Tabernacle of David**, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

Acts 15:15-18



## The Parable of the Trees (Judges 9:7-15)

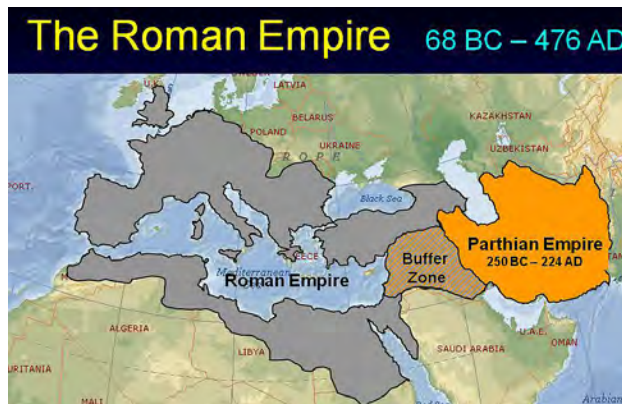
- Olive Tree – Valuable oil
- Fig Tree – Sweet Fruit
- Vine – Wine
- Bramble – No fruit
- Too low for shade
- Only good as fuel for the fire

*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 be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

Micah 5:2

*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.*

Micah 5:5



It was an *Assyrian* that oppressed Israel during their sojourn in Egypt: the Pharaoh (a title of the ruler) of that day was *not* an Egyptian! (Isa 52:4). [That was why the Pharaoh was so insecure with the growth of the non-Egyptian population thus rendered into slavery (Ex 1:8-10).]

## “The Assyrian”

“The Assyrian”: a title of the Antichrist? Sennacherib was but a type; this could be but a generic reference, or it could be a hint more specific (cf. Isa 10:5, 24; 14:25, 26). The final climax will a *confederated movement on the part of the nations* of the earth to blot out God’s chosen people Israel (Joel 3, Zech 12 & 14, et al.).

## Organization

- Chapter 1: Sins against God
- Chapter 2: Sins against each other
- Chapter 3: Sins by their leaders
- Chapter 4: The Coming Kingdom
- Chapter 5: The Coming King
- Chapter 6: The Coming Judgment
- **Chapter 7: Final Wrap-Up**

## Micah 7

This last chapter is similar to Jeremiah’s Book of Lamentations. It also echoes the prayer of the repentant remnant in the “Days of Jacob’s Trouble.”

## The Soliloquy of Penitence: vv.1-9

These had local application during the days of Micah; yet, they also are a graphic portrayal of the conditions of the days of the Antichrist. [Contrast: repentance in Hezekiah’s day (credited to Micah!) vs. the climax in Great Tribulation (Mt 24:9-31).]

- 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.

This is very personal. The vine is used as a picture of Israel. The vine is not producing fruit (cf Ps 80:8, 9; Isa 5:1-7; 28:4; Hosea 9:10).

- 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. (Nets were used for hunting as well as fishing.) It is not safe to walk the streets of our major cities. Lawlessness abounds. There are exceptions; however, “the good man is perished out of the earth.”
- 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.

Bribery and corruption abound. The rule of law has even been abandoned at the highest levels of our government. Our entertainments and “news” broadcasts are tailored by the spin doctors. They promote immorality, violence, anything sacred (cf. Naboth’s vineyard: 1 Kgs 21; Cf. Rev 2:20).

- 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.

Even the best of them is as a briar: you had to be careful not get stuck. Even the most upright was “sharp” in the deceitful sense (cf. 2 Sam 23:6, 7). [Example: Coeur d’Alene: The French Canadian trappers called the local indians the “Coeur d’Alenes,” “Hearts of the Owl,” as a backhanded compliment as they were “sharp traders.”]

“...the day of the watchmen cometh” (cf. Isa 21:6; Ezek 33:2): Jesus warned there would come “upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring” (Lk 21:25). Confusion would be the characteristic of the end of the age. The standards of Micah 6:8 were not—and could not—be kept. Many who assumed they were safe we not...

- 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.

It’s a rough world out there. Jesus warned us,

*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

Matthew 10:34

...and He goes on to emphasize that you will not be able to trust your own family (cf. v.6).

We live in a day when one’s word means less than it used to. We have lost the sanctity of commitment: in business; and in our marriages. This also goes for—especially for—Bible teaching. Test it all against the Word of God. Remember our “trade mark”: Acts 17:11 Also, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess 5:21).

- 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.

Jesus quotes this very passage in Matthew 10:21-36.

- 7] Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

There is only one place to rest our confidence: on Him. It sounds trite; but it is the only thing that abides.

*Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken ...And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*

Luke 21:26, 28

And that’s exactly what Micah is saying: “Therefore I will look unto the Lord...”

- 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.

Micah’s “faith in the night seasons.” [That’s a plug for our book by the same name!]

- 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.

His confidence comes from the only place it should: from complete submission to God. He is confessing his individual—and national—sins.

We, too, have gone along with the affluent society and accepted its comforts. We have snickered at the lack of integrity in public life. We have closed our eyes to the gross immorality that is around us. It is time, indeed, for us also to confess our sins.

In Israel’s case, God used the “rod” of Assyria to punish them for their sins... In Judah’s case, it will be Babylon that will be His “rod...” Is the judgment of America overdue?...

- 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.

The nations are bent on Israel’s annihilation. Yet, ultimately, the nations will see that God was dealing with His people; after they are restored, it will be *they who are “trodden down as mire in the streets.”*

- 11] In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed.

“...thy walls are to be built”: Verses 11 and 12 look to a later and final fulfillment. [It is interesting that Daniel’s “69 weeks” were triggered by the decree that the *walls were to be built* (not the Temple as many have erroneously assumed); cf. Dan 9:25.]

- 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.

“...from Assyria”: As we saw in Chapter 4, during the Millennial Kingdom all nations shall come to Zion, even their former enemy Assyria.

*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.*

Micah 4:2

Cf. Isaiah 19:23-25, et al.

- 13] Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

Micah reminds them that before this time of blessing, punishment lies before them. The land and the people are inextricably linked together. *That's what makes the current confrontations in the Middle East so significant!*

- 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.

Carmel, Bashan, and Gilead were all highly desirable grazing lands—that's why they were favored by the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh (Deut 3:12-17; Jer 50:19 here, for the whole land; cf. Zech 11:1-3 for a similar synecdoche).

The “days of old” refer to the days of David and Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 4:15 vs. Micah 4:4).

- 15] According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things.

God's answer (vv.15-17). God again references the Exodus as one of His most important achievements...

- 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.

All nations will be defeated; and astounded. Recall Rahab's confession (Josh 2:10-11). Israel will be regathered in order to possess the land (v.14) and this regathering will be accomplished by miracles (v.15).

When the Gentiles see this, they will cease reproaching the Jews and have a reverential fear of the Jews. They will then submit to the God of Israel (vv.16-17).

- 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.

Licking the dust? Is this an allusion to Gen 3:14?

Moving out of their holes? Cf. Rev. 6:15,16.

*And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:*

Revelation 6:15,16

Cf. Joshua 10:16, 22, 24.

- 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.

There is something that God has not seen but which you and I see every day (?). What has God not seen? His equal.(first asked): Cf. Ex 15:11; 1 Kgs 8:23; Ps 113:5, 6; et al. God is unique:

- 1) He is the Creator. The gods of the heathen are creatures; created **things** (Rom 1:21-23; Isa 44:16, 17; 46:5-7)
- 2) He is holy and righteous. Our God is a holy God, and He reveals His anger against sin.
- 3) He pardons iniquity and delights in mercy (v.18). Ex 33:18-19; 34:5-7; Ps 103:9, 10; Isa 57:16.

- 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.

“...the depths of the sea”: Ex 15:4, 10; Cf. Jer 50:20.

- His forgiveness is like a *debt*: Isa 43:25; Acts 3:19; Col 2:14
- His forgiveness is like the *healing of a disease*: Jer 3:22; Isa 61:1.
- His forgiveness is pictured as the *cleansing of a pollution, a contamination*: Titus 3:5; John 1:7.

- He never forgives until the debt is paid. Christ paid my debt on the cross.
- How about *yours*?

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 will perform on the basis of His covenant: to Abraham (Gen 12:2,3) to Isaac (Gen 26:24) and to Jacob (Gen 28:13-14). The things God has sworn to Abraham and their fathers are irrefutable and immutable. Yet most of the churches deny them.

### ***Taschlich***

The last three verses are joined to the book of Jonah for reading in the synagogue on the afternoon of *Yom Kippur*; *the Day of Atonement*.

Once a year, the orthodox Jew goes to a running stream or river and symbolically empties his pockets of his sins into the water, while he recites verses 18-20. The service is called *Taschlich*, after the Hebrew word meaning “thou wilt cast.”

### **Next Session**

Read Zephaniah Chapter 1.

## **Zephaniah Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Zephaniah means “Whom the Lord hides (or protects).” He was born during the latter part of the reign of Manasseh (686-642 B.C.); cf. 2 Kgs 21:16. Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah.

### **Dating Authentication**

Zephaniah’s prophecy was given after Josiah’s revival, for these reasons:

- 1) Cutting off the remnant of Baal worship implied that a religious awakening was in progress (Zeph 1:4).
- 2) Jeremiah, who prophesied long after 622 (as well as before), described Judah’s religious and moral condition much as did Zephaniah (cf. Jer 8:2; 19:13 with Zeph 1:5; cf. Jer 5:2, 7 with Zeph 1:5b; and cf. Jer 8:8-9 with Zeph 3:4).
- 3) The fact that the king’s sons wore foreign apparel suggests that they were old enough to make their own choices (Zeph 1:8).
- 4) Zephaniah’s frequent quotations of the Law suggest that he was using the sources discovered by Hilkiah (cf. v. 13 with Deut 28:30, 39; cf. Zeph 1:15 with Deut 4:11; cf. Zeph 1:17 with Deut 28:29; cf. Zeph 2:2 with Deut 28:15-62).
- 5) Zephaniah’s message of impending judgment would be appropriate for those who spurned the religious revival under Josiah. Thus his prophecy was given sometime after the time of Josiah’s revival in 622 B.C., but before the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C.—which Zephaniah indicated was still in existence then as the capital of the Assyrian Empire (Zeph 2:13).

### **Historical Setting**

Politically, Judah was benefiting from a power vacuum among the super-powers of the day, so much so that King Josiah extended his influence militarily as far north as Naphtali.

At that time Assyria—which had carried off the 10 Northern tribes in 722 B.C., under Sargon II—was rapidly suffering eclipse. When Sin-shar-ishkun (623-612 B.C.), Ashurbanipal’s son, was reigning over Assyria,



the Neo-Babylonian Empire began to emerge under Nabopolassar in 626. Also the Medes, under Cyaxares II in 625, pulled out from under Assyrian authority.

The collapse of the Assyrian Empire was delayed as the Egyptians under Psamtik I (664-609 B.C.) allied with them, but a coalition of Medes and Babylonians destroyed Assyria's capital city, Nineveh, in 612.

Before Josiah's reign, Manasseh (695-642 B.C.) and Manasseh's son Amon (642-640 B.C.) had introduced wicked practices into Judah. So Josiah was encouraged to remove Assyrian religious practices from Judah. As a result Judah prospered politically.

Manasseh built altars to Baal and worshiped the sun, moon, and stars. He built altars to these stellar objects and placed them in the temple courts (2 Kings 21:4-5) and he made a carved Asherah pole (an image of the goddess Asherah) and placed it in the temple (2 Kgs 21:7). Child sacrifice and astrology prospered (2 Kgs 21:6; 23:10-11).

King Amon, who may have been named after an Egyptian deity, continued his father's policies until his assassination (2 Kgs 21:19-26; 2 Chr 33:21-25).

Josiah succeeded Amon in 640 B.C. at the age of 8. In 632, at age 16, Josiah began to seek after the God of his forefather David. In 628, Josiah started a reform movement in which much of the idolatry was purged from Jerusalem and Judah.

About that time Jeremiah (627 B.C.) commenced his ministry and Judah moved toward independence from Assyria with a potential revival of the idea of an undivided kingdom like that of David and Solomon.

Then in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah's reign (622 B.C.) a copy of the Law was discovered by Hilkiah the high priest (2 Kgs 22:3-8). This accentuated the religious renewal, including a new enthusiasm for celebrating the Passover (2 Kgs 23:1-25; 2 Chr 35:3ff).

Unfortunately the promising reform movement was superficial for it did not deeply affect the politico-religious life of the nation. Worship of Yahweh was reestablished, but idolatry was not entirely removed. This may also explain why the Priests had removed the Ark of the Covenant and sought protection under Pharaoh Necho (Cf. 2 Chr 35:3ff).

Both Zephaniah and Jeremiah prophesied to a politically prospering people of coming judgment because Josiah's reform movement still went unheeded. Baal was again being worshiped (Cf. Jer 19:5; 32:35). This may be why the Ark spent several centuries on Elephantine Island in Egypt before being moved to Tana Kirkos Island on Lake Tana, Ethiopia. (Note: Pharaoh Necho was Ethiopian.)

## Day of the Lord

The phrase "The Day of the Lord" occurs seven times in this book. Judgment would begin with God's people, Israel (Isa 2:5-3:26; Ezek 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; Zeph 1:7, 14; Zech 14:1). It would begin with a battle cry as the Lord summoned His enemies to prepare for battle (Isa 13:3-5; Ezek 30:2,3; Joel 1:15).

It would be a day of darkness (Ezek 30:3) and fire (Zeph 1:18; Mal 4:1) and of cataclysmic events (Isa 34:4), when the earth would tremble (Joel 2:1-11).

"The Day of the Lord" sometimes involves the judgment of God's people, including the Northern Kingdom (at the hands of the Assyrians; cf. Amos 5:18, 20); and Judah (at the hands of the Babylonians; cf. Lam 1:12; 2:1, 21-22; Ezek 7:19; 13:5; Zeph 2:2-3). Sometimes this judgment appears in the context of a more universal judgment on all nations (cf. Isa 2:12; Zeph 1:18).

These examples of the Lord's intervention in history prefigure that final time period when He will annihilate His enemies on a more universal scale and restore Israel (for a thorough development of this relationship between history and eschatology, see Isa chapters 13-27).

The Day of the Lord, however, as other Scriptures show, will include other events:

- 1) Before Israel's enemies will be destroyed they will plunder and devastate Israel (Zech 14:1-2). This will be a time of anguish for Israel (Zeph 1:7-18; cf. Dan. 12:1) Jesus called this time period (the Great Tribulation) a time of "great distress" for the nation (Mt 24:21).
- 2) After the Lord will destroy His enemies (at Messiah's return) the day of the Lord will include a time of blessing for Israel, known as the Millennium (cf. Obad 15 with Obad 21).

- 3) Then, after the Millennium the day of the Lord will also include the destruction of the present heavens and earth and the making of new heavens and a new earth (2 Pet 3:10, 12-13).

Therefore, “the Day of the Lord” will be a lengthy time period including both judgment and blessing. It will begin soon after the Rapture and will include the seven-year Tribulation, the return of the Messiah, the Millennium, and the making of the new heavens and new earth.

Obviously this contradicts the view of some that at the end of the Great Tribulation the Rapture will occur and the day of the Lord will then begin.

In the Day of the Lord, Babylon (Isa 13:1, 6, 9), Egypt (Jer 46:10-11), Edom (Obad 1,15), and other nations (Joel 2:31; 3:14; Obad 14) would be laid waste as God intervened to punish sin that had come to a climax.

The Day of the Lord will begin with the Tribulation period, “The time of Jacob’s Trouble”:

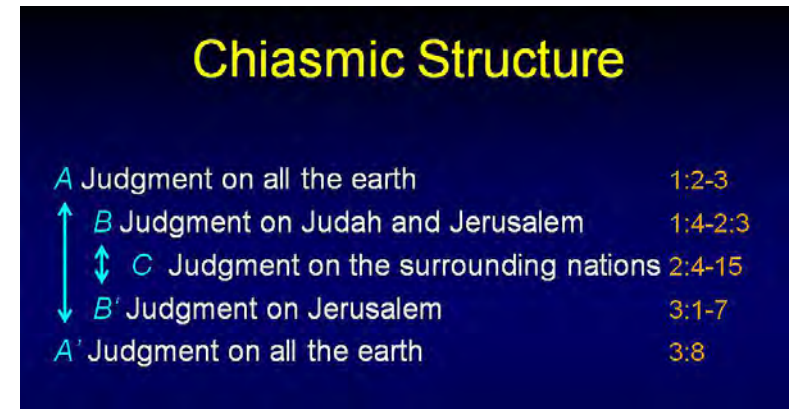
- In OT: Jer 30:7; Isa 24:20-21; 26:20-21; 34:1-3; Joel 1:15; 2:2; Amos 5:18; Zeph 1:14-18;
- in NT: Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1, 7; 16:5-7; 19:1, 2; and, it would embrace the entire Millennium.

It was spoken of as a “day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12); a “day of judgment” (2 Pet 2:9); and, a “day of wrath” (Rev 6:17).

There are 1,845 references to Christ’s rule on the earth in the Old Testament. A total of 17 OT books give prominence to the event. Of 216 chapters in the New Testament, there are 318 references to the Second Coming. It is mentioned in 23 of the 27 books (excepting three that are single-chapter letters to private individuals, and Galatians)

For every prophecy relating to His first coming, there are eight treating His Second Coming. Still, most people assume that the future is but a linear extrapolation of the present; life will just go on. But the Bible says otherwise.

One of the problems in many of the Old Testament prophecies is the juxtaposition of the immediate and far horizons (e.g., Daniel 11, before and after verse 36, et al).

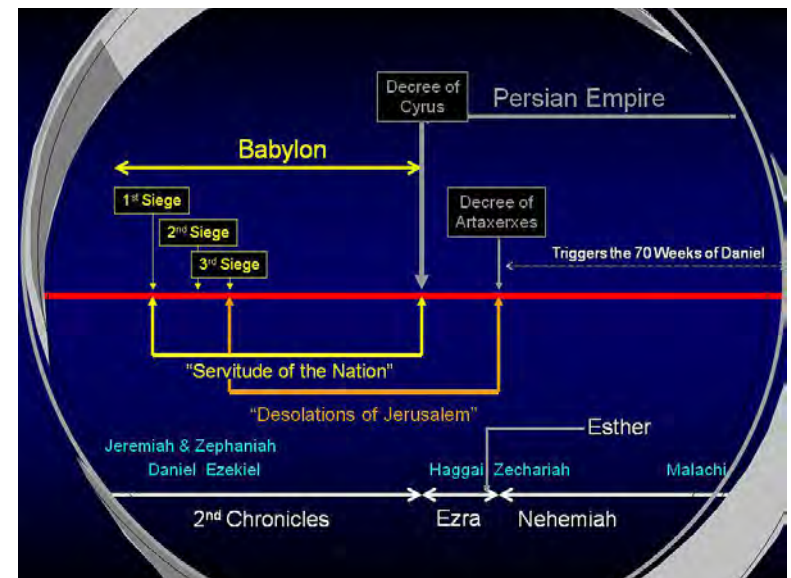


## Zephaniah Chapter 1

A warning of impending judgment

- The judgment announced Zeph 1:2-6
- The judgment defined Zeph 1:7-13
- The judgment described Zeph 1:14-18

- 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.



Zephaniah identifies himself better than any of the other minor prophets—four generations, the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah and thus of royal blood.

## Kings of Judah

- **Ahaz**
- **Hezekiah:** 12<sup>th</sup> king of Judah; son of the unbelieving Ahaz; ascended the throne at the age of 25 in 726 B.C. Of his faithfulness it is written: “He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him, for he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him but kept His commandments” (2 Kgs 18:5).
- **Manasseh:** Son born to Hezekiah 12 years before his death. Manasseh’s reign was the longest of the reigns of Judah’s kings, 55 years (2 Kgs 21:1-18; 2 Chr 33:1-20). He filled Jerusalem with blood: “Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah that whosoever heareth it both his ears shall tingle, and I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab (i.e. I will destroy it as I did Samaria and Ahab), and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, turning it upside down,” (2 Kgs 21:13, 16; 24:4).
- **Amon:** Possibly the name was given by Manasseh, when an idolater, from the Egyptian god. He reigned from 642 B.C. to 640 B.C. (2 Kgs 21:19; 2 Chr 33:20). His own servants conspired and slew him in his own house, and in their turn were slain by the people, who raised his son Josiah to the throne.
- **Josiah:** See below.

- Jehoahaz
- Jehoiakim
- Jehoiachin
- Zedekiah

Bad News Losers:  
Deterioration leads to  
Babylonian Captivity

## Josiah

He had royal blood in his veins, but more important, he had the message of God on his lips. Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight, and at the age of sixteen he committed himself to the Lord. Religious idolatry was rampant because his father, Amon, had reverted to Manasseh’s (55

years of) earlier evil practices. When he was twenty, he began a great reformation in the land, pulling down the idols and judging the false priests and prophets. He then began to rebuild the temple and led the nation in a celebration of the Passover.

...in the days of Josiah”: Zephaniah was the swan song of the Davidic kingdom and he is credited with giving impetus to the revival during the reign of Josiah, the happiest in Judah’s experience. However, Zephaniah saw deeper: he saw the hearts of the people, and he knew that their religious zeal was not sincere.

The reforms were shallow; the people got rid of the idols in their homes, but not the idols in their hearts. The rulers of the land were still greedy and disobedient, and the city of Jerusalem was the source of all kinds of wickedness in the land.

Even today, many believers lack discernment and think that every “religious movement” is a genuine work of the Lord. Sometimes mere outward reformation only prepares the way for a work of the devil (Mt 12:43–45).

## Huldah

חַלְדָּה *Chuldah* The Prophetess. The king, high priest, counselors, etc., appealed to her rather than to the priests, Levites, or Jeremiah; her word was accepted by all as the word of Yahweh (2 Kgs 22:14-20; 2 Chr 34:22-29). Why?

## Assyria

In 721 B.C., under Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) Assyria overran the Northern Kingdom and deported them throughout their empire (2 Kgs 17). Residents of the upper classes of people in Babylonia and Syria were then settled in the cities of Samaria. (This manner of mixing peoples had been instituted by Tiglath-pileser III as a means of minimizing the chances of rebellion among the subjugated peoples; 2 Kgs 17:24). These merged peoples became the Samaritans of the later years (Jn 4:9, etc.).

Sargon had scarcely completed the overthrow of Israel when he was faced with the rebellion in Babylonia. No sooner had this been put down when he became entangled in campaigns in Asia Minor and Urartu (ancient Armenia).

When he died, he was followed on the throne successively by Sen-nacherib (705-681 B.C.), Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.), and Ashurbanipal (669-633 B.C.). Sennecharib likewise became involved in suppressing revolts as far west as Cilicia, where he captured the city of Tarsus in 698 B.C. He was murdered by his sons.

Esarhaddon succeeded him, and was faced with considerable opposition from peoples to the north: the Cimmerians and Scythians. In the course of time, however, he ultimately succeeded in his invasions of Egypt.

Ashurbanipal, his successor, relentlessly subjugated Egypt. Upon his death the might of Assyria began to wane and his successors could do little to quell the forces against them.

In 614 B.C. the Babylonians, aided by the Medes, overthrew the Assyrian capital of Asshur and in 612 B.C. Nineveh suffered a similar fate.

When Assyria began to decline in the face of the emergence of the Babylonians, Egypt fought two major battles against the Babylonians at Carchemish (modern Jerablus). They were nominally victorious in the first encounter (during which Josiah was tragically killed; 2 Kgs 23:29-30; 2 Chr 35:20-27; Jer 46) but were severely beaten by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C., establishing Babylonian supremacy in the region.

It was the invasion by the Babylonians that Zephaniah predicted in the forthcoming passages (Zeph 1:10-17; 2:4-7, et al.).

- 2] I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD.

“...utterly consume”: Utterly *scrape* the land. As we move further into this prophecy, we will recognize that this judgment covers more than just the land of Israel. It is a worldwide devastation that is predicted here.

The Book of Revelation confirms this and places the time of this judgment as the Great Tribulation Period. During that period, this earth will absolutely be denuded by the judgments that will come upon it. This will occur right before God brings in the millennial kingdom and renews the earth.

- 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.

Zephaniah blends the near and far prophetic views together. The immediate judgment of Judah prefigures a far greater worldwide time of trouble to come upon Israel and the nations of the world (Dan 12:1; Mt 24:21; Rev 8:1-20:3 Jer 30:5-7; Joel 3:2-17).

This would all be preparatory to Israel’s final restoration and kingdom blessing (Jer 30:8-9; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15; Zeph 3:14-20; Hag 2:20-23; Zech 8:20-21; 14:16-21; Mal 4:1-4; Acts 1:6; Rom 11:25-36; Rev 20:4-6).

“...man, beast, fowl, fishes...”: Interestingly these four are in reverse order from Creation:

- |                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| • fish,                       | Gen 1:20a |
| • birds,                      | Gen 1:20b |
| • livestock and wild animals, | Gen 1:24  |
| • and man                     | Gen 1:26  |

- 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;

Judah and Jerusalem are to be singled out for judgment.

“Chermarims” means “black priests.”

The Scriptures, beginning with the Book of Judges, teach a philosophy of human government, which you will find was true of God’s people and which has been true of every nation.

- 1) The first step in a nation’s decline is *Religious Apostasy*, a turning from the living and true God.
- 2) The second step downward for a nation is *Immorality*.
- 3) The third step downward is *Political Anarchy*.

## The Church of Laodicea

This betrayal of Christ in the name of Christianity is one reason for the moral and spiritual malaise with which this country is afflicted. The melancholy fact is that the churches no longer influence the development of national character. People go to church mainly because of an impulse to participate in a service of entertainment, not because of any spiritual guidance they expect from the clergyman.



[Source: McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*.  
electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 3:865.]

Judgment begins with the “household of God” (1 Pet 4:17). Churches no longer influence the development of national character. In our culture, there is no longer any connection between character and destiny.

## Five Reasons for the Decline and Fall of Rome

- 1) The undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home as the basis of society;
- 2) Higher and higher taxes; the spending of public money for free bread and circuses;
- 3) The mad craze for pleasure; sports and entertainments (ever more violent);
- 4) The building of great armaments, even though the enemy was within;
- 5) The decay of religion, fading into mere form, losing power to guide the people.

[Source: Gibbon (a non-Christian historian).]

- 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;

“...host of heaven (Baalim, astral deities)”: the sun, moon, stars... Mars! (See our Briefing Package on the *Signs in the Heavens*, or our Commentary on *Joshua* for further study.)

## Three Forms of Idolatry

After Zephaniah said that God would remove the false priests, he then referred to three forms of idolatrous worship, introducing each of them by the phrase “**those who.**”

First, he noted the worshipers of stellar bodies, people who bow down on flat housetops (cf. Jer 19:13; 2:29) as star-worshipers—through which the powers of nature were supposedly harnessed. The sun, moon, and stars were regarded as deities. Though God had clearly warned against this practice (Deut 4:19), Manasseh led the way in this perversion also (2 Kgs 21:3, 5; cf. 2 Kgs 23:4-5).

Second, Zephaniah mentioned those who attempted to combine the worship of Yahweh with the worship of Molech, a form of religious

syncretism. Molech was the chief god of the Ammonites (1 Kgs 11:33), a people east of the Dead Sea (cf. Zeph 2:8-9). Jeremiah, a contemporary of Zephaniah, said the Jews were sacrificing children to Molech (Jer. 32:35; cf. 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6). The Hebrew *Malkām* (Zeph 1:5) is a variant spelling of “Molech.” To swear by a deity meant to pronounce an oath under the threat of punishment by that deity if one failed to carry out his oath.

Third, the prophet spoke of others who were religiously indifferent and unconcerned about worshipping the true God (v. 6), though they may not have been worshipping other gods.

Baal (Mars) was the son of El, in the Canaanite pantheon, the god of war. His sister-consort was Anath. *Malcham* is the name of Molech, the god of the Ammonites. Sacrifice of children in Hinom Valley...*while they still professed Temple worship.* [We also sacrifice children, in the Holy of Holies: “ye are the temple of God.”]

- 6] And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him.

Two groups: 1) Those who had known the truth and departed; backsliders and 2) Those who are indifferent: the unsaved. *Ecumenical strategies are abhorrent to a jealous God, who puts His Word even above His name* (Ps 138:2)

It is easy to lose sight of the fact that God’s people had been blessed above all other nations. It was their base ingratitude to Him that finally brings down His wrath. Any form of greed or covetousness is regarded by God as idolatry (Col 3:5). We become like the gods we worship (Ps 135:18).

## Nonlinearities

- If Satan have half the heart, he will have all;
- If the Lord have but half offered to Him, He will have none.

- 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.

“Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD”: The lack of reverence for God today: the notion that Jesus is sort of a buddy; that God is “the man upstairs”; that we can indulge in casualness about our Creation and our Redemption...



“...the day of the Lord”: first mention in this book. It will begin when the Church leaves this Earth. This is the first of 19 references in Zephaniah to “the day,” “that day,” “a day,” “the day of the Lord’s wrath,” and similar phrases referring to “the day of the Lord.” (Here, there is no definite article; this is but a precursor; cf. Rev 1:10.)

“...the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice...”: Biting sarcasm? His guests will be the sacrifice... Guests ( vs. “the called ones” = Zeph 2:3?).

- 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.

Zedekiah’s children killed, his eyes put out...2 Kgs 24-25 [Jer 32:4; Ezek 12:13]. Huldah the prophetess had intimated that which Zephaniah now more expressly foretells (2 Kgs 22:20). The Lord had made some stipulations about Israelite dress (Num 15:38; Deut 22:11–12).

In addition to the idolaters, Judah’s royalty were also the objects of God’s scorn (vv. 4-7); they included **princes** cf. Jer. 36:12; Hos 8:4 (officers of the king’s court;), Josiah’s **sons**, and the aristocracy who evidenced their disobedience by wearing the latest fashions from Nineveh and Babylon (**foreign clothes**). Adopting foreign dress outwardly most likely implied that they also had absorbed foreign values and practices inwardly.

Josiah’s sons were certainly punished: His son Jehoahaz reigned only three months and then was captured by Pharaoh Neco II and taken to Egypt (2 Kgs 23:31-34). Josiah’s wicked son Jehoiakim, who reigned for 11 years (2 Kgs 23:36) was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:1-2); Jehoiakim’s son Jehoiachin reigned only three months in 597 and was taken captive to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:8-16). Judah’s last king, Zedekiah, another of Josiah’s sons, was blinded by Nebuchadnezzar and taken to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:18-25:7).

- 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.

“...leap on the threshold”: In imitation of the Philistine fear of not treading on the threshold, which arose from the head and hands of Dagon being broken off on the threshold before the ark (1 Sam 5:4,5, Ezek 9:3; 10:4; 46:2; 47:1). This was viewed superstitiously as the abode of demons, thus a place of particular danger. In Roman times, you find its expression in carrying a bride across the threshold, etc.

- 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.

“...the fish gate” = Damascus Gate.

- 11] Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.

*Maktesh* = mortar, or deep hollow. A depression where the marketplace was situated; the Tyropean Valley, “cheesemakers’ valley,” alongside the temple where the Wailing Wall is today...(!)

- 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.

“...search Jerusalem with candles”: Cf. the search for leaven on Passover... Josephus wrote about a later invasion in which the city’s aristocracy were literally dragged from the sewer system where they hid for fear of death.

“...settled on their lees”: “hardened” or crusted; image from the crust formed at the bottom of wines long left undisturbed (Jer 48:11). Thus, Indifferent; complacent; oblivious to the coming judgment...

After grapes are squeezed, wine is allowed to stand in a vat so the accumulation of sediment can settle to the bottom. If it stands too long, it becomes thick and syrupy and unpalatable. The people of Jerusalem is compared to the “dregs” proverbially “settles on their lees” (Jer 48:11), illustrating their stagnancy and inability to have moved in time. [Spiritual indifference in our day?]

- 13] Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

[vv.14-18 goes beyond the local, prefiguring, invasion]

The Great Tribulation is yet future. In Zephaniah’s day, after Josiah ruled, there never arose another good king—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah: every one corrupt.

- 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.

“...is near”: Grammatically this verse stresses the word **near**, which is first in the sentence in Hebrew (cf. “near” in v. 7, where it also appears in this emphatic position). The fearful wrath of God was to come on the nation **quickly**.

Since Zephaniah wrote shortly after 622 B.C., the year of Josiah’s partial revival, the day of the Lord was in fact imminent. In 605 B.C., only 17 years after Josiah’s revival, Judah under Jehoiakim became a vassal of Babylon and many of Judah’s best young men were deported. Under Jehoiakim’s equally wicked successor, Jehoiachin, the city was again besieged by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. and some 10,000 Jews were deported. Under Zedekiah the city was under a long siege by Nebuchadnezzar and was finally *destroyed* in the summer of 586 B.C.

Verses 14b-16 describe the physical characteristics of that awful day, while Verses 17-18 describe the personal trauma of that judgment.

“cry there bitterly”: The concept of the Wailing Wall would come into existence.

- 15] That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

“...wasteness and desolation”: שׁוּאָה *sho’ah* and מְשׁוּאָה *umesho’ah*—similar sounds convey the alliteration of Destruction, Distress, Desolation, and Darkness [Feinberg].

- 16] A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

“...trumpet and alarm”: Sound the alarm; but it is *against* the fenced cities, etc. [The trumpets precede the bowls: Rev 8ff]

- 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.
- 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 fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

## Next Session

Study Zephaniah Chapters 2 & 3. Who is involved? How serious is it? What time period(s) are implied? (Can you find a hint of the *Harpazo* in the Old Testament?)

## Zephaniah Chapters 2 & 3

### Zephaniah 2

- God not only judges His own people, but also the *nations*.
- He is gracious, and not willing that any should perish.
- He sends out a final call before judgment.

- 1] Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;

It is not that He does not love them; it is because of their *shameless* sin.

- 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.

Note the tone of urgency here. Repentance before the judgment comes, before it’s too late.

### A Snapshot of Heaven

*I was shocked, confused, bewildered As I entered Heaven’s door; Not by the beauty of it all, Nor the lights or its decor.*

*But it was the folks in Heaven Who made me sputter and gasp-- The thieves, the liars, the sinners, The alcoholics and the trash.*

*There stood the kid from seventh grade Who swiped my lunch money twice. Next to him was my old neighbor Who never said anything nice.*

*Herb, who I always thought Was rotting away in hell, Was sitting pretty on cloud nine, Looking incredibly well.*

*I nudged Jesus, “What’s the deal? I would love to hear Your take. How’d all these sinners get up here? God must’ve made a mistake.*

*“And why is everyone so quiet, So somber-- give me a clue.” “Hush, child,” He said, “they’re all in shock. No one thought they’d be seeing you.”*

Judge not. Remember: Just going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than standing in your garage makes you a car. Every saint has a PAST... Every sinner has a FUTURE!

- 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.

“...shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger”: Most modern English translations use some form of the word “shelter” which gives both the idea of hiding and that of protection (JB, NAB, NEB, NIV, NJV).

“Perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the wrath of the Lord.”  
[Source: *Translator’s Handbook* D. J. Clark, & H. Hatton, (1989).]

A *remez*? A hint of something deeper... Rev 3:10. A Rapture hint? OT “*Remezim*”: Isa 26:19-21; Psa 27:5; Zeph 2:3: Ye shall be hid. Ye shall be preserved in the time of judgment. This recalls the prophet’s name, which is interpreted, “Whom the Lord hides.”

## What’s In a Name?

They would be sheltered (lit., “hidden, concealed,” from...

סָתַר *sathar*, to hide, conceal carefully; a synonym of...

צָפַן *tsaphan* to hide, treasure, or store up, hide from discovery; which is associated with the name Zephaniah:

צִפְנִיָּה *Tsephanyah*, “Jehovah has protected, treasured” from...

...the impending doom of God’s anger (Zeph 2:2).

## Old Testament Allusions?

*Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

Isaiah 26:19-21

*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.*

Psalm 27:5

- 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.

## Old Testament Patterns

- Enoch and the Flood of Noah (Gen 5:24).
- Isaac’s Absence after his offering (Gen 22:19 – 24:62).
- Ruth during the Threshing Floor Scene (Ruth 3:7-9).
- Daniel’s absence from the Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3).

## Three Groups Facing Flood of Noah

- Those that *perished in* the Flood
- Those *preserved through* the Flood
- Those *removed prior* to the Flood

- Enoch Born: *Hag Shavuot*
- Enoch Translated: *Hag Shavuot*
- Church born: *Hag Shavuot\**

\* = Feast of Weeks, Harvest, Pentecost

## “Exclusionary Truth”

Lesson: Avoid “exclusionary truth” (e.g., hyperdispensationalism?). The Gospels only apply to rejecting Israelites? (Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16; et al.). Spiritual gifts only until canon complete? Canon incomplete? (Rev 10:3,4).

Inoculation: a mild dose to make one immune to the real thing. Remedy: “Whole Counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Don’t be “willingly ignorant”: (2 Pet 3:3-6).

## Judgment of the Nations

The Doom of Israel’s neighbors (from Zeph 2:4 through 3:8). God is not a local deity:

- Philistines in the west v. 5–7
- Moabites and Ammonites in the east v. 8–11
- Ethiopians in the south v. 12
- Assyrians in the north v. 13–15

- 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.

Four of the cities of the Philistines (Gath, the 5<sup>th</sup>, had already been destroyed by the Assyrian king Sargon II in 711 B.C.) Gaza is certainly problematic today and Ashkelon is a desolation. (The present Ashkelon is not over the ruins of the old city.)

- 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.

The Cherethites were a people (of Hamitic descent) who came from the island of Crete (Deut 2:23; Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7), migrants who came to be known as Philistines (which means “emigration” (cf. Ps 83).

- 6] And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

“...cottages”: Rather, “dwellings with cisterns” (that is, water-tanks *dug* in the earth) *for shepherds*. The *Hebrew* for “dug cisterns,” *Ce-roth*, seems a play on sounds, alluding to their name Cherethites (Zeph 2:5): Their land shall become what their national name implies, a land of *cisterns*. Instead of a thick population and tillage, the region shall become a pasturage for nomad shepherds’ flocks.

- 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.

You can visit the beaches and apartments at Ashkelon and see this. (However, they may yet be driven from this area before the final fulfillment.) Now Zephaniah turns to the east:

- 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.

Moabites and Ammonites descended from the incest of Lot (Gen 19:36-38).

- 9] Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as 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.

Here the implication seems to be that hard words spoken against Israel as the Lord’s people are in effect spoken against the Lord himself.

“...saltpits”: Found at the south of the Dead Sea. The water overflows in the spring, and salt is left by the evaporation (Judg 9:45; Ps 107:34).

These nations consistently opposed Gods people:

- Moab: Num 22:1-6; 25:1-8; Jud 3:12ff; 2 Kgs 3:4ff; 2 Chr 20:1ff; Ezek 25:8.
- Ammon: Judg 11:4-33; 1 Sam 11:1-11; 2 Sam 10:1-14; 2 Chr 20:1ff; Neh 2:10, 19; 4:3-23; Jer 40:14.

Their land, which for centuries had been noted for its fertility, would become a desolate waste. The Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, was one of the poorest countries in existence.

- 10] This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts.

Pride, against the Jew. Cf. The plight of the Edomites...

- 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.

They will be judged for their pride and arrogance (Isa 16:6), gross immorality, idolatry (1 Kgs 11:7), and psychopathic inhumanity (2 Kgs 3:26-27).

The danger among believers today: a pride of race; a pride of face; a pride of grace. Paul said he had nothing to glory in. If he had none, then certainly we have none! Seek: righteousness. Meekness. [Do *you*?]

“...famish all the gods of the earth”: Which “gods” are these? ...*Allah*?

“...all the idols of the heathens”: Who might be included in these?

- 12] Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword.

These are the descendants of Cush ( Gen 10:6), including eastern Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, etc. Ethiopia had been a great nation—even ruling Egypt (720-654 B.C.); yet at times threatened the well-being of Judah (2 Kgs 19:9; 2 Chr 14:9-13; cf. Isa 37:9). She is to be ravaged by war (“sword”; cf. Zeph 3:10.

- 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.



The judgment is worldwide. Now, to the north: Assyria had been dominant for centuries. Zephaniah's prophecies were in advance of the Medo-Babylonian attacks.

"...Nineveh": Nineveh is one of the oldest cities in the world (Gen 10:11). In Zephaniah's day it was deemed impregnable. Xenophon, the ancient Greek historian, reported that its walls stood 100 ft. high, and 50 ft. thick. They were surrounded by a moat 150 ft wide, and protected by 1200 towers.

## Nineveh

Diodorus Siculus refers to a legend that stated that the city would not be taken until the river became its enemy (cf. Nahum 1:8; 2:6; 3:13, 15).

History records that when the Medes and Babylonians attacked Nineveh, there was a sudden rise in the level of the Tigris River. Water began to soften the sun-dried bricks, a section of the wall collapsed, causing a breach in the defenses and the once-proud city was soon overrun and destroyed.

Nineveh was destroyed by Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, 625 B.C. The Scythian hordes, by an inroad into Media and then in the southwest of Asia (thought by many to be the forces described by Zephaniah, as the invaders of Judea, rather than the Chaldeans), for a while interrupted Cyaxares' operations; but he finally succeeded.

Arbaces and Belesis previously subverted the Assyrian empire under Sardanapalus (that is, Pul?) in 877 B.C.

- 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.

Their buildings are to be torn down.

"...cormorant": by some, "pelican" (Ps 102:6; Isa 34:11).

"...bittern": Maurer translates, "the hedgehog"; Henderson, "the porcupine" (Isa 14:23).

- The first term is **qā'ath**, which is translated
  - vulture (RSV),
  - "cormorant" (KJV)
  - "pelican" (RV, JB)
  - "jackdaw" (BJ, NJV)
  - "screech owl" (NAB)
  - "horned owl" (NEB)
  - "desert owl" (NIV)
- The qā'ath is found in a list of unclean birds in **Leviticus 11:18** and **Deuteronomy 14:17**.
  - It is also mentioned as inhabiting deserted places in **Psalms 102:6** and **Isaiah 34:11**. This seems to make it unlikely that a water bird like the cormorant or pelican is intended, or a scavenger like the vulture.
- The second uncertain word is **qippod**, which is translated
  - "hedgehog" (RSV, BJ)
  - "bittern" (KJV)
  - "heron" (JB)
  - "porcupine" (RV)
  - "desert owl" (NAB)
  - "ruffed bustard" (NEB)
  - "screech owl" (NIV)
  - "owl" (NJV)

RSV Revised Standard Version  
 BJ La Bible de Jérusalem  
 KJV King James Version  
 JB Jerusalem Bible  
 RV Revised Version  
 NAB New American Bible  
 NEB New English Bible  
 NIV New International Version  
 NJV New Jewish Version

- 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.

When Alexander the Great marched his armies up the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, Nineveh had been so completely covered that they were unaware that beneath their feet lay the once mighty city of Nimrod (Gen 10:8-11).

Nothing then seemed more improbable than that the capital of so vast an empire, a city sixty miles in compass, with walls one hundred feet high, and so thick that three chariots could go abreast on them, and with



twelve hundred towers, should be so totally destroyed that its site is with difficulty discovered. Yet so it is, as the prophet foretold.

The picture of Nineveh's destruction is completed as the prophet reiterated that the city, though apparently quite secure, would be shamed. Its king was arrogant because of its supposed impregnability (Isa 10:12). It was known as the carefree city, as its populace felt it lived in complete safety.

The city was quite large, having with its suburban areas a circumference of 60 miles and a population of at least 120,000. In addition to an extensive outer wall there was an inner wall with an 8-mile circumference, 50 feet thick and 100 feet high. Between the two walls was enough farmland to support the huge population.

Nineveh's claim ("there is none besides me") was no idle boast! For approximately 200 years she was superior in strength to any other city of her time. An attack on the outer wall, begun in 614 B.C. by the Medes and Babylonians, and a combination of trickery by the attackers, carelessness by the attacked, and a natural disaster, finally brought victory to the attackers (Nahum 1:10; 2:3-5; 3:11).

The great inner wall collapsed because of an unexpected deluge that swelled the Tigris River in a normally dry season of the year and inundated the wall. Thus the city was unexpectedly defeated (Nahum 1:8; 2:6-8; 3:12). The carefree boasting of the city was hushed by her enemies, and all who later saw its ruins scoffed at her former haughtiness (Nahum 3:19). To scoff and to shake their fists were signs of contempt. God reduced the city miraculously and gave it to the wild beasts!

## Implications

The precision of these prophecies are startling preview of the overthrow of the world's nations in the end times. God has judged the nations in the past, and He will judge them in the future. America, too, is ripe.

## Zephaniah 3

- The sins of Jerusalem (v. 1-5).
- Failure to learn from the example of the fate of other cities (v. 6-7).
- The universal Day of Judgment (v.8; cf. 1:2-3, 17-18).
- Renewal of the gentile nations after the judgment (v. 9-10).
- The Israeli Survivors (v. 11-13).

- 1] Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!

"Woe to her...": Clearly identified as Jerusalem (v.4,14). They had the Temple. Privilege creates responsibility. [Where does that put *us*?] Paul's verdict in Romans 3:16: "Destruction and misery are in their ways."

"...filthy and polluted": Pollution is on the inside: pornography is the garbage of the ungodly. Obscenity and violence are the garbage of the world's entertainment. Immorality arises whenever people are treated like things and things are valued as if they were people.

- 2] She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.

God had sent judgment: 185,000 Assyrians outside their walls scared the daylights out of them (2 Kgs 18 -19). God relieved them, but they "received not correction."

How about America? Riots, fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes—yet we continue in our arrogance (and our debts), denying the God of our heritage and flaunting our sin (Isa 5:18ff).

- 3] Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.

Corruption among her princes and judges: Insatiable greed, devouring all in ravenous appetites, leaving nothing till the morning...sound familiar?

- 4] Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

By their lives they brought disrespect upon the Temple, the sanctuary of God. You do violence to the law when it is not interpreted accurately, or even left untaught. These were the theological liberals of their day.

How many pastors really know the Word of God? How many resort to psychology rather than the sufficiency of Christ?

- 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.

"...no shame": What ever happened to shame? There always has been immorality—but it had the sensitivity to remain hidden, not publicly

condoned. “Broadmindedness” is a synonym for condoning sin. It was the *social acceptance* of homosexuality that brought down Sodom and Gomorrah.

## The Coming Climax

Verses 6 - 8 present a picture of the Great Tribulation, the great Day of the Lord, Armageddon, etc.

- 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.

When studying the glory that was Rome, it is easy to see why they were confident that it would live forever. Yet when you view the ancient ruins, and the stones worn by chariot wheels, it is hard to imagine the great cities of yesterday. What about New York or Los Angeles?

- 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.

The warnings of judgment seem to have little effect. If lavish spending and increased taxes could save an empire, Rome would still be ruling the world...

- 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.

“...all the earth”: The Planet Earth is moving toward a definite appointment with a jealous God (Ps 2; Rev 16:13-16).

The first part of this chapter is almost frightening to read: dark forebodings and ominous rumblings. Now we turn from darkness to the brightness of blessings...

- 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.

“...then”: The word “then” signifies a major pivot in the prophet’s message both in tone and in content: the Lord now shifts from frightful predictions of destruction to prophecies of blessing and peace...

“...a pure language”: Language that is pure? (free of blasphemies, etc.) Or pure Hebrew? (True today...) Kingdom age language? (Zech 14:9; Isa 2:2-3; Zech 8:20-23; Joel 2:28-32; Hab 2:14). The confusion of Babel to be undone??

*“For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.”*

Zephaniah 3:9 NAS

Instead, “pure lips” may simply mean the renewal of once-defiled speech. The words spoken by one’s lips reflect his inner life (Isa 6:5-7). As a result the nations, turning to reverential trust in God, will call on the name of the Lord and will evidence their dependence on Him by their united service (“shoulder to shoulder”).

- 10] From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

“...my suppliants”: Falashas (come from the same root as Philistine: means “migrant,” or “stranger.”)

## The Return

The return of the Ethiopian Jews in 1991 made history. In 36 hours, 14,000 Jews were flown to Israel. On the Jewish Sabbath, May 24, and continuing non-stop for 36 hours, a total of 34 El Al jumbo jets and Hercules C-130s—seats removed to accommodate the maximum number of Ethiopians. Some of the rows of 10 seats had 18 people crammed into them.

[David Allen Lewis, *Can Israel Survive in a Hostile World?*, p. 240.]

On May 24, 1991, a 747 carried 1,086 on just one flight, and landed with *two more* than they started with: two babies were born enroute, making a total of 1,088!

[Source: *Guinness Book of Records*, 1995 edition.]

“...shall bring mine offering”: Some believe that the Ark of the Covenant is hidden in Ethiopia (Acts 8).



Legend: Menelik I, switching a replica with the real one in the days of Solomon, etc. I happen to doubt this one; *however...* (2 Chr 35). See our briefing *Seat of Mercy* for a full discussion.

- 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 midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

“...no more be haughty...”: The meek shall inherit the earth.

God’s judgment comes on shameless immorality. God’s own can never reach a place where they are satisfied in sin. If you can live in sin and be happy—you can be sure that you are *not* a child of God. The prodigal son was never happy in the pigpen. (He was absent from his place of blessing—but he never lost his *sonship*!)

- 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.

The three Babylonian deportations left the poor, afflicted, and crippled in Jerusalem. God is pledged to take care of the poor (Mt 5:3,5).

- 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.

“...they shall feed and lie down”: Employing the metaphor of a shepherd with his sheep (Ps 23; Jn 10). Cf. The preserved company standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion when the glory is about to be displayed (Rev 14:1–5).

[Ironsides, H. A.: *Notes on the Minor Prophets*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1909, S. 317]

- 14] Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

“...be glad and rejoice with all the heart”: The book of Zephaniah concludes with a paragraph different in tone from the whole of the rest of the book. The faithful minority have passed through the punishment of the nation. This paragraph is similar in outlook to such passages as Isa 52:7–10; 54:1–8; Zech 2:10; 9:9.

- 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.

The Hebrew verbs here are in the past (the so-called “prophetic perfect”), but they really refer to events which are still future.

- 16] In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.

“In that day”: The opening words mark explicitly that the prophet is speaking about the future...

- 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.

“...mighty” = *gibbor*, valiant warrior.

“...he will save” = *yoshua*, who saves, as Boaz, ‘*ish gibbor hayil*, the mighty man who redeemed the land back to Naomi and took a Gentile bride in his acts of redemption.

“...he will rest in his love”: Zephaniah is called the prophet of love because of this verse.

- 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.

The burden of having her children in exile was a reproach to the city of Jerusalem (cf. Zech 12:10).

- 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.  
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 Millennial Kingdom

Unger highlights a seven-fold description:

- 1) An era of supreme and exhilarating joy (Zeph 3:14);
- 2) An era when the Lord’s judgments against Israel will have been removed (Zeph 3:15a);
- 3) Favored with the personal presence of the Lord (Zeph 3:15b);
- 4) A time when Israel will not experience evil or fear (Zeph 3:15c-17a);

- 5) A time when the Lord will rejoice over Israel as the special object of His love (Zeph 3:17b);
- 6) Represent the gathering together of the saved remnant (Zeph 3:18);
- 7) Preceded by the Lord's judgment of Israel's oppressors and the exaltation of the saved remnant (Zeph 3:19-20).

[Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1981, 2:1939-40.]

## The Coming Kingdom

Our book *The Kingdom, Power & Glory* deals with the practical implications for each of us...

## Habakkuk Chapters 1-3

## Introduction

His name means "to embrace." He records his own experience of soul with God. Habakkuk's main theme (like Ps 37, 49, 73, Job, et al.) is God's consistency with Himself in view of permitted evil; the affliction of the godly and the prosperity of the ungodly.

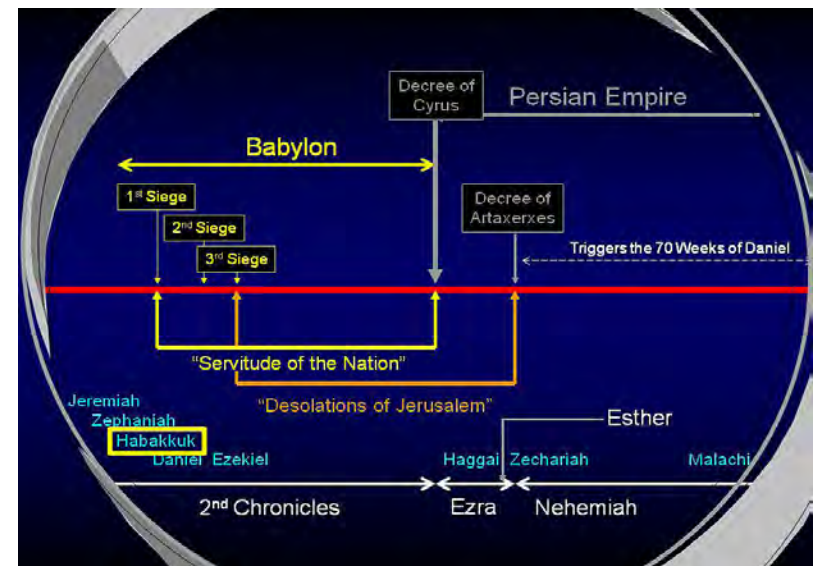
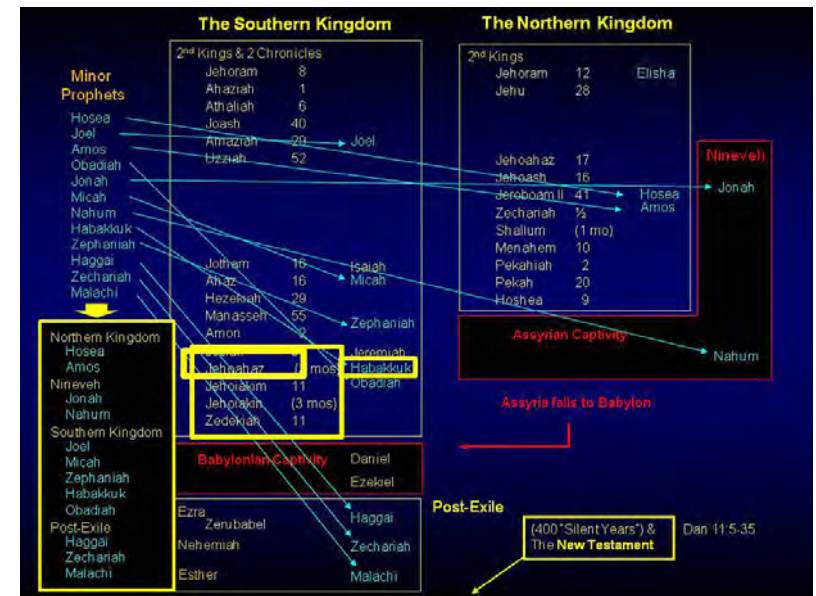
Why do bad things happen to good people? [Considered a "theodicy": a defense of God's goodness and omnipotence in view of evil.]

Habakkuk is among the last of the "minor" prophets to preach in Judah before the Babylonian captivity.

NT quotes: Acts 13:40-41      Hab 1:5  
 Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38      Hab 2:4  
 Phil 4:4, 10-19      Hab 3:17-19

Habakkuk probably lived about the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Josiah. The book was probably written about 609 B.C., during the reign of Jehoiakim.

Those were dark, troubling times. Babylon formed an axis with the Medes to overthrow the Assyrians; would continue to rise under the generalship (and later kingship) of Nebuchadnezzar.



Habakkuk was probably a priest before he was called as a prophet. ("my stringed instruments..." cf. Hab 3:19), as was also Jeremiah, and at about the same time.

Habakkuk's book is not being initiated by God into the ministry, but rather he is initiating a dialogue *with God about the ministry*.



He's the initiator and God is the responder. At the beginning of his ministry, he saw the revival in the days of King Josiah.

## King Josiah

Josiah was one of the better kings of Judah: he began to reign at age 8; sought the Lord at age 16 (2 Chr 34:3). At 26, he ordered the temple to be remodeled; a copy of the law was found by Hilkiah the priest in a corner (not another copy throughout the land?); people were amazed.

Josiah realized how far they had drifted; wept before the Lord; called the people to seek the Lord and institute the festivals and feasts of Israel once again.

After the death of Josiah (in a battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt on the plain of Megiddo in 609 B.C.), disillusionment with the reform set in and Judah reverted to its former ways. Jeremiah and Ezekiel describe this period in detail.

The reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) had allowed the people to enjoy a greater degree of prosperity than had been possible in previous years. Ignoring the spiritual dimensions, they thought the new era would last indefinitely. The realities that faced them, however, could not have been anticipated by either the political liberals or the religiously minded conservatives.

## Historical Context

The power of Assyria had collapsed. Political supremacy belonged to Egypt. Strong political ties, however, had been established with the emerging kingdom of Babylon. As a vassal of Egypt and a friend of Babylon, there seemed to be no serious threat to prosperity on the horizon. The leaders and the people had ignored the *spiritual* reasons for their material prosperity.

Alexis de Tocqueville remarked: "America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, she will cease to be great."

Now, the rich exploit the poor. Greed and avarice characterize the times. Perversions of all kinds are openly promoted and protected by law. Real power is increasingly concentrated among an elite few... So Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah were on the scene—calling the people to true spirituality.

## King Jehoiakim

After Josiah came Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.), an evil king. (Between was Jehoahaz, who only lasted three months.) His reign was characterized by injustice and bloodshed. He burned an initial scroll by Jeremiah; Jeremiah then prophesied an even bleaker future for Judah (Jer 36:29).

Habakkuk wonders: "Lord, why don't you judge your people?" See Jer 22:3, 13-17; also Jer 12:1; 20:8; and Job 19:7. He starts out wrestling with God and ends up worshipping Him.

## Habakkuk 1

- 1] The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

"...burden": *massah*, a load to be lifted; heavy judgments.

- 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!

"...cry" = actually, *shavah*, "scream." [Do you ever feel that way?]

"...violence" = *hamas*, an adverbial accusative: violence, cruelty, injustice, oppressor; cf. Terrorist group today..

- 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.

I look around this nation and all I see is violence and contention. Why aren't you doing something about this, Lord? Sounds like our own nightly news broadcasts, doesn't it? The most violent city in the world is now Washington D.C....

- 4] Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

"...slacked" = paralyzed; chilled. Unrighteous judges; law set at naught; Life and property were insecure. The wicked knew how to pervert the judicial process.

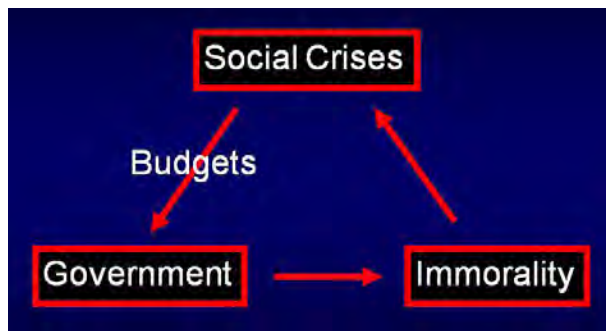
The average capital offender, before he is executed, will spend 22 years in legal procedures at a cost of \$1.8 million! The suicide rate among police is 4X greater than that of society in general. Out of every 1,000 violent crimes committed in this country, only 2.4 criminals are brought to justice.



Most of our social changes are brought about by court decision, not laws we voted on: bussing, affirmative action, elevation and promotion of sexual perversion, etc.

Have you ever wondered why governments always seem to tend *toward corruption*? Why are we surprised: Governments have always loved crises: they provide the rationale for a) increasing budgets and bureaucracies, and b) subjugating the liberties of the population. Most new dictators create external crises to consolidate their internal powers.

In our country, they long ago learned that *social* crises serve as well as military ones. Here is one insight that supplies a key missing link: *Immorality results in social crises*. Let's diagram the overriding dynamic:



If an organism—or a country—cannot deal with its infections quickly and effectively, it will die of infection. So, in Jerusalem, too, they could not deal with justice and equity fairly, quickly, and simply.

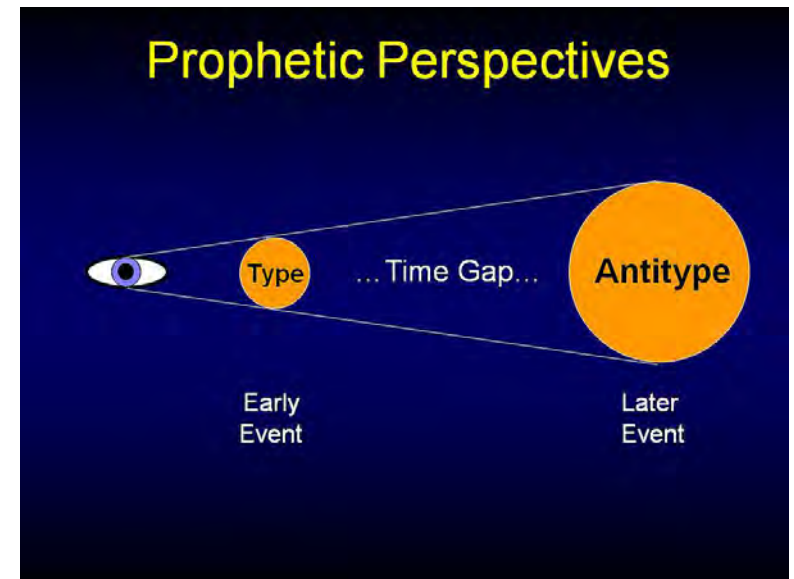
- 5] Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

“Behold ye among the heathen”: This verse anticipates the dispersion “among the heathen” (Deut 28:64-67). While Israel as a nation is thus dispersed, YHWH will “work a work” which Israel “will not believe.” Paul quotes this to the Jews of the dispersion at Antioch, attributing this prediction to the redemptive work of Christ (Acts 13:37-41).

## Prophetic Perspectives

Don't count God out. Stand back and watch. God deals with the worldwide dispersion (v.5) and the impending captivity by Babylon (v.6). Probably at this time Babylon was still friendly (2 Kgs 20:12-19). [Aren't we doing the same thing? Hezekiah didn't advance them cash, however...]

Three sieges will follow, during Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (Isa 55:8-9; Phil 4:7). He bypasses our puny understanding... Habakkuk seems to imply, “Try me”...



- 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 dwelling places that are not theirs.

Chaldeans were inhabitants of Babylonia, of Semitic origin from Kesed, son of Nahor, brother of Abraham (Gen 22:22). In 626 B.C. Nabopolassar came to the throne. In 606 B.C., his son, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho in the Battle of Carchemish and established the Neo-Babylonian Empire of Daniel 2.

- 7] They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.  
 8] Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.  
 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.  
 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.

“...heap dust”: exploiting bulwarks to capture walled cities...

- 11] Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.

This is a classic passage for the characteristics of the Chaldeans (as Isaiah 5:26-30 is for the Assyrians). God is already preparing the Chaldeans to be His rod of punishment...

This is a fulfillment of Moses' warning in Deut 28:49. The purpose of the invaders is to perpetrate violence in the land. This was Israel's sin (vv. 2 & 3) and it will be her punishment (Dan 4:16, 30-34).

*For one to make his own strength his god is to commit suicide of the soul.*  
—Feinberg

- 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.
- 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?
- 14] And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?
- 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.
- 16] Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.
- 17] Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

Now Habakkuk is really struggling! "God, you can't be serious! You can't use *them*! *They are even worse than we are...*" Yet he knows the nature of the covenant-keeping God who will not allow His people to be wiped out [cf. *The Magog Invasion*; Ezek 36, 38, et al.]. Notice how he deals with his questions in Chapter 2.

## Habakkuk 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.

"...tower": Not necessarily a literal tower, but an attitude of mind. Prophets are compared to watchmen (Isa 21:8, 11; Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17; 33:2,3).

## Key Components

- 1) Determination: He didn't say, maybe next week; when it's convenient; when I can find time (Jer 29:13).

- 2) Isolation: Away from all distractions: radio, TV, telephone. We often can't hear the voice of God because so many other voices are constantly ringing in our ears... a quiet time, a quiet place, a quiet heart...
- 3) Expectation: "I will see what the Lord will say to me" not might, hope, wish, but *will*...

There are many ways to please God, but none apart from faith (Hebrews 11:6).

- 2] And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

Habakkuk, you're ready to do business; take a memo... i.e. as a messenger of the "vision" (Cf. Zech 2:4,5).

Are *you* really serious about Him? Do you seek the Lord with pencil and paper in hand? Does an executive secretary *ever* enter her boss's office without a steno pad in her hand?

- 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.

Be patient. Don't panic. God has set a bound to all which displeases Him.

- 4] Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Two groups: 1) Those whose soul is lifted up; 2) The just who live by faith.

Whose soul is "not upright"? The Babylonian's. Pride leads to death because it will not receive by faith the grace of God. Look at their leader, Nebuchanezzar (Dan 4; Prov 16:18). The Talmud declares that all 613 precepts given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai are there summarized.

## The "Vision"

To the watching prophet comes the "vision" with three elements:

- 1) The moral judgment of YHWH upon the evils of dispersed Israel (vv.5-13, 15-19).
- 2) The future purpose of God that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" —the Kingdom! (v.14).
- 3) Meanwhile, "the just shall live by faith" (v.4).

## The Just

- “...the just”: צדיק *tsaddiyq*; just, lawful, righteous:
- just, righteous (in government);
  - just, right (in one’s cause);
  - just, righteous (in conduct and character);
  - righteous (as justified and vindicated by God);
  - right, correct, lawful.

## Shall Live

- “...shall live”: חיה *chayah*; to live, have life, remain alive, sustain life, live prosperously, live for ever, be quickened, be alive, be restored to life or health:
- to cause to grow;
  - to restore; to revive; to preserve alive, let live;
  - to quicken, revive; to restore (to health);
  - to revive; to restore to life.

## By Faith

“...by faith”: אמונה *emunah*; firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, steadiness. By faith; not by intellect, sight, feelings, touch...

Faith is the currency of eternity. God wants us to be rich people. We need to be weaned.

- 4] Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

- The Just shall live by Faith Rom 1:17
- The Just shall live by Faith Gal 3:11
- The Just shall live by Faith Heb 10:38  
(just before Heb 11)

## An Impact on History

In 1483 in Eisleben, Saxony, a baby boy was year born to a poor coal miner. He decided to become a lawyer and, in 1501, entered the University of Erfurt, where he excelled in his studies. At the end of his schooling in 1504, a forceful storm caused him take a vow if he survived; he entered an Augustinian monastery and earned a Doctorate of Theology degree. But the more he studied, the more he became distressed over sin. He indulged in extreme pious self-punishment and still could not find peace.

Finally, in 1509, he decided to make a pilgrimage to Rome by crossing the Alps. Almost dying of a high fever, a monastery nursed him back to health. While there, a wise monk insisted that he read the Book of Habakkuk. One verse captured Martin’s imagination—Hab 2:4: *The just shall live by faith*. He couldn’t get it out of his mind.

Subsequently disillusioned with his experience in Rome, he returned to the University of Wittenberg, and went on to explore the revolutionary idea of “justification by faith.”

He ultimately nailed his famous 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church, and started the movement known today as the Reformation—one of the most important events in modern history. At the Diet (council) of Worms (a town) they excommunicated Martin Luther as a heretic.

He went on to write commentaries that are classics today; hymns like, “A Mighty Fortress is our God”; and translated the entire Bible into German, a classic which remains a literary masterpiece in the Germanic tongue.

[Source: Manuscript by his son, D. Paul Luther, preserved in the library at Rudolstadt, quoted by F.W. Boreham in *A Bunch of Everlastings or Texts That Made History*, Judson Press, Philadelphia, 1920, p. 20. Also, see Courson, p. 33-38.]

## Five-Fold Woe

Now follows a five-fold woe upon the wicked Chaldean oppressor. Presented symmetrically in 5 stanzas or strophes of 3 verses each:

- |                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| <b>1) Proud Ambition</b>    | <b>Hab 2:5-8</b> |
| 2) Covetousness             | Hab 2:9-11       |
| 3) Ruthlessness and Cruelty | Hab 2:12-14      |
| 4) Debauchery               | Hab 2:15-17      |
| 5) Idolatry                 | Hab 2:18-19      |

- 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:

Trust me: they will never be satisfied. Nothing satisfies: prominence, position, power, people... God-thirst drives us.

“...by wine”: Nahum makes it clear that Assyria fell through drunkenness; Amos tells us that the fall of the Northern Kingdom was caused by drunkenness; now Habakkuk tells us that Babylon will fall through drunkenness (cf. Dan 5!). Rome also. How about the U.S.?

- 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!

“...to him that ladeth himself with thick clay”? Rather, “and maketh himself rich with loans.”

- 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?

Medo-Persia took over Babylon by drying up the River Euphrates and taking them by surprise...

- 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.

In search of satisfaction, the Babylonians would only experience retribution; the people they devoured would soon devour them (cf. Gal 5:15).

## Five-Fold Woe

- |                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1) Proud Ambition           | Hab 2:5-8         |
| <b>2) Covetousness</b>      | <b>Hab 2:9-11</b> |
| 3) Ruthlessness and Cruelty | Hab 2:12-14       |
| 4) Debauchery               | Hab 2:15-17       |
| 5) Idolatry                 | Hab 2:18-19       |

- 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!

“Woe”: The Second Woe, for covetousness and self-aggrandizement.

- 10] Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.  
11] For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

The things they are devoted to will soon fall apart...[How about yours?...] ]

## Five-Fold Woe

- |                                    |                    |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1) Proud Ambition                  | Hab 2:5-8          |
| 2) Covetousness                    | Hab 2:9-11         |
| <b>3) Ruthlessness and Cruelty</b> | <b>Hab 2:12-14</b> |
| 4) Debauchery                      | Hab 2:15-17        |
| 5) Idolatry                        | Hab 2:18-19        |

- 12] Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!

“Woe”: A Third Woe, for murder, pillage, slaughter and violence.

- 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?  
14] For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

*The Ultimate purpose of God:* the establishment of the “Kingdom (from) Heaven,” when the David’s Righteous Branch sets up His Kingdom (Isa 11:9; cf. 2 Sam 7:9; Zech 12:8; Lk 1:31-33; 1 Cor 15:38).

## Five-Fold Woe

- |                             |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1) Proud Ambition           | Hab 2:5-8          |
| 2) Covetousness             | Hab 2:9-11         |
| 3) Ruthlessness and Cruelty | Hab 2:12-14        |
| <b>4) Debauchery</b>        | <b>Hab 2:15-17</b> |
| 5) Idolatry                 | Hab 2:18-19        |

- 15] Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

“Woe”: A Fourth Woe, for exploitative partying and drunkenness...

- 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.

Your manipulations will be retributed on yourselves...your own nakedness will be exposed... [AIDS...]

“cup of His fury” (Jer 25:15,17, 28; Obad 1:16; Rev 15-18...).

- 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.

## Five-Fold Woe

- |                             |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1) Proud Ambition           | Hab 2:5-8          |
| 2) Covetousness             | Hab 2:9-11         |
| 3) Ruthlessness and Cruelty | Hab 2:12-14        |
| 4) Debauchery               | Hab 2:15-17        |
| 5) <b>Idolatry</b>          | <b>Hab 2:18-19</b> |

- 18] What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?
- 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.

“Woe”: A Fifth Woe, for the greatest sin of all: idolatry. We become like the gods we worship... (Ps 115:8; 135:18).

There are three steps (re: Judges; Isaiah) to the downfall of a nation:

- 1) Spiritual apostasy;
- 2) Immorality;
- 3) Political anarchy.

The primary problem wasn't political anarchy... Even immorality was also simply a symptom: it all begins with spiritual apostasy: turning away from the true and living God.

- 20] But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

He is saying, “I know what I am doing. I’m on the throne. Pipe down. Trust me.”

## Habakkuk 3: His Prayer

- 1] A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

The psalm of Chapter 3 is viewed as the most magnificent Hebrew poetry. [“*selah*”: v 3, 9, 13.]

“...Shigionoth”: (found, in the singular in Ps 7 also.) Uncertain musical term. The kind of music which accompanied the song; implies great excitement; a triumphal style.

- 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.

Lit.: “Let your work live.” We talk of showers of blessing; rather, showers of mercy!

*The quality of mercy is not strain'd  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest.”*

—Portia, The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene 1

- 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.

There are lots of alternative views. Probably focuses on history involving three men:

- |            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| 1) Abraham | vv. 3–6   |
| 2) Moses   | vv. 7–10  |
| 3) Joshua  | vv. 11–15 |

“Selah”: A term reserved for the Psalms: “Stop. Look. Listen.”

- 4] And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.
- 5] Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.
- 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.

Moses? (vv.7-10).

- 7] I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

“...Cushan”: Cushan is Ethiopia. Moses’ campaign as Pharaoh’s son (cf. Acts 7:22)?

- 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?
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

“The sun and moon stood still”: Joshua? (vv.11-15). Miracle at Gibeon (Josh 10:12).



- 12] Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.
- 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.
- 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.
- 15] Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.

Habakkuk not only heard a sermon *from God*, he now has a vision of *God*.

Some view this passage historically: the descent of God from Mt. Sinai when the law was given; the wandering through Midian, through Teman (v.3), over the mountains, and through the Red Sea on their way to the promised land.

Others suggest that it's prophetic of Jesus Christ: Teman is Edom; Bozra, stained with blood; then moving north to Jerusalem (cf. Isa 63:1-6). Some also imply that the effects of one of the Mars' near pass-bys may be in view. [Patten, Hatch, Steinhauer model; Cf. our Commentary on *Joshua*.]

The Result: reminded of the past; revealing of the future; to be renewed in the present.

Review what God has done for you in the past; anticipate what He will do for you in the future...*and you will have peace in the present*.

- 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.

Earlier: Lord, do something. Now, I tremble at what you will do...Come quickly, Lord Jesus. But what does that mean for those left behind?

- 17] Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the 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 though my country will be devastated, the markets will crash, my house will be burned and looted, and there is blood in the streets...

- 18] Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

"...rejoice": "to jump up and down."

"...joy": "to spin around."

1 Thessalonians 1:9: "In everything give thanks" *in*, not *for*... (I rejoice in the Lord, not the problem...)

- 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.

- Chapter 1: He was in the valley;
- Chapter 2: He was in the tower;
- Chapter 3: He is now on the mountain top.

"...my stringed instruments": Habakkuk was probably a priest before he was called as a prophet.

- Jonah ministered to the Assyrians.  
– Habakkuk to the Babylonians.
- Jonah ran from God when he heard what God was going to do.  
– Habakkuk ran to God wondering what God would do.
- Jonah saw the salvation of God to the Gentiles.  
– Habakkuk saw the sovereignty of God through the Gentiles.
- Jonah's story ends in foolishness as he worries about the gourd.  
– Habakkuk's story ends in faith as he trusts God.
- Jonah had to learn inside a fish.  
– Habakkuk learned in the high tower.

Where to you want to learn your lessons about faith? Are there always storms? Is there seaweed wrapped around your head? Do you feel cramped, always in the dark? Are you inside a fish or in the tower?

The hour is later on God's clock than any one of us realizes. Prophecy should be studied—not as an idle curiosity—but to ascertain the will of God now for each of our lives, and to enable us to move into the center of that place of blessing (Hab 1:5).

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