

- land of Egypt on their way toward Canaan. 2) David later fought against and subdued the nation of Edom (cf. II Sam.8:14). 3) Edom revolted against that dominion (II Kings 2:20-22), and 4) Jeremiah made a prediction concerning their future destruction (cf. Jeremiah 49:7-22). In addition to that prophecy there are numerous other references to the nation of Edom throughout the prophets and throughout the Old Testament in general.
3. Obadiah, therefore, as the subject of this short book, is bound for destruction. One of the major reasons for this consequence was the pride of the Edomites. "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?" (vs.3) Though they may have seemed impregnable to themselves, such was not the case in the sight of the Lord. "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." The Lord informs Edom that she would be surely judged.
  4. In addition to an over-exalted pride, Edom was subject to judgment due to her rejoicing during the misfortunes of Judah. Verse 11 in Berkeley's Version reads: "On the day when you stood aloof, as foreigners carried off his (i.e. Judah's) possessions and aliens came into his gate, and for Jerusalem they cast lots, yes, you were as one of them." Though they were not directly involved in the direct downfall of the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Judah, they were indirectly responsible because they simply stood by and watched, offering no assistance at all. But that is not all that they were guilty of, for we learn in vs. 12 that they not only stood idly by while Jerusalem and Judah were taken, but they also rejoiced in the day of their destruction. Remember again, that the blessings which the Lord spoke about to Abraham would not only come to his seed, but also to those who blessed his seed...but in addition to that, cursings came upon those who cursed them. Edom, by refusing to help Judah, and by rejoicing in her downfall, subsequently received a "curse" from the Lord.
  5. As a result of these actions on the part of the Edomite, they were to be punished. Verse 15 informs us that "thy day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been." The book of Galatians teaches that we should not be surprised, for we shall certainly reap just as we have sown. Hosea 8:7 speaks of those who sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind. The harvest is always large than the planting. When the planting is the sowing of "wild oats", the harvest will be destruction.
  6. The concluding verses of the book speak of the ultimate triumph of the nation of Israel.
  7. From the book of Obadiah we learn these lessons: 1) "righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov.14:34); 2) the Lord's word is sure; 3) the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham came to fruition in the further events of history; 4) when the Lord prophesied judgment, there was no use in depending upon other nations for help; 5) vain-glorious pride quite often brings destruction (cf. Proverbs 16:18); 6) nothing is hid from the Lord; 7) non-involvement does not equal "non-responsibility"; 8) rejoicing in iniquity and the misfortunes of others is sin and therefore worthy of judgment; 9) the righteous are ultimately rewarded; 10) no one is unconquerable; 11) there is always hope for the righteous.

## JONAH

Jonah, like Obadiah, is mainly addressed to a different theme than other books of prophecies. The mission of Jonah was to proclaim the word of the Lord to the city of Nineveh, the capital of the nation of Assyria. Jonah initially rebelled against the will of the Lord, but we learn that he finally relented and submitted to it.

## CHAPTER ONE

1. We are informed in the very first verses of this book what the mission of Jonah was. Verse 2 states that he was to "go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

2. The remainder of the first chapter deals with Jonah's response to the command of the Lord and his subsequent punishment for refusing to follow the Lord's will. Jonah booked passage on a ship going to Tarshish in an attempt to flee the presence of the Lord. He could no more hide from the Lord than could Adam and Eve evade the Lord in the garden of Eden. In the midst of his journey a storm came up that threatened the safety of the men and the ship. It finally came out that Jonah was responsible for the malady which plagued the men, that is the storm. At Jonah's instructions the men of the ship cast him into the sea. In this manner they were to avoid the effects of the storm. It worked. "So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging." (vs.15) The effect of this upon the men of the ship was most impressive: "Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows." (vs.16) Jonah, however, was swallowed up by a great fish which the Lord had prepared for that specific purpose. According to the last verse of the chapter Jonah remained "in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." [NOTE: Many critics of the Bible have attacked the credibility of the word of God at this point by claiming that such a feat was impossible. Most commentaries on this passage cite verified incidents in which this same sort of event occurred in more contemporary times. Consult them for further information about the possibility of this event being real or fiction. Of course, the Bible teaches that it was real. Jesus, in Matthew 12:40f made reference to this very event as if it were a real historical occasion. "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."]

## CHAPTER TWO

1. This chapter shows the effect that the Lord's actions had upon Jonah. The bulk of the chapter provides us with an account of the prayer which Jonah offered while in the belly of the great fish. Note the effect of his current situation:
- 1) "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me;..." It is a most common response of the afflicted to turn unto the Lord. David made the same sort of response in Psalms 119:67 "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." It is good that people will turn to the Lord in these situations, but it would be even better if they would depend upon the Lord at all times, the good and the bad. The Lord often used times of despair and gloom in a person's life to encourage them to repentance. Not only did it apply to individuals, but also to nations. There certainly is benefit in affliction when it is instrumental in turning us to the Lord. 2) Verse 7 echoes the same feelings as verse 2: "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple." When all else fails, many will turn to the Lord. 3) The final thought of Jonah is portrayed in verse 9: "I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."
2. In response to the prayer and the repentance evidenced in the heart of Jonah the Lord delivered him up from out of the great fish (vs.10).

## CHAPTER THREE

1. The Lord "recommissioned" Jonah to go preach to the city of Nineveh. This time Jonah went and obeyed the Lord as he was so commanded. Nineveh, according to the text (vs.3), was an exceedingly great city about three day's journey from where Jonah began. Jonah went into the city and began to proclaim the words of the Lord there: "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."
2. The effect of Jonah's preaching is seen in verses 5-10. The people of Nineveh believe in God and began to make changes in their lives. Even the king of the city went so far as to instruct the people to begin a fast in an effort to stay the destruction which Jonah said would come. As a result of the repentance that was manifested by the people of the city, the Lord did not destroy them. [In the book of Nahum we learn that Nineveh was eventually destroyed.]

CHAPTER FOUR

1. One might think that Jonah would have been overjoyed to see the entire city of Nineveh rise up and repent of their sins and turn to the Lord. As we enter the fourth chapter of the book, however, we learn that this was not the response which Jonah made. Verse one tells us that "he was very angry." Why was this his attitude? And what was the significance of the appearance and then the disappearance of the gourd which shaded Jonah as he seemingly awaited the doom of the city of Nineveh? Note the following:

"Jonah's bitterness at the outcome of the affair was such that he would have been happier dead. He makes it quite plain that it was not preaching to Nineveh that he minded, nor the dangers and hardships of the journey, but it was the possibility that the people might repent and be spared that he resented. He was afraid of God's mercy, and that fear drove him to Tarshish. If he did not preach to Nineveh, then the people would not repent, and God would have no alternative but to destroy Nineveh."

"Jonah, despite his wrath at the Lord's sparing Nineveh, built himself a booth on the east of the city to wait for the outcome. He is in the peculiar position of being a preacher who hoped that he would not succeed. The plant that the Lord caused to grow up pleased him no end, but made his anger all the more bitter when it was cut off by the worm. Ibn Ezra made quite plain that one does not have to know the species of the plant that shaded Jonah to understand its lesson."

"It was at this point that the Lord called Jonah's attention to his concern for a comparatively worthless plant for which he had not labored. Could he not then understand God's concern for the 120,000 innocent people of Nineveh who knew neither right or wrong—doubtless infants—as well as the much cattle that God had created which, of course, were not capable of sin? The contrast of the whole is between Jonah's attitude to Nineveh and the Lord's attitude. ..." [The Minor Prophets, Jack P. Lewis, p.42-43]

2. The lesson, therefore, is amply depicted. The Lord was concerned for those who were not Jews, even to the extent that he commissioned Jonah to preach the lesson on repentance to them. The Lord did this not because he hoped that they would not respond (as was Jonah's desire), but rather because he wanted them to repent and turn to him.

JONAH: A REVIEW

The book of Jonah provides us with quite a different story than we are accustomed to finding in the books of the prophets. Rather than dealing with the great messages and themes of the prophets, this book deals almost entirely with the prophet himself. Lewis made the comment that the sermon/lesson of Jonah to the city of Nineveh took all of eight words in the Hebrew language as it is recorded in the book of Jonah. Obviously, then, it is not the purpose of the book of Jonah to deal in depth with the message of repentance as it was proclaimed to the Assyrian city of Nineveh. Note the following lessons from the book of Jonah: 1) No man can flee from the presence of the Lord, physically or spiritually. The Lord is always aware of every person's condition. 2) The Lord sometimes will punish (through physical nature) those people who seek to be disobedient. 3) The effect of the treatment of Jonah (and others) upon the men who witnessed the event can cause men to turn to the Lord. The influence of the great event in Acts when Ananias and his wife were struck dead is seen in that chapter (5:11): "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." One might think that the results of this fear would be entirely negative, but in the following verses we note: "And believers were the more added to the Lord,..." (vs.14) These men turned to the Lord following Jonah's being cast into the sea. 4) The Lord prepares ways for those who seek to do other than his will. 5) Affliction often brings a change of heart. 6) God answers the prayers of the truly penitent. 7) Nobody preaches like a converted preacher. 8) The word of the Lord can affect the lives of even the most ungodly and cause them to change their ways. 9) Some do not understand the infinite mercy

of the Lord. 10) Some do not have the true and sincere desire to see the salvation of the souls of all men, regardless of their race or nationality. In the book of Jonah we learn that the mercy of the Lord is indeed great to all people. It was a common Jewish misconception of the Old Testament (and a common misconception on the part of many people today) that the Jews were the only ones who could be in favor with the Lord at that time (i.e. the time of the O.T.). Such could not be further from the truth. Simply because the Jews were the only one to whom the law was addressed specifically did not preclude the fact that there were non-Jews who lived righteously or who were influenced to faith in God by the Jews or what they heard God had done for the Jews. Consider the following examples: 1) The servant of Abraham in Genesis 24 expressed a great faith in God. He was not of the seed of Abraham. 2) In Genesis 20 when Abraham met Abimelech we learn that he (i.e. Abimelech) was a moral man. To what extent his righteousness filled his life, we do not know. 3) Moses father-in-law, Jethro, exhibited faith in God. 4) Rahab, the woman of Jericho, expressed faith in the God of Israel when she heard of the great things which he wrought in their behalf in the wilderness and in Egypt. 5) Darius expressed great concern for God, evidently as a result of the influence that Daniel may have had on his life. The list is noticeably brief, but it could be greatly expanded if the time were taken. The point is that the Lord's mercy extends to all people of all nations. In this sense John 3:16 was true even prior to the coming of the Christ. God has always loved the world (i.e. all the inhabitants of the world). The coming of the Christ simply manifested that love through the Christ, but there were prior manifestations of God's love to mankind. The sending of Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh is but one other example of the love of God for the non-Jews. The following outline has been suggested for the book of Jonah: 1) The first chapter depicts Jonah running away from God. 2) The second chapter depicts Jonah running to God. He was sorry for his sins and prayed that he might be brought back to the Lord. 3) The third chapter of the book of Jonah depicts Jonah as running with God. Now he was willing to do the will of God by going into the city of Nineveh and proclaiming the message of repentance. 4) The fourth and final chapter of the book depicts Jonah running ahead of God. He was not "ahead of God" in the sense that he was better than the Lord, but rather in the sense that he thought that he knew what would happen to the inhabitants of the capital city of Assyria. He assumed that the people would not repent and he was upset when he found out that they would. In this sense he tried to know something that he could not know and thus tried to get ahead of the Lord.

## MICAH

Micah was a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah prior to the time of the exile. The first verse of the chapter sets the time-frame that he labored during.

Jeremiah made reference to him in 26:18 of his prophecy. "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."

## CHAPTER ONE

1. Micah begins by expressing words of prophecy concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Each of these two cities was the capital of their respective kingdoms. Samaria was the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel. Jerusalem was the capital city of the southern kingdom of Judah. Numerous prophecies were directed at each of these two cities, but the prophecies contain warnings against not just the cities but the surrounding nation as well.
2. We learn from this chapter that Samaria would be made as the heap of the field (vs.6). All the graven images and the idols of that country would be destroyed by the Lord. Verse 9 says that "her wound is incurable", that is, there was no hope for her.
3. The effect of the sins of Judah were great enough to influence her sister kingdom in the same direction. The rest of verse 9 states "for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem." Judah was basically a more righteous people than the nation of Israel. The greatness of Israel's sin is therefore made known when we see that it even influence Judah to sin. Both cities and nations would receive judgment in the future at the hand of the Lord.

CHAPTER TWO

1. The sins of the people are listed briefly in this chapter. As we have noted before in the books of the other prophets, the Jews were guilty of afflicting and oppressing their own people. This same sin is pointed out here. As a result of this sin the Jews would be punished.
2. The Lord informed them that his ways were not limited and that his words should provide comfort to those that are walking uprightly in his sight. Those who are not, however, would not find that comfort in the words of the Lord.
3. In addition to the general oppression of the poor, we learn that the Jews were mistreating their wives and casting them out of their houses (vs.9). Such mistreatment is condemned in numerous places in the Bible, but perhaps no stronger than in the book of Malachi where the Lord through the prophet states that he "hates" putting away.
4. Though the majority of this chapter dealt with the sins and the resulting punishment for those sins, the last two verses deal with the hope of the future restoration of Israel and Judah. Note that the Lord said that he would assemble "all of thee", that is all of Israel and Judah, and that they would be put together. Again, this passage, like so many others, emphasizes that there were never any lost tribes of Israel.

CHAPTER THREE

1. The leaders of the nation are rebuked in the opening section of this chapter. It was their responsibility to know right from wrong that they might be able to rule and judge effectively in their positions, but we learn that they were those "who hate the good, and love the evil;..." (vs.2) Such was a common error of the people of the day (cf. Is.5:20). As a result of their inadequacies judgment would be brought upon them.
2. The following section of the chapter deals with the sins of the prophets, not the true prophets of God, but rather those false prophets who told lies and encouraged the people to continue in their wicked ways as if nothing would ever happen to them. These sort of men are spoken against in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many of the other faithful prophets' books. There would come a day when these "seers" would be ashamed (vs.7).
3. As a consequence of the sins of the princes and the prophets, the Lord promised to plow Zion like a field and to gather Jerusalem in heaps (vs.12). This is exactly the message that Jeremiah said Micah would proclaim.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. The first part of this chapter is parallel to the passage in Isaiah 2:1-4. Each of these passages talks about something that would occur in "the last days." The subject under consideration is not the future restoration of the nation following the period of captivity, but rather it deals with something quite a bit further off in time. The subject is the mountain of the Lord's house, the house of the God of Jacob, which refers to the kingdom (i.e. the church) of the Christ. All nations would flow unto this glorious institution (cf. Acts 2; 9ff).
2. Following the period of captivity, however, things would be different as well. The Lord would deliver a remnant (a portion) of the people back to their homeland.
3. An image is expressed in this chapter that identifies a common theme in Old Testament literature. Verse 9ff depict a woman in pain as she is in expectation of delivering a child. The picture depicts Israel pregnant with the hopes of future redemption and glory. That redemption and glory came out of Israel, born of a woman of Israel, a Jew, under the law. Christ was, of course, the fulfillment of such expectations. [Note: The same image is used in Revelation 12 to describe the entrance into the world of the Christ and his kingdom, the church.]
4. Verse 12: "But they know not the thoughts of the Lord...". The Jews never fully realized the promises of the Lord concerning his Son and the kingdom he would establish until they were already come and in existence. Paul in I Corinthians stated that the rulers of the world did not know the things God had in store for them that loved him. Peter also taught that the prophets did not fully realize many of their own prophecies. The writer of the Hebrew letter emphasized that the great men

and women of faith listed in Hebrews 11 all died not having received the fullness of the promises. The hope of restoration was great in the minds of those who were in the midst of captivity, but the Lord had in mind something far greater than that. (see review of the book of Daniel)

#### CHAPTER FIVE

1. This chapter speaks of the deliverance which is to come from Bethlehem. The second verse of the chapter is generally considered to be a direct reference and prediction of the birth place of the Christ. "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." The future deliverance of the nation is seen coming from this ruler born in Bethlehem.
2. Though the Messiah, the Christ, would come to be the ultimate redeemer of the Jews, that period of time was not to come until further things first occurred. In verse 3 we learn that the Lord gave up, in a sense, the children of Israel. This occurred when the nations went into captivity. All of this was according to the will and the plan of the Lord. Following the period of captivity there would be an era of restoration and then the coming of the Messiah would come. Prior to that the Jews would be scattered as the dew of the morning. The remnant would be scattered among the nations, but they would once again be brought back to Israel's homeland. At that time, those who held them in their captivity would receive judgment.

#### CHAPTER SIX

1. In this chapter we learn of some of the Lord's contentions with the nation. He asked the people what he had done to cause them to live as they were living. The question of course was a rhetorical one, for the Lord did not cause them to change from good to bad. That was something for which the people were solely responsible, but by asking the question in this manner the thought was conveyed that the Lord had done all that he could for his people. The sins of the people could not in any way be blamed upon the Lord. The Lord brought them up out of the land of Egypt and sustained them in the wilderness. He brought them into the land of Canaan and delivered them from the hands of their enemies time and time again. He cautioned them to remember the prophet Balaam, a prophet who initially refused to do anything against the will of the Lord, but who later died for his sins of working against the people of God.
2. In the following portion of this chapter we note what the Lord expects of the people of Israel. All of the Lord's expectations were formerly set out in the law of Moses and the statutes and the precepts which accompanied that law. Here the Lord merely sums up the principle intent of all of the law/s. The Lord was not pleased with the outward manifestation of obedience. The offering of hundreds and thousands of sacrifices would never be pleasing in his sight, if the right heart was not there. This point was pointed out numerous times to the children of Israel by the prophets. What then did the Lord desire? "He hath showed 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?" (vs.8) This short verse sums up the intent of the law. By following these simple words, a man would be totally obedient to the will of the Lord. [NOTE: If Jonah had loved mercy as this verse enjoins it, he would have never revolted when he saw the Assyrians repenting of their sins.]
3. The remainder of the chapter lists the sins of the Jews. 1) They were unjust in their business dealings. 2) The rich were full of violence. 3) The people spoke lies. 4) The people were deceitful in general. As a result of these sins, the people were going to be judge by the Lord. The Lord, however, was not going to judge them with unjust wieghts and measures as they used, but would judge them with justice.

#### CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The first section of this chapter continues the list of the moral and the ethical sins of the people. 1) The good man was no longer found in the nation. 2) The people were guilty of doing evil, and doing it with both hands (totally involved), and doing evil earnestly. 3) The politics of the people were corrupt. 4) They were not a people that could be trusted. 5) The sons did not honor the fathers and the families were in decay. Micah expressed the correct attitude: "Therefore will I look unto the

- Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." (vs.7)
2. The latter part of the chapter shows the concern that the Lord had for his people. He would show his strength again as he did when he brought the nation of Israel out of the land of Egypt. Then the nations would know that the Lord was God, and so would Israel. He would deliver them out of the midst of their future captivity and restore them to their land. "The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall aly their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf." (vs.16)
  3. There is no God like the God of Israel, for their is no other God. There is only one. He pardons iniquity, he forgives transgressions. His anger isn't kept forever, because he deligts in mercy. He will restore Israel and subdue their enemies. All their sins would be cast into the sea. He would keep the promises which he made to Jacob and Abraham. God is faithful.

### MICAH: A REVIEW

Micah does not present any new information or teachings that we have not already seen in the earlier prophets taken under consideration. As a matter of fact, the messages of many of the prophets were quite similar in content, and many in form as well. Micah spoke of judgment which would come upon Judah and Israel. During the reign of Hezekiah, the northern kingdom of Israel went into captivity at the hands of the Assyrians. This should have been a great lesson to the Jews of the southern kingdom, but they needed to hear the words of the Lord in addition to witnessing the downfall of their fellow Jews. Example and exhortation go together. Micah spoke out against the sins of oppression. Many of the Jews took advantage of others (even other Jews) for the purpose of benefiting themselves financially, politically, or whatever. For this reason Micah spoke out against the rulers of the people. It was their responsibility to lead and guide the children of Israel and to make righteous judgments. When they failed, the people failed as well. This point is quite vividly seen in the books of the Kings. When a wicked king was ruling, the people more often than not fell into the same degree of wickedness as the king. The princes and rulers of the people were not, however, the only ones that came under the attack of the word of the Lord as it was proclaimed by Micah. He also attacked the work of those who were false prophets in the nation. Those who proclaimed peace when there was not to be any peace, were guilty of deceiving the people. Numerous references are found in the book of Micah to the future restoration of the nation of Israel, and even a reference or two to the coming kingdom of the Christ. The Lord, through the prophet, promised deliverance to the Jews of Micah's day, but he also promised a time of future oppression at the hands of their enemies. Israel is portrayed as a woman pregnant with future expectations, which were fully realized in the coming of the ruler from Bethlehem. Micah also spoke out against religious superficiality. He set forth some very basic principles which formed the foundation for the law of Moses and the requirements of the Jews. In the book of Micah we note: 1) Sin brings judgment. 2) God can not tolerate sin forever. 3) God is long-suffering. 4) God, in showing his love for his people, often warned them of sins consequences. 5) God is the supreme authority and the one that should be followed in matters of religion, and in this case in political matter (Judah and Israel were original theocratic governments.) 6) The Jews would be restored. 7) God had in mind even greater blessings through his Son. 8) God is merciful. 9) God loves his people. There are many more lessons taught in this book, but this partial listing shows us the importance of the book of Micah.

### NAHUM

Nahum was a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah prior to the time of the exile. His name is a shortened form of "Nehemiah" which means "compassionate". Very little is known about the prophet other than the information given in this book. The book deals primarily with the doom of Nineveh.

### CHAPTER ONE

1. The first chapter (with the exception of the last verse) is devoted to an explanation of the majestic mercy and judgment of the Lord. God is described as: 1) jealous,

- 2) God will take vengeance on his adversaries, 3) the Lord has control over the realm of nature, 4) the Lord is slow to anger, 5) the Lord is good and can be depended on in all instances, 6) the Lord knows those who trust in him.
2. These descriptions of the Lord are set forth to encourage faith and trust in him. There is no reason to think that the Lord could not take care of the problems of Israel. Though he afflicted them at times due to their sins, he would not continuously afflict them if they would repent of their inadequacies and return to him. Israel would be freed from their bondage one day.
3. The last verse of the chapter speaks of the destruction which would come against the wicked. They would utterly be cut off. Judah, therefore, was to keep her feasts and her vows, for she would be destroyed.

## CHAPTER TWO

1. The bulk of this chapter details the judgment which would come upon Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, the nation which came upon and captured the northern kingdom of Israel. It was the city that Jonah went to with his message of repentance. At that time the people of the city from the king on down repented at the word of the Lord and mourned in sackcloth and ashes. Now the situation changed. The mighty in Israel would fall because of their sins and their afflictions of Israel. The palace of that city would be destroyed. She would be torn asunder as a lion tears into his prey.
2. All of these things came as a result of the sins and the oppressing ways of the Assyrians. Remember, the Lord used them to bring judgment against his own chosen people, but it was not because they were better than the Jews, but because they were simply being used as the means by which punishment would be brought to the Jews. Now we notice that they, too, receive the judgment which they deserved.

## CHAPTER THREE

1. The final chapter of the book of Nahum continues the discussion of the overthrow of the city of Nineveh. The reasons for this destruction were: 1) they were involved in harlotry, whoredoms, etc.; 2) they were involved in witchcrafts, and 3) they were involved in all sorts of "abominable filth" (vs.6).
2. As a result of their sins, the people of the city of Nineveh were to be punished. They would soon become the "gazingstock" of the nations. They would be laid to waste. They would become drunken with destruction and consumed with fire. The last verses of the chapter state: "Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" The destruction of Nineveh, therefore, was inevitable due to their sinful ways.

## NAHUM: A REVIEW

Nahum quite briefly and pointedly teaches us that though people may repent of their wicked ways, there always exists the possibility that they will one day fall again and therefore be subsequently punished. Jonah went to the city of Nineveh and proclaimed the message of repentance there. The people listened to his words and did as they were to do. They repented of their sins and turned toward the Lord. But now, in the book of Nahum, we note that the city which repented earlier would be destroyed. God showed his mercies to the Gentile nation just as he showed his mercies to the nations of Israel and Judah, but he also punished the Gentile nations just as he did Israel and Judah. With regard to righteousness and unrighteousness, God is no respecter of persons; a righteous person (regardless of nationality) is exalted in the sight of the Lord and an unrighteous person is found in disfavor. Some of the lessons learned from this book are: 1) God rules in the affairs of nations, 2) sins in nations bring the judgment of the Lord just like sins in any individual, 3) repentance is not enough for a person to be found right in the sight of the Lord. The repentance must be couple with continued righteous living (cf. Matthew 3)., 4) The mercy and the wrath of God are equally applied to all peoples and nations. 5) God uses vile nations for his purposes at times, but they too receive the punishment of God if they continue in sin. God's use of them does not preclude punishment.



HABAKKUK

The book of Habakkuk deals with some of the same questions that were previously considered in the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. Habakkuk was a prophet that labored in Judah during the days prior to the exile.

CHAPTER ONE

1. In the opening verses of the chapter we note that the prophet asks "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." By saying these things the prophet Habakkuk was questioning the current status of the Jews. Why was it that it seemed the wicked were faring better than the righteous? Where was the judgment of God and the equality of justice while these matters continued? These questions will be set forth in detail and answered in the remaining part of the book.
2. The Lord informs Habakkuk that he (i.e. the Lord) would bring 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. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves." In answer to the questions set forth by Habakkuk the Lord replies that he was going to use the Chaldeans (i.e. the Babylonians) to bring them up against the land of Judah. They would specifically come for the purpose of violence, that is for doing violence.
3. In the last section of the chapter (vs.12-17) the prophet again resumes his former line of questioning. "Are 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. 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?" The prophet Habakkuk wondered why the holy God would allow such wickedness as to let the Chaldeans come against the Jews. He realized that God was well aware of the fact that the Jews were more righteous than the Chaldeans. Why then would God just sit back and hold his tongue and allow these things to occur?

CHAPTER TWO

1. Habakkuk determined to find out the answer from the Lord (vs.1).
2. The Lord spoke to Habakkuk and informed him that the thing of which he (i.e. the Lord) spake would certainly come to pass. It would not come to pass immediately, but it would still come. He affirmed that the "soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." (cf. Rom.1:17)
3. Beginning with vs. 5 of the second chapter and continuing through the remainder of that chapter, the Lord sets forth the destruction of the Chaldeans. They too would be destroyed for their own iniquities, but not until God had used them for his purposes. [NOTE: God did not force them to perform these events, but rather allowed them to do so. In such a manner they fulfilled God's intent to bring justice against the Jews. They were the instrument of that punishment.] A series of five woes are issued against conquering nations (cf. 2:6ff): "(1) Woe upon the plunderer, for he, himself, shall be plundered. (2) Woe upon him who thinks only of individual gain, for he forfeits his own soul. (3) Woe to him that oppresses others. Cities built by violence shall be destroyed. (4) Woe to him that reduces a people to helplessness. The violence will come home to him. (5) Woe to him who resorts to idolatry. The idol cannot save him, but the Lord is in his holy temple and all should keep silent before him." [THE MINOR PROPHETS, Lewis, p.64]

CHAPTER THREE

1. The third chapter of the book of Habakkuk constitutes a psalm or a prayer that the author offered up to the Lord.

2. The greatest portion of the prayer is devoted to praising the Lord. Such elements as the following are pointed out: 1) God is full of glory, 2) God is full of mercy, 3) God is all-powerful, 4) God is a God of vengeance and justice, 5) God richly blesses.
3. The last part of the chapter shows the reaction which Habukkuk made concerning these things. 1) When he heard his belly trembled. 2) His lips quivered at the voice of the Lord. 3) Finally, he realized that he was required to be faithful regardless of what the physical conditions might be. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fall, 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: YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD, I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION. 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.'

### HABUKKUK: A REVIEW

The questions which the prophet raised are all answered. His questions concerning the justice of God and the plight of the righteous in the midst of the prosperity of the wicked are perennial. God used the Chaldeans to bring judgment upon the Jews. This element concerned Habukkuk. It seems as if he thought that the Lord was just sitting idly back and not doing anything about the situation. Of course, this was an incorrect assessment of the situation. We know that God is always in control of all the affairs of this life. In Isaiah 6 and in Revelation 4 we note that the Lord is reigning upon his throne in heaven. Though the governments of the world will change from time to time, God never changes (cf. Mal.3:6) He knows the situation, Habukkuk does not. The Chaldeans, though they were being used to bring judgment upon Judah, were still in line to receive their just reward. The fact that they were being used to punish Judah did not indicate that they were more faithful than Judah. Habukkuk realized this fact, but he did not understand that righteousness is not determined by strength nor is strength determined by righteousness. Israel, the more righteous of the two nations (Chaldea and Judah), was going to be defeated. God simply used the Babylonians to bring about his will. When the Jews fell away from the Lord the promises (conditional) that the Lord made with them went into a period of regress. This was due to their sins. But we also learn in the book of Habukkuk that the Chaldeans, though they were victors over Israel, were going to be punished in the future for their own sins. We learn elsewhere in the Bible that the Assyrian kings thought that they were able to overthrow God's chosen people because of their own might and power. God let them know that this was not the case. They, too, would be destroyed for their sins. It is imperative to notice that there is no direct correlation between righteousness and suffering. This important element has been pointed out previously, but it is worthy of repetition. If a person is wicked he may be poor or rich. If a person is rich he may be either righteous or unrighteous. If a person is poor he may be righteous or unrighteous. If a person is righteous he may be either rich or poor. There is no concrete relationship between the inward man of the heart and the prosperity/suffering that he will or will not receive in this life. Habukkuk ultimately got the point. In the closing verses of the third chapter we note that he was determined to be faithful to the Lord regardless of the physical circumstances. This is exactly what we must do. Job well said "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him..." (Job 13:15) We should have the mind-set (i.e. the attitude) that we will serve the Lord come what may.

### ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah was a prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah prior to the time of the Babylonian captivity. He labored during the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. In all likelihood, Zephaniah was a contemporary with the prophet Isaiah.

### CHAPTER ONE

1. The book opens almost immediately by proclaiming the judgment of the Lord which would one day come. The wrath of the Lord is depicted initially in verse 2: "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord." We must remember that Josiah was basically a righteous king in Judah. Why therefore would Zephaniah come proclaiming judgment against Judah during the reign of a righteous king? The answer, for the same reason that Amos went to Israel and told them of the problems which would

come upon them. Israel during the time of Amos was in a period of great prosperity economically. Judah during the time of Zephaniah was faring quite well spiritually, but just as Israel would receive future punishment, so would Judah receive future punishment. After the reign of Josiah, we know (cf. Kings and Chronicles) that the following kings of Judah were no where near being righteous. The punishment which Zephaniah spoke of would come due to the sins of those kings which had not yet been committed.

2. The first chapter informs us that those who turned away from the Lord, those who have not sought him (that which God expects of us; cf. Ps.14:53), those who sit around and do nothing (vs.12), those who say in their heart "the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil", etc.; would be punished. They would thereafter walk like blind men because they sinned against the Lord. Their silver and gold would not save them then, but all would be consumed by the fire of God's jealousy.

### CHAPTER TWO

1. In this chapter we note something of the scope of the divine judgment which was to come. In the initial chapter of the book, Zephaniah informed Judah of coming destruction, but now we learn that such judgment was going to come upon many more nations. Some of the nations listed in this chapter are: 1) Gaza, 2) Ashkelon, 3) Ashdod, 4) Ekron, 5) Cherethites, 6) Philistines, 7) Moab, 8) Ammon, 9) Ethiopians, 10) Assyria.
2. The reasons for such widespread judgment are also given. 1) Some would be destroyed for their pride, magnifying themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts. 2) Some would be punished for their revilings. 3) Others would be judged for other reasons (numerous reasons have previously been cited in the prophets and in these notes).

### CHAPTER THREE

1. The first eight verses of the third chapter deal with the judgment which would come upon Jerusalem and the rest of the nations. Jerusalem receive punishment because: 1) she obeyed not the voice of the Lord, 2) she received not correction, 3) she refused to trust in the Lord, 4) she refused to draw nigh to God, 5) her princes involved themselves in sin, 6) her prophets (false ones) engaged in sinful practices and 7) generally speaking, they "have done violence to the law". For these sins Jerusalem would be punished.
2. In addition to Jerusalem's sins and punishment, we are informed of the Lord's intent concerning other nations. "I have cut off the nations..." (vs.6) "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." (vs.8)
3. The last section of the chapter (vs.9-20) speaks about the Israel which would be returned to the land of Canaan following the period of captivity. It would be a quite different Israel, for they would 1) no longer be ashamed of the Lord, 2) they would trust in the name of the Lord, 3) they would not commit iniquity (i.e. not "live" in sin), 4) they would not speak lies, 5) they would not be deceitful, 6) they would not be afraid of others (nations). The final two verses sum up this new Israel: "Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At 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."

### ZEPHANIAH: A REVIEW

The book of Zephaniah was addressed to Judah at a time when they were doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord. The prophesy, therefore, applied to a time when they would be engaging in sin. The specific sins were enumerated to some extent in the first chapter of the book. In addition to that we learned that the surrounding nations also fell under the scope of God's divine judgment. Dickson makes the following remarks:

"In great earnestness, and in the most forcible and pointed manner, the prophet draws the lessons from the existing state of things heading up into a great crisis. The sinful nations will not escape the blow that is about to fall, and if that is true of pagan nations how much more true will it be of Judah that knows Jehovah, has had so many expressions of His power and goodness and has so sinfully and persistently forsaken Him for other gods.

Zephaniah points out that the chose people, so far from escaping the judgments of God because they are His people, will, on that very account, be severely punished; that if God will not spare those to whom He has not so fully revealed Himself, how much more surely will he chastise those who have greater light, who know the way of truth and refuse to walk in it.

Hitherto Judah had not been moved by the things that had befallen the nations. She had regarded those things with indifference, had become dull and insensitive to what these things were designed to teach her. The prophet has enumerated the nations, has announced the coming judgment and again calls upon Judah to seize the overtures Jehovah is making, repent and get right with God, and thus avert the ruin with which she is threatened. Thus the chastisement of the nations is held up as an object lesson to Judah." [Dickson Bible, p.1058]

If it is true that the prophet Zephaniah labored after the prophets Jeremiah, Nahum, Habbukuk, and Hulda, then Judah would have already heard the basic message numerous times. The book of Zephaniah contains messages about: 1) the goodness and the severity of the Lord, 2) divine providence, 3) wealth and its failure to save, 4) a nation resting upon the laurels of the past, 5) and other lessons, many of which have already been described in previous reviews of the prophets.

## HAGGAI

Haggai was a prophet who labored in the kingdom of Judah/Israel following the restoration of those two nations. He was, therefore, a post-exilic prophet. Reference is made to him in the first verse of the fifth chapter of the book of Ezra the priest.

### CHAPTER ONE

1. The prophet Haggai came to the city of Jerusalem during the reign of Darius the king and spoke to Zerubbabel and Joshua. Zerubbabel was involved in the restoration of the city of Jerusalem, and Joshua was the high priest in Jerusalem at that time.
2. Haggai's message was basically one of encouraging the children of Israel to engage wholeheartedly in the rebuilding of the temple. He came asking: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled (i.e. houses with ceilings, roofs) houses, and this house (i.e. the temple) lie waste?" The children of Israel were already living in their own houses, but they had not yet done anything substantial concerning the rebuilding of the temple itself.
3. The prophet Haggai informed them that they (i.e. the Jews) were not prospering as they should because they had not yet done the work of the temple. They were sowing much and reaping little, eating but not getting enough, drinking but remaining thirsty, clothing themselves but remaining cold. They were earning wages both they were, in effect, putting them into a bag with holes in the bottom. In short, they were simply not what God wanted them to be, because they had yet to do what they needed to do.
4. Because of this failure to do the work of the Lord's house a drought came upon the people. When Zerubbabel and the rest of the people heard the words of the prophet Haggai, the people did fear the Lord. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and Joshua and the spirit of all the remnant of the people and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts (vs.12-14).

### CHAPTER TWO

1. Haggai came again to the people and asked them concerning the temple: "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" The temple which they were working

on was nothing compared to the glory of the former temple, the temple of Solomon. But yet God had respect for this new temple. Note: "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. ... The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts:..." (vs.4,5,9) God would respect the new temple even as he had the first temple.

2. In the second section of the chapter the prophet Haggai encourages the children of Israel, specifically the priests, not to engage in the same form of sins and iniquities that caused Israel and Judah initially to go into captivity.
3. The last few verses of the chapter (vs.20-23) contain a promise which the Lord made to Zerubbabel. God promised to be with Israel and to overthrow the kingdoms of the unrighteous nations. He promised to make Zerubbabel a signet "for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts."

### HAGGAI: A REVIEW

The prophet Haggai came at a time when the children of Israel needed encouragement. They had just returned from the land of Babylon where they were held captive for years. They are in the process of restoring the land to the way that it used to be. Haggai exhorted them to pay attention to the building of the temple, then, and only then, would the Lord be totally pleased with the Jews. From the book of Haggai we learn: (1) "there is a need for timely, penetrating questions, (2) God's people are under certain specific fundamental obligations, (3) obligations do not disappear merely because opposition appears, (4) people need to be reminded of their duties, (5) affluence can be dangerous, (6) God's work is controversial, (7) a remnant may be all that is left to do the work, (8) God favors the faithful." [THE LIVING MESSAGES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, "Haggai", by Mac Deaver, p.397], (9) "false content and discontent are dangerous, (10) false fears and expectations are to be guarded, (11) it is not safe to base conclusions upon the comparative strength of the friends and enemies of a proposition, (12) a life that leaves God out rests on a false basis." [Tidwell, p.150] The Lord did not restore the Jews to their homeland so that they could forsake his will and purpose. The Israel which returned was to be a new Israel (cf. Zeph.3). It was to be a better Israel than before. The people were to be more faithful than before. They should have known what they needed to do, and maybe they did, but the prophet told them what they needed to do. In the New Testament Peter did the same sort of thing. Note: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." (II Peter 1:12) "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:..." (II Peter 3:1) The glory of the Lord, which Ezekiel depicted as leaving the former temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, was now to return to the new temple. Though it was less in physical beauty than the previous temple, the glory and the spirit of the Lord was still going to be over the nation of Israel as it used to be. Israel was still the chosen people of the Lord.

### ZECHARIAH

Zechariah is the second of the three prophets who labored during the post-exilic period. Like Haggai before, Zechariah is also mentioned in the first verse of the fifth chapter of the book of Ezra. Zechariah began shortly after the work of Haggai began in Jerusalem.

#### CHAPTER ONE

1. The first section of this chapter (vs.1-6) is simply a call for the children of Israel to return unto the Lord. They are admonished not to follow after the sinful ways of their fathers before the captivity. Such sinful ways cause Israel and Judah to be taken into bondage. Such ways of life were to be avoided.
2. In the next section of the chapter we note the first of the many visions of the book of Zechariah. Because of the intricacies of some of the visions, space will not permit anything but a brief review and/or application of each of the visions.
3. The first vision centers around riders on horses:
 

"The rider on the red horse with red, sorrel, and white horses behind him. (1:7-17) These patrollers of the earth report that the earth is at rest, which seems bad news.

'The shaking of the nations' (cf. Hag.2:6,7), which could restore Jerusalem to glory, is not visible. The angel of the vision, however, assures the prophet that after 70 years (cf. Jer.25:11; 29:10) the Lord's pity is stirred and that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, while the heathen will be chastised." [Lewis, p.76]

"This vision might be labelled: THE MESSAGE OF GOD TO THE DISCOURAGED. It reveals that those who have failed God still have a divine intercessor. It shows that man is accountable for his sins, but that God is deeply concerned about his own and that he is always ready to strengthen and restore his people." {LIVING MESSAGES OF THE O.T., Howard, p.401]

3. "The four horns and the four smiths (1:18-21). Horns, a symbol of power (cf. Micah 4:13), represent those powers that have scattered Judah. The smiths on the other hand are symbols of the destruction of those powers. The import of the vision is that there is no longer any opposition to the building of the Lord's house." [Lewis, p. 76] (see also Howard, p.401)

## CHAPTER TWO

The message of the vision contained within this chapter is quite simple. The man with the measuring line could only symbolize one of two things: 1) either the measuring for destruction, or 2) the measuring for construction. The latter is, of course, the correct view. This occurred during the time of the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. Jerusalem would once again be vaulted to the position of prominence that it had once attained. Jerusalem would be the home of the abode of the Lord, the temple. A special appeal is made to those Jews who had not yet returned to the land of Canaan but still remained in Babylon. When the decree was initially given, the Jews were given the choice of remaining in Babylon or returning to their homeland. Some left Babylon and others remained. Now the prophet Zechariah calls for all of the Jews to return. [NOTE: Many of the dispensationalists and premillennialists of today assume that all the Jews will return to the land of Palestine prior to the "millenium". The truth of the matter is that the Jews never have and never will fully return to the nation of Israel. During the time of the beginning of the church the Jews that were gathered together in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost were gathered from countries throughout the Roman empire. It is said that today there are Jews in the city of New York and its suburbs than there are in the entire nation of Palestine.]

## CHAPTER THREE

This chapter deals with the vindication of Joshua. This is not the same Joshua who was the successor of the prophet Moses, but rather the grand-son of the last high priest when Judah was overtaken by the Babylonians. This Joshua is now the high priest in Jerusalem. He is vindicated of the sins and the transgressions that so characterized the priests and the priesthood prior to the period of captivity. "Behold, I have cause thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." (vs.4) Note the reference to verse 8 to the BRANCH, a reference to the Messiah who was to come (cf. Is. 11:1; Jer.23:5; 33:5; Zech.6:12). Verse 7 points out that the ways in which the priests were to walk before the Lord.

## CHAPTER FOUR

"The golden candlestick with seven lamps and two olive trees (4:1-14). The "two anointed ones" likely represent Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil and religious heads of the community who are given assurance that the temple will be completed. Despite the difficulties now in the way, Zerubbabel, who had laid the foundation, will complete the capstone amidst applause. One should not despise the day of small things. The seven represent the all-seeing eye of God in his constant rule of earth. Success comes not by might and power, but by the Lord's spirit (4:6)." [Lewis, p.77]

## CHAPTER FIVE

1. The fifth chapter consists of two visions: 1) a flying roll (scroll), and 2) a woman in the ephah.
2. The first of these visions indicates that the Lord would protect the land of Israel against common criminals. Those who involved themselves in acts of crime would be justly dealt with.

3. The second of the two visions, that of the woman in the ephah deals with wickedness, which is quite often personified as a woman.

"Though attempting to escape, she is thrust back into the barrel. In the Hebrew language wickedness is feminine, indicating the seductive power of temptation. The strange imagery of this vision must not cause us to miss its deep spiritual principle. Zechariah is not satisfied with a mere ritualistic atonement for sin, but is declaring that the living power of sin itself must be banished from the land. Service must be joined with sanctification.!" [Howard, p.403-4]

#### CHAPTER SIX

1. The four chariots of this chapter (vs.1-8) seem to depict the providence of the Lord over the nation of Israel. Chariots were the strongest military pieces of equipment, and symbolized might and strength, as also did the image of the mountains of brass.
2. The latter section of the chapter (vs.9-15) deals with the crowning of the priest. After the days of the Babylonian captivity, the office of the high priest took upon itself significantly more political prominence. Perhaps this was to typify the Christ who is both priest and king. [cf. Lewis & Howard]

#### CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The first section of the seventh chapter deals with the subject of fasting (vs.1-7). The prophet encourages the people to keep the fasts sincerely and devotedly as opposed to keeping them only superficially. The questions which are posed in the latter portion of this selection emphasize rhetorically that the purpose of the feasts is to serve the Lord, and not to serve self.
2. The last portion of this chapter emphasizes the consequences of disobedience. The Jews prior to the exile were disobedient, and subsequently went into a period of captivity. These Jews were admonished not to follow in the wicked footsteps of their ancestors. The sins of the previous generation are enumerated here: 1) oppression of the poor, 2) imagining evil in their hearts, 3) refusing to hearken unto the ways of the Lord, 4) hardening their hearts, etc. These sins cause the downfall of Judah and Israel before, and they would again if the present generation followed the same disastrous course.

#### CHAPTER EIGHT

This entire chapter is devoted to an exposition of the future restoration of the city of Jerusalem. This became the focal point and the theme that binds together many of the Old Testament books of prophecy. Beyond the days of trial and tribulation, there were going to be days of blessed restoration. In this chapter the Lord speaks abundantly through the prophet Zechariah about his plans for the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem would be called "the city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain." (v.2). The streets of the city would be full of old men and children playing. The people of Judah and the city of Jerusalem would once again be the people of the Lord. They were encouraged to be strong and to engage heartily in the rebuilding of their beloved city. They were promised blessings and prosperity as it had been with them before. They were admonished to "Speak every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor: and love no false oath: for all these things are things that I hate, saith the Lord." (vs.16-17). In that day would Jerusalem and Israel be honored among the nations of the world.

#### CHAPTER NINE

1. In harmony with the concluding verses of the preceding chapter, this chapter continues by speaking about the judgment which would come upon the neighboring nations of Israel. They would be brought down and Israel would once again be exalted.
2. The second and last section of this chapter deals with the future king of Zion. It must be pointed out that from the period of the captivity to the time of the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, there were no reigning kings in Jerusalem. Christ, therefore, was the next king to reign in Israel. His kingdom, however, was not a physical kingdom, but rather a spiritual one (cf. John 18:36; Luke 17:21).

CHAPTER TEN

This entire chapter speaks of the Lord's redemption of his people. It is fitting that this chapter comes right after that passage which referred to the coming king of Zion, the Christ, for it was through this king that the ultimate redemption of Israel and the world was to come. The Lord promised to strengthen the house of Joseph and to save them. They would become a mighty people in the sight of the Lord. At the same time he would bring down the powers of the nations of Egypt and Assyria.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The bulk of this chapter addresses the subject of the foolish shepherds. In the writings of the prophets the word "shepherd" did not simply denote a man who labored in a field and watched over the sheep. More commonly the term is used in the writings of the prophets to represent those who were the leaders in the nation of Israel. In this sense the term shepherd (guide, protector, leader) applied most appropriately. The chapter, therefore, speaks against those foolish leaders in the nation.

"The good and the foolish shepherds. Lamenting the fate of the sheep, at the Lord's command the prophet takes charge of the flock and takes two staves which he names 'graciousness' and 'union' [BEAUTY AND BANDS/KJV], and in one month three shepherds are cut off (cf. Jer.23:1-8; Ezek.34: 37:24; f. for the shepherd as a figure of speech for the leader of God's people). No clue to the identity of these persons is available. The shepherd despairs of governing and asks for his wages. The price-thirty shekels of silver-the equivalent of the value of a Hebrew slave (cf. Exod.21:32), is such a trifle that it is cast unto the potter; the stick union is broken to annul the brotherhood between Judah and Israel [cf. Ezek.37/jla]. The prophet is next ordered to become the worthless shepherd who in the end is stripped of his tools and punished (vss.15-17)." [Lewis,p.79]

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. The initial part of this chapter speaks of a time when Jerusalem would be oppressed and burdened. "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." In the midst of this time [NOTE: The phrase "in that day" is used numerous times in the last three chapters and is simply indicative of "the day of the Lord" (ch.14:1), a phrase which refers to the coming judgment of the Lord.] all nations would be burdened by Jerusalem. The exact fulfillment of this passage is somewhat obscure, but may refer to the future glory that would be fully Israel's when Jerusalem was once again exalted to her former position of prominence.
2. In the midst of this chapter lie references which seem to be quite Messianic in character. Note, for example, verse 10: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. Continuing the thoughts of the previous chapter, we note that a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem. The blood of Christ which was shed upon the cross would, of course, be the anti-type of this particular reference. The reference to the failure of the prophets may relate to the fact that Christ is now the "ultimate revealer" to mankind (cf. Jn.1:18; Heb.1:1; 2 Pet.1:19); therefore, all previous revelation ceases upon his arrival.
2. Note in verse 7 the reference to the effect of the smiting of the shepherd: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." At the betrayal and the trial of the Christ, there was a noticeable absence of the greatest part of his disciples. Peter and John followed afar off, but they, too, forsook him as the Christ had said.



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. The last chapter of the book of Zechariah has been one of the most difficult to understand in this book and one of the most difficult in all of the books of prophecy. [see Ellicott, p.590]. The application of this chapter, therefore, has been adapted to: 1) the restoration of Israel after the period of captivity, 2) the coming of the Christ, 3) the overthrow of Jerusalem by the armies of Rome, 4) the overthrow of the Greeks by the Maccabees, and 5) the ultimate victory of Christians over the forces of evil (i.e. the Roman empire, the antichrist, etc.). One thing is sure, the last chapter of this book deals with victory of some sort, and the most likely candidate would be the Jews (spiritual or fleshly). They are, after all, the prime subject of a great majority of the Bible's history. Exactly what sort of victory is conveyed here is hard to determine.
2. Notice that within the chapter a reference is made to "living waters" (vs.8). This is reminiscent of the 47th chapter of the book of Ezekiel, in which the prophet saw a great river bordered by numerous trees proceeding out of the city of Jerusalem. Christ referred to himself as "living water" in the fourth chapter of John. The obvious application is to the future blessings that would one day be Jerusalem's. Whether the blessings refer to the restoration of the city and nation during the days immediately following the period of captivity, or to the spiritual blessings which would come through the Messiah, is not certain. [NOTE: see vs.20-21]

### ZECHARIAH: A REVIEW

The prophecy of Zechariah is one of the most difficult in the Old Testament to understand fully. The prophet labored during the same general time period as did Haggai and Malachi, and was, as a matter of fact, preceded by Haggai by a period of only a few months. The Jews were engaged in resettling the land of Canaan following the period of captivity. We learn from Haggai that they began to pay more attention to their own affairs than they did to the affairs of the Lord's house (the temple). At Haggai's urging, the people began to exert more efforts to this forsaken work. Zechariah came shortly thereafter and encouraged them to continue in this work. In a series of visions found in the opening chapters of the book, he spoke of the providence of God, the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, the destruction of those who formerly oppressed the Jews, and the re-establishment of the sanctity of the priesthood. It is important to notice that following the period of captivity, no king sat upon the throne of Israel until the coming of the Christ, and then he was a king of a different sort (cf. Jn.18:36; Luke 17:21). Rather than a king, the Jews were now served by a priestly king, that is a priest who served in the role of political head as well as a priest in the temple. The restitution of the priesthood shows us that Israel, though plagued by years of defiled priests, was now fit to worship the Lord in the prescribed manner. No longer were the garments defiled; now they were cleansed and the priesthood was vindicated of their sins. Numerous references are made within the book to the sins that brought the period of bondage upon the Jews. They were, of course, to avoid these sins. There are also several references to the previous sins of the priests, the prophets, and the princes (leaders) of the land, which contributed to the downfall of the nation. These were to be avoided as well. Unique to Zechariah, are the allusions to the Messiah which appear throughout the book. They are not unique in the sense that no other prophet made reference to the Messiah, but they are in the sense that they differ greatly from previous references to the Christ. A reference is made to THE BRANCH in chapter 3 and verse 8 of the book. Christ as THE BRANCH, or the root of Jesse, would be a continuation of the new priest-king, for Jesus himself would be both priest and king at the same time. [This simple fact is one of the simplest refutations to the false theory of premillennialism. Christ is not only the high priest (cf. Heb.7), but he is also at the same time reigning upon the throne of the kingdom. If he is priest, which he is, then he must of necessity be the king at the same time. This fact is quite often overlooked by the proponents of this false theory.] Christ is also seen in the triumphal entry of the Lord into the city of Jerusalem (9:9), the thirty pieces of silver which Judas received for informing the Jews of Christ's whereabouts (ch.11), and the piercing of Christ (ch.12:10). In addition to these, Christ is also referred to in the reference to the smitten shepherd (ch.13:7). The book of Zechariah teaches us that: 1) the Lord

rules over all the earth, 2) the Lord provides for his own, 3) suffering often precedes a period of victory, 4) sins brings punishment, 5) God is just, 6) God is merciful, 7) the Messiah would come, suffer, and die for mankind, 8) the Messiah would be a priest and a king simultaneously, 9) Satan is always working against man (3:1), 10) the forces of evil will sometimes seem to have the definite advantage, 11) ultimate victory always lies within the sphere of obedience to the Lord.

## MALACHI

Malachi, the last of the prophets of the Old Testament, labored during the same general time period as Zechariah and Haggai. The city and the temple have already been rebuilt and the people have once again begun to move away from the Lord. Malachi deals with this situation.

### CHAPTER ONE

1. In the first part of the chapter, the prophet expresses the love which the Lord had for Jacob (i.e. Israel) and how he always sought to magnify them in the sight of the world when they would magnify him (i.e. the Lord) in the sight of the rest of the world.
2. The remainder of the chapter (vs.6-14) specifically addresses the sins of Israel as they relate to worship. It is important for us, as New Testament Christians, to note that Israel involved themselves in improper worship numerous times in their history, and that they were always rebuked for it. It seems too easy for many to fall into the rut of worshiping outwardly, yet failing to worship the Lord inwardly. The Lord wants us to love him with all of our heart, soul, mind, etc. That entails worshiping the Lord in spirit and in truth. No where in the Bible does God accept superficial acts of obedience. Obedience to the Lord's commands is only acceptable when it comes from the heart. We must not ever attempt to do something thinking, "Oh well, I guess I'll just do it and get it over with." Our attitude should rather manifest itself in thoughts like: "I love the Lord and I know the Lord loves me. He wants me to do this because he loves me. He did not require it of me in order for me to just be doing something, but rather to benefit me. The Lord always has purpose in his commands. I will keep them, because I love the Lord and want to be obedient to his will."
3. The children of Israel did not have this proper attitude. The Lord said that they despised his name, yet they asked "Wherein have we despised thy name?" You would think that if the Lord told them that they were wrong, that they would accept it and correct the matter. Their actions did not take that route, but rather they chose to question the Lord (not just to ask a question, but more of a challenge to the Lord). We learn from the first chapter that the Jews: 1) offered polluted bread upon the altar, 2) offered the blind for sacrifices (They would not have even done this to the governor.), 3) vowed to offer that which was acceptable and then substituted something quite unacceptable, 4) said that serving the Lord was a weariness to them.
4. The Lord was certainly upset with their behaviour. They sinned exceedingly in his sight, and did not even seem to be concerned about it or even know it.

### CHAPTER TWO

1. In the second chapter we note that the Lord, through the prophet Malachi, addresses the priests. The Lord told them that he would curse them and make them to be lowly in the sight of men. This would come because of the failure on the priest's part to keep the covenant of the Lord.
2. Rather than break the covenant of the Lord, the priests were to: 1) keep the law of truth in their mouths, 2) walk in peace and quietness, 3) keep from iniquity, 4) keep knowledge, 5) be a messenger of the Lord of hosts. Instead of doing these things, the priests: 1) departed out of the way, 2) caused many to stumble at the law, 3) corrupted the covenant of Levi, 4) were partial in the law, 5) dealt treacherously with their brothers, 6) profaned the covenant of the Lord, 7) committed abomination in Israel by marrying unauthorized women.

3. The last portion of the chapter devotes more material to the last of these sins, that of marrying unauthorized women and putting away the wives of their youth. Note verse 14: "Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." Furthermore, we note in vs.16: "For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away:...". The children of Israel were abusing the marriage institution and were held responsible for such abuses.

### CHAPTER THREE

1. The third chapter of the book of Malachi opens by making a prophetic reference to John the baptist (cf. John 1) who came to prepare the way for the Lord. (see also Is. 40:3) The point that is made is that John the baptist would come proclaiming the sins of the people of Judah and Jerusalem and that the people would not be able to abide in that day if they continued in their present sinful ways. John is identified as being a refiner, one who would purify the people of their sins. In that day the Lord would "be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts."
2. In verse 6 we note that the Lord's immutable nature is described, but in this context it is set forth to show that the Lord has always been merciful to those who are in sin. The ancestors of the Jews of Malachi's day were sinful and now these Jews were sinful too. They were robbing God by refusing to give as they were supposed to give. They robbed God in tithes and offerings, even the whole nation. They were commanded, therefore, to give as they should have been giving so that the Lord would bless them greatly. The Lord challenged them to test him to see if this were true or not.
3. The people had been saying that it was vain and useless to serve the Lord. They complained that it was not profitable to serve the Lord of hosts. All the wicked people about them seemed to be prospering, why should we serve the Lord?
4. Note, however, that those who feared the Lord "spake often one to another". Those who were faithful stuck together, and that's how it should be. The point is that a vast majority of the people were unfaithful. There were only a few that stuck together. Quite often in the Lord's church, those who are faithful are the object of ridicule and persecution by those who are somewhat less than faithful. Such should never be the case; all of the children of the Lord should be and are expected to be faithful to the Lord. The names of the faithful were written in a book (cf. Rev.20) and they were to be the Lord's jewels; they would be spared.

### CHAPTER FOUR

1. The last chapter of the book of Malachi, and the last chapter of the Old Testament, makes reference to the day of the Lord that was coming. It is depicted as being day of judgment in which the wicked would be consumed as stubble and in which the righteousness would be rewarded.
2. The children of Israel were admonished to "remember ye the law of Moses". The call to remember involved not just a mental exercise, but primarily obedience to the law of Moses.
3. The chapter closes by making another reference (cf. 3:1) to the coming of John the baptist. He was the prophet who would come in the spirit of Elijah and Jesus the Christ confirmed this to his disciples. (cf. Matthew 11:14).

### MALACHI: A REVIEW

Malachi closes the period of inspiration that we refer to as the Old Testament. As far as we know, there were no prophets in Israel that were inspired of God from this point until the coming of John the baptist, a man referred to twice in this book. The history of the Jews concluded with the book of Nehemiah, and Malachi labored during this general period of time. The greater part of the restoration of the land of Palestine already occurred. The temple was completed and the city was rebuilt. The system of worship was re-established during the days of Zechariah when Joshua, the new high priest, was inaugurated and the priesthood was vindicated of the sins of the priests prior to the restoration. Malachi

addressed the children of Israel with regard to the sins that they were once again falling into. He admonished them to follow after the Lord more completely than did their fathers before them. The Jews were involved in a half-hearted practice of their religion. They worshiped in an abusive manner. They offered up lame and blind sacrifices; they refused to give as they had been prospered. The priests were becoming more and more like the priests prior to the captivity. They did not keep the covenant of the Lord. They did not teach the truth of the word of the Lord. They were oppressive and abominable in their ways. The institution of marriage was falling in the sight of the Lord and in the respect that it so richly deserved. The people had gone into wholesale corruption of the ways of the Lord. But, there were still a few who were faithful to the ways of the Lord, a few who "feared the Lord." John the baptist is referred to as coming into the midst of just such a wicked and perverse people, but when he comes the people would not, by-in-large, subscribe to his teachings. Many would not abide in the day of his coming. From the book of Malachi we learn: 1) the Lord is always concerned with worship coming from the heart, 2) outward appearance can be deceiving, 3) worship involves outward manifestations that come from inward convictions, 4) the Lord is just and merciful, 5) the people were deceptive, 6) people often grow weary of obeying the will of the Lord, 7) those who are to be the "most responsible" for keeping the ways of the Lord are often the "most guilty" (e.g. the priests), 8) breaking the will of the Lord brings and does deserve punishment, 9) the Lord withholds blessings from the unfaithful, 10) marriage is precious in the sight of the Lord, 11) God expects his people to give as they were commanded to give, 12) the wicked sometimes prosper in their wickedness, 13) the righteous are written in the book of life, 14) punishment awaits the wicked, et al.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT IN PERSPECTIVE

The Old Testament covers hundreds of years of Jewish history beginning with the creation of the world and the creation of man, and continuing through the establishment of God's chosen people (later to become a nation) and the events that related particularly to them. It is important to view each book of the Old Testament (indeed, each book of the Bible) as contributing to the major theme of the Bible: THE GLORIFICATION OF GOD AND THE SALVATION OF MAN THROUGH THE BLOOD OF JESUS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD.

Everything within the Bible either directly or indirectly contributes to this major theme. Each book within the Bible concerns itself with an aspect of the Bible that is unique unto itself. Every book should, therefore, be studied with regard to its own major theme that it contributes to the overall theme of the entire Bible.

The Old Testament has often been referred to as the 'New Testament veiled'. The coming of the Christ is constantly depicted as an event that was going to be of primary importance to the people of God. From the first sin that was committed in the garden of Eden to the close of the Old Testament Canon, the "scarlet thread" of the story of the coming Christ occupies a central position in the Bible. The change from good to bad in man would one day change from bad to good.

The application of the Old Testament to Christian today is often misunderstood. Though the law of Moses was nailed to the cross (Col.2:12ff), there are principles which were in existence then that are still in existence now. The Old Testament is not simply a compilation of stories that are to be told to our children. They reveal the unfolding plan of redemption which God purposed for the benefit of mankind. They are to be studied diligently, just as the New Testament is to be studied. There are numerous portions of the New Testament which cannot be properly understood except that one know the historical background of the Old Testament. The books of Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews abound in references to the Old Testament. The book of Revelation is more easily understood having read and digested the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. The apostle Paul said that these books

(that is the books of the Old Testament) were written for our admonition and for our learning. The lessons to be learned from them are great.

The Jews were human beings, just as much as you and I are human beings. We can learn from their weaknesses, their strengths, their failures, and their successes quite readily. In principle, God expects from us what he expected of them. The principle of grace and faith remains the same, but the form of obedience differs.

Furthermore, the Bible would not be complete without these most important books. The aspect of prophecy is most unique. From the predictions and the fulfillments we can learn and confidently affirm that the Bible far exceeds a product of mere human imagination. It must of necessity be supernatural in its origin. In addition to that, we learn numerous types and figures of people, events, and places which would one day come to fruition in the New Testament. The church, its origin, its duty, and its prominence in the scheme of God's plan, is amply depicted within the Old Testament. From a study of the prophets we can learn that the church of which we are members is the one and the only church. The Old Testament is indispensable in this service.

The number of references to the coming Son of God are too numerous to mention, but they play a very important role in the Old Testament. The love which the Lord has for mankind was to be manifested in the giving of that Son upon the cross of calvary. The Christ, his birth, his life, his ministry, his death, his burial, his resurrection, his goal, and much more, are given just a brief treatment in the prophets, but from that brief exposure we learn much about the Messiah which was to come.

It is important that you continue your study of the Old Testament. It is an area that many Christians are far too weak in, and therefore an area which demands our constant and immediate attention. Paul told Timothy that his knowledge of the scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation. It can do no less for us when we master it.

### THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

As we indicated previously in our discussion of the book of Malachi, the history of the Jews makes an abrupt stop following the period of the restoration. For a time of about 400 years we have no inspired record of the lives and the activities of the Jewish nation. There were, however, secular accounts of this period in time, and it is from them that we draw the greatest bulk of information about this "dark period" in the history of Israel. [FOR YOUR FURTHER STUDY YOU MAY WANT TO CONSULT SOME OF THESE WORKS: 1) THE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS, 2) NEW TESTAMENT TIMES, by Merril C. Tenney, and 3) THE NEW TESTAMENT ERA by Bo Reicke]

The Old Testament is not, however, totally silent about the events of this period. We have already noticed several prophecies which addressed events which would transpire during this general time frame. In the book of Daniel we noted several allusions to the four kingdoms which would arise and fall prior to the coming of the kingdom of God. We identified these kingdoms as 1) the Babylonian kingdom, 2) the Med-Persian kingdom, 3) the Grecian kingdom, and 4) the Roman Empire. The first of these two kingdoms are discussed more fully than are the last two in the Old Testament, and with good reason. Each of these kingdoms had a direct impact upon the history of the Jewish people. It was at the hands of the Babylonians that the southern kingdom of Judah went into captivity. During this period of captivity, Daniel spoke about these four kingdoms mentioned above.

Following the Babylonian kingdom, the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians emerged. This was the empire that was in control when the Jews were released from their bondage and allowed to return unto their homelands. It is this