

Lessons 70-74

- 1 Proof of the Bible Part One
- 2 Proof of the Bible Part Two
- 3 Time of Ezra and Nehemiah - Fifth Period of Canonization
- 4 How the New Testament Came Together
- 5 The Inspired Order of the Books of the Bible
- 6 Introductory Survey Approach of Studying the Bible
- 7 Genesis 1 - 3
- 8 Genesis 4 - 9 Part One
- 9 Genesis 4 - 9 Part Two
- 10 Genesis 10 - 11
- 11 Genesis 12 - 36
- 12 Genesis 37 - 50
- 13 Exodus 1 - 18
- 14 Exodus 19 - 40
- 15 Leviticus Part One
- 16 Leviticus Part Two
- 17 Numbers
- 18 Deuteronomy
- 19 Joshua
- 20 Judges
- 21 I Samuel 1 - 15 & I Chronicles 1 - 9
- 22 I Samuel 16 - 31 & I Chronicles 10
- 23 II Samuel 1 - 20 & I Chronicles 11 - 20
- 24 II Samuel 21 - 24 & I Kings 1 - 11 & I Chron. 21 - 29 & II Chron. 1 - 9
- 25 I Kings 12 - 22, II Kings 1 - 2, II Chronicles 10 - 20
- 26 II Kings 3 - 25 and II Chronicles 21 - 36
- 27 Ezra and Nehemiah
- 28 Between the Testaments
- 29 Introduction Survey of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- 30 Matt. 1 - 4:11; Mark 1:1-13; Luke 1 - 4:13; John 1 - 2:12
- 31 Matt. 4:12 - 9:17; Mark 1:14 - 2:22; Luke 4:14 - 5:39; John 2:13 - 4:54
- 32 Matt.8,11,12,13; Mark 2:23 - 4:20; Luke 6:1 - 8:15; John 5
- 33 Matt. 8,9,10,13,14; Mark 4:21 - 6:29; Luke 8:16 - 9:9
- 34 Matt 14:13 - 17:23; Mark 6:30 - 9:32; Luke 9:10-45; John 6:1 - 7:1
- 35 Matt.17:24 - 18:35; Mark 9:33 - 10:1; Luke 9:46 - 12:59; John 7:2 - 10:21
- 36 Matt. 19; Mark 10; Luke 13 - 19:29; John 10:22 - 12:11
- 37 Matt. 20:18 - 25:13; Mark 11:1 - 13:37; Luke 19:29 - 21:38; John 12:12-50
- 38 Matthew 25:14 - 26:75; Mark 13:37 - 14:72; Luke 22:1-62; John 13:1 - 18:27
- 39 Matt. 27:1 - 28:20; Mark 15:1 - 16:20; Luke 22:66;24:53; John 18:28 - 21:25
- 40 Acts 1 - 9
- 41 Acts 10 - 17
- 42 Acts 18 - 28
- 43 General Epistles
- 44 James
- 45 I & II Peter
- 46 I, II, III John & Jude
- 47 Major Prophets - Introduction
- 48 Isaiah 1 - 14
- 49 Isaiah 15 - 35
- 50 Isaiah 36 - 49
- 51 Isaiah 50 - 66
- 52 Jeremiah 1 - 15
- 53 Jeremiah 16 - 34
- 54 Jeremiah 35 - 52
- 55 Ezekiel 1 - 16
- 56 Ezekiel 17 - 32
- 57 Ezekiel 33 - 48
- 58 Background - Apostle Paul
- 59 I & II Thessalonians
- 60 Galatians
- 61 I Corinthians
- 62 II Corinthians
- 63 Romans
- 64 Colossians & Philemon
- 65 Ephesians & Philippians
- 66 Hebrews
- 67 I Timothy & Titus
- 68 II Timothy
- 69 Battle Against First Century Heresies
- 70 Minor Prophets - Introduction
- 71 Hosea & Joel
- 72 Amos, Obediah, and Jonah
- 73 Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and
- 74 Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi
- 75 The Writings - Introduction
- 76 Psalms 1 - 41
- 77 Psalms 42 - 72
- 78 Psalms 73 - 89
- 79 Psalms 90 - 106
- 80 Psalms 107 - 150
- 81 Proverbs 1 - 9
- 82 Proverbs 10 - 22:16
- 83 Proverbs 22:17 - 31:31
- 84 Job
- 85 Song of Solomon
- 86 Ruth
- 87 Lamentations
- 88 Ecclesiastes
- 89 Esther
- 90 Daniel Part One
- 91 Daniel Part Two
- 92 Ezra, Nehemiah and I & II Chron.
- 93 Revelation - Introduction
- 94 Revelation 1 - 3
- 95 Revelation 4 - 6
- 96 Revelation 7 - 10
- 97 Revelation 11 - 13
- 98 Revelation 14 - 18
- 99 Revelation 19 - 22
- 100 Questions & Answers

Bible Study # 70
May 28, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Introduction

This evening we **are getting into a new Bible study series, a series on the Minor Prophets.** The Minor Prophets play a very important role in the understanding of the Bible and the understanding of God's plan. There are many, many things that come out.

The Minor Prophets are minor, but not in the sense of importance. They are referred to as Minor Prophets to distinguish them from what are called the Major Prophets. The difference in them has nothing to do with importance. It is reflective of the length or size of the books.

The Jews traditionally recognized three divisions of Scripture: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. These divisions would refer to what we term the Old Testament.

The **Law** was the most basic revelation of God. It consisted of the five books of Moses called in Hebrew, the Torah. The word "Torah" simply means "Law." The books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy form the most basic revelation of God. This is the starting point. God introduces Himself to us in Genesis as the Creator and He begins the process of teaching and instructing with His basic law.

Some of this sets a stage. What we **are going into this evening is introduction and background as far as the Minor Prophets are concerned.** But the term "Law" or "Torah" is a lot more inclusive than what we sometimes think. We tend to think of law where everything is spelled out. Our concept of law is more akin to rules. We think of "do this, that or something else," or "don't do this, that, etc." We think that's what law is. Those kinds of statements are law, but law consists of much more than simply "thou shall" and "thou shall not."

The entire first five books of the Bible are called "the Law," "the Book of the Law," "the Law of Moses" or "the Torah." We find that the law consists of testimonies as well as commandments, statutes, ordinances and judgments. It consists of all these things. Much of God's law is given by way of example or illustration—by what the Bible terms testimonies. Testimonies are simply a witness or a testified account of God's working that has transpired. One of the main ways we gain insight into the will of God is through the examples and illustrations that God records.

God introduces Himself to us at the creation. He gives us the basis for understanding who He is and the right that He has to establish commandments. God introduces us to Him and to His most fundamental revelation in the first five books of the Bible. Everything else in the Bible is based and built upon the five books of the Law. That is the starting point.

After the Law came the Prophets and then the Writings. The **Prophets** consist of what are termed the Former and Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets were the books that we term historical: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The Latter Prophets are the books we think of as prophetic: the Major and Minor Prophets. The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets are the Twelve, beginning with Hosea through Malachi.

Prophecy and history are the same thing seen from different directions. We look back on history and we look forward on prophecy. It is simply where you are in the continuum of time that makes the distinction between history and prophecy. Much of what we study today is prophecy. In the Millennium, we will study it as history; it is already there. Some of the things prophesied in the Old Testament were fulfilled with the first coming of the Messiah. Those things we study as a matter of history. They were given as prophecy; now, they are history. There are events that relate prophetically, but as these things come to pass, they then fall in the category of what we call history. It is a continuum of time and depending on our perspective (the point where we are), we look backward on certain things and forward on certain things.

Since God inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15), there is not the same distinction we would make. That is sort of mind boggling when you consider it because God exists outside the realm of time. Time exists for human beings. Time was created and established for human beings. Time is regulated by the workings of the interaction of the heavenly bodies and the cycles that God established. Before God created the physical universe, there was no such thing as time.

The Prophets build upon the law. The Prophets show you the results and the consequences when the law is obeyed and when it is disobeyed. The law is the basis for all the prophets. Everything in the prophets is simply an expansion of the blessings and curses that are contained in the law.

Remember when Moses gave the law in Deuteronomy? We have the account before

Israel went into the Promised Land. He gathered them together, put them on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim and gave them the blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 11:26-29). You are blessed for obedience and cursed for disobedience. That ultimately sums up the prophets. *The message of the prophets is the consequences of either obedience or disobedience to the law.* That's what gives predictability because when you obey the law, there are results; when you disobey the law, there are results. God's law carries consequences, both good and bad.

From what we term the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings), we see the way God responded and dealt with Israel. We see the historical account of what happened when Israel obeyed and disobeyed. We see the distinction that comes in.

In the Latter Prophets, both the Major ones (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) as well as the Minor Prophets (the Twelve), we look forward and anticipate the consequences and results. We see the curses of Israel's disobedience that ultimately resulted in their captivity. We see the blessings that are going to occur when Jesus Christ returns and the government of God is set up on this earth. The Millennium is going to be a wonderful time. The earth will be a wonderful place during the one thousand-year reign of the Messiah. The reason is because "a King will reign in righteousness and princes will rule with justice" (Isaiah 32:1). God's law is righteousness.

Psalm 119:172, "...for all Your commandments are righteousness." The Millennium will be a wonderful time and place because the law of God will be the basis by which society will conduct itself, and there will be results and consequences.

The **Writings** are the poetic books: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the five Festival Scrolls (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther), and then conclude with the books that were written after the exile: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. For the most part, most of the Writings serve as a poetic amplification of the law as well as including the wrap-up, the concluding accounts that were written after the exile to sort of finish off the Old Testament—God's revelation in the Hebrew language. Again, it represents an amplification of the law. It all gets back to the law.

The Minor Prophets that we are focusing on over the next number of Bible studies are the 12 books. In fact, sometimes in Hebrew, they are simply referred to as "the Twelve." They were

normally in one long scroll because they were short, and if you put them all together, they would be no longer than many of the longer books of the Bible.

They consist of several things. There are several different periods during which these books are grouped. There is dispute as to why they are arranged as they are. There are various theories developed on it. However, if we look at the pattern of the Major Prophets and at the pattern of the Minor Prophets that are dated, there is a pattern that establishes itself. If we look at Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel as something to establish a pattern, why are they arranged as they are?

Isaiah 1:1, we are told, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." The period of Isaiah was a period that had its beginnings considerably before the captivity of Northern Israel.

Isaiah 6:1, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple." He began his writings in the last year of King Uzziah, which was about 732 B.C. We would reference that in Isaiah 6:1 when Isaiah dates his vision to the year that King Uzziah died. We would date Isaiah beginning his ministry about 732 B.C. and continuing on down to the end of the lifetime of King Hezekiah in 686 B.C.

Jeremiah 1:1-2, when we come down to Jeremiah, it says, "The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign."

Jeremiah, according to verse 2, had his beginning in 625 B.C., which was the 13th year of Josiah. It continued on down until after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

We notice that Isaiah began his ministry considerably before Jeremiah did. In fact, Isaiah's ministry had ended almost 60 years before Jeremiah's began.

We come down to Ezekiel a little later.

Ezekiel 1:1-2, "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. On the fifth day of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity..." We would date this to 591 B.C. because the year of King

Jehoiachin's captivity was the second invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 596 B.C. Therefore, we would date this to 591 B.C. when Ezekiel began his prophesy and it continued until 569 B.C.

We notice that Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are clearly arranged in chronological order. We know the Major Prophets were arranged in chronological order because they are clearly dated. This gives us a little bit of a pattern. The pattern is not quite as easily established in the Minor Prophets as they are in the Major Prophets, but it gives us some insight and ideas.

You can read commentaries and find that different ones say different things. They will argue about the dates of the Minor Prophets. Most of them have no idea why they are arranged as they are. Clearly, at least in a general sense, *they are arranged in chronological order.*

We know that the first seven of the Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Nahum) are all books that date to what we would term the "Assyrian period." It is called that because Assyria came to an end as a world power in 612 B.C. with the fall of Nineveh. The Medes teamed up with some other nations and sacked Nineveh, and it was destroyed in 612 B.C. This set the stage for the rise of Babylon. The first seven Minor Prophets clearly fall within that range. Most of those can be dated.

The books of Habakkuk and Zephaniah fall in what we would term the "Chaldean period." They date to a time of Babylonian ascendancy and their warnings have to do with Babylon. Babylon is the emerging power.

The last three books, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, are what are termed "post-exilic," that is, after the exile, after the Jews returned with Zerubbabel from Babylonian captivity. Clearly, we find at least a general chronological order. I can demonstrate that.

Hosea 1:1, "The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel." We find that Hosea would have been approximately contemporary with at least the early part of Isaiah's prophecies. His period ends with Hezekiah, King of Judah. The prophetic career of Hosea lists kings of Israel and Judah, and if you overlap them together, you will find that his prophetic career began about 770 B.C. during the reign of Jeroboam II, King of Israel and came on down to around 710 B.C., which was after the captivity of the ten tribes. Hosea is clearly an early prophet during the Assyrian

domination. We would date Hosea to that early period.

When we come to Joel, Joel does not start off by giving us a date. There is not a clear internal date in the book of Joel.

Joel 1:1, it just starts off, "The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel." It goes through and gives the prophetic message. It goes through the things that are going to occur, but it is not clearly dated.

Amos is the third of the Minor Prophets.

Amos 1:1, "The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake." Amos would clearly date as contemporary with the very early part of Hosea's prophecies. We can clearly date Hosea and Amos. Joel doesn't say.

Jonah is not clearly dated except in a couple of ways. One, Jonah went to warn Nineveh of impending destruction and Nineveh was spared. We know from this that we are talking about a period earlier than 612 B.C. because Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C.

If we go back to 2 Kings 14, we will notice something. Sometimes people are unaware of this.

2 Kings 14:23-25, "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, and reigned forty-one years. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher."

Jonah 1:1, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, ..." Clearly we are talking about the same Jonah. We can date the book of Jonah to the latter part of the reign of King Jeroboam II. We can date Hosea, Amos and Jonah. All three of those are clearly dated as beginning at the same general time.

We can put a question mark by Joel and Obadiah. Micah clearly dates a little later (around 740-690 B.C.) based on the kings whose reigns he overlapped and based on the other dates. Hosea we would date about 770-710 B.C.; Amos, 760 B.C.; Jonah, 750 B.C.; and Micah, about 740-690 B.C. This is based on internal

dating. We would put a question mark by Joel and Obadiah because you can't date them internally in the same way you can the others.

Nahum does not date itself in the same way. Nahum is a prophecy against Nineveh. We can date it prior to 612 B.C. because Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C. and there wasn't any point in prophesying against Nineveh after 612 B.C. Nahum doesn't date internally except that we could say that Nahum was prior to 612 B.C., a time when Assyria was the enemy. His prophecy is against Assyria.

Habakkuk prophesied against the Chaldeans. We can date Habakkuk generally but not specifically. It doesn't date itself exactly. There's not an internal date, but he is dealing with the Chaldeans. They began to arise about 620 B.C. They came into dominance and achieved world status after the fall of Nineveh.

We can date Zephaniah to about 620 B.C., to the time of Josiah's reign.

Zephaniah 1:1, "The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah." Josiah began to be king about 620 B.C. Zephaniah would clearly be contemporary with the early part of Jeremiah's ministry. It might be helpful to have a list of the Minor Prophets because I am going to keep jumping back and forth, giving you some overview. You may want to write some of these dates down and line them up so you can visually see it.

Haggai 1:1, "In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozakak, the high priest, ..." The second year of Darius would be 520 B.C. Haggai is dated to the sixth month of 520 B.C., which would be the month before the Feast of Tabernacles. He started prophesying in 520 B.C., the month before the Feast.

If you turn to Zechariah, he starts prophesying in the eighth month of the second year of Darius.

Zechariah 1:1, "In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, ..." He prophesied the same year. Notice there is a two-month difference. Haggai prophesied in the sixth month; Zechariah prophesied in the month after the Feast. The arrangement of Haggai and Zechariah is interesting because clearly it is chronological,

even if it was only a distinction of two months. The one that was dated first came first.

Malachi is not clearly internally dated, though by all tradition, it is considered the very last book to have been written. Malachi is, at least from a traditional standpoint, considered to tie in with the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

What do we find? We find that Joel, Obadiah, Nahum and Habakkuk cannot be clearly dated in terms of internal evidence. From all the ones that are clearly dated, we see that they all run in a chronological order. Based on the fact that the Major Prophets are clearly chronological and based on the fact that every one of the Minor Prophets that we can date are in chronological order, we see that God does things in a logical way. He doesn't just throw them in hodgepodge and just kind of stick them in any old way. God does things in a purposeful way. He is not the author of confusion, so undoubtedly, there was a reason as to why the books were arranged the way they are.

The most logical reason, that I am aware of, is that the Minor Prophets were probably arranged and preserved for us in the Canon in chronological order. That way we would date Hosea 770-710 B.C. Hosea is clearly dated internally by the scriptures. Joel we would date to about 770 B.C. We would date Joel about the same time of Hosea. Amos is internally dated. The date that it gives for itself, internally, is about 760 B.C. Obadiah is not clearly dated. Jonah is dated to about 750 B.C. We would date Obadiah about the same, 750 B.C. This would run 770, 770, 760, 750 and 750. Micah is dated from 740-690 B.C., so Micah would come next. We would date Nahum about 650 B.C. Nahum clearly comes after Jonah when Assyria's repentance hadn't lasted so God is really going to "put it to them" this time. We would date these seven prophets to a period of Assyrian ascendancy.

Most of the commentators will agree on that part of it, but then they want to come up with some other dating method for the books that aren't dated. They seem to have a problem concluding that the books are chronological. But when you look at the way they are laid out, I think that's the most logical way. Habakkuk and Zephaniah, clearly date to the Chaldean period. Zephaniah we date to about 620 B.C., Habakkuk about the same, coming a little before Zephaniah. Haggai was written a couple of months earlier than Zechariah. Last of all, Malachi, we would probably date in the vicinity of 420-400 B.C.—something like that.

We would date the Minor Prophets or figure their arrangement primarily on a chronological basis. We see that slightly over half of them (seven out of the twelve) can be internally dated very clearly. Malachi is a very probable date attested to by tradition. That leaves us only four, and they fall in this sequence that would lend itself logically to what we are saying here.

Let's understand a little bit about prophecy. When we think of prophecy, we tend to limit it to strictly a prediction of the future. But prophecy is really an oral or written disclosure in words through a human mouthpiece, transmitting the revelation of God and setting forth God's will to man. Prophecy, used in the term that is used in the Bible, does not necessarily have to be predictive, though we normally think of it that way. The Hebrew word for prophet is "*nabi*." It comes from a word that means "to summon" or "announce" or "to call." It means one who has been called or appointed to proclaim, as a herald, the message of God. It is someone that God has appointed to announce or proclaim His message. In that sense, a prophet of God was not necessarily predicting the future.

Elijah is considered the greatest of the prophets, and, yet, we don't find that his main mission seems to have concerned itself with a whole lot of prediction as we think of it. There were certainly predictive aspects. In fact, Elijah's life and ministry was predictive because Malachi tells us that prior to the coming of the Messiah, God would first send Elijah the prophet to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4: 5-6).

Jesus Christ clearly identifies the fact that prior to His first coming, John the Baptist was raised up 'in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord' (Luke 1:16-17). John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of coming in the spirit and power of Elijah in terms of Christ's first coming. But when you read the context of the prophecy in Malachi, it is clear that what we would term the second coming of the Messiah is even more directly referred to.

I think it has been our understanding over the years in the Church that Mr. Herbert Armstrong was raised up by God to fulfill a similar mission—a mission to prepare a people made ready for the Lord, to carry out the work of Elijah and to do an Elijah work. Certainly, Mr. Armstrong referred to that many times himself and, certainly, he felt and understood that God was using him in that way. I think that the vast

overwhelming majority of us in the Church certainly felt the same way—that he was established in that way.

You can say that Elijah's work and ministry was itself predictive and prophetic because it set the stage. Elijah came when the nation of Israel had lost sight of the true God and had gotten off into other things. Elijah was called to restore the knowledge of the true religion in Israel. John the Baptist came and did something similar to that.

God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong back in the 1920s at a time during the fifth era of God's Church, the Sardis era. The Sardis era is described as a dying remnant that had a name and that it was alive, but for all practical purposes, it was spiritually dead (Revelation 3: 1-6). It was certainly not in a position to proclaim God's message to the nation or to the world. Mr. Armstrong was raised up in the context of restoring the knowledge of the true religion in Israel. That was a part of the way that God used him.

I think we have to understand that God has used His different servants in different ways. Every messenger and servant of God has not had exactly the same mission. God has used different ones to warn different groups. He has used His servants in the overall scheme of performing His work, but He has used them differently.

We have to understand and recognize that God worked through each of the Minor Prophets in different ways. If you go through each of the Minor Prophets, you find that God worked through these individuals in different ways. They were all God's servants, but He worked through them over a period of time in different ways. Some were utilized and did a work in a certain context. God used others to focus on a different aspect of His work or message. The point is that prophecy is not simply prediction; it is the announcement or proclamation of God's will. There is often a predictive element to prophecy.

One of the things to recognize is the distinction between the prophets and the Levites. The Levites were professionals. They didn't receive their office directly by divine call. They received their office by a hereditary succession in the Levitical priesthood. If you were a Levite, then obviously your father was a Levite. It was a tribal distinction, and the priesthood was a subdivision of the Levites through the descendants of the family of Aaron.

The prophets differed from the Levites. They were not automatic successors to an office. They did not inherit their prophetic office. The emphasis of a prophet was that he was one who

was called to go out and announce or proclaim God's message. He was not someone who appointed himself to the job. He was not someone who inherited the job. You weren't a prophet simply because your father or your grandfather had been a prophet. The prophets were raised up by God.

God used individuals from a variety of walks of life. Some, evidently, were and could have been of Levitical background. Elijah, evidently, was a Levite. But that seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. Most of them who are recorded were not of Levitical ancestry at all.

Amos was a herdsman (farmer). He describes himself as a gatherer of sycamore fruit. He said he wasn't a prophet nor was he a prophet's son (Amos 7:14). He said he was not a professional; he was not in the prophet business. That was not his profession or his business, but rather, God called him and gave him a job to do. God thrust him into that. Over and over when we find God's servants used in that way, and particularly for a special mission or job, we see that God thrusts them into that job. It was not something they sought or sort of orchestrated or brought about and ensconced themselves into.

There are two kinds of prophets: oral and written prophets or oral and written prophecy. There are prophecies to which reference is made in the Scriptures that we have no record of. There is no book of Elijah or Elisha. We are told about Nathan the prophet, but there is no book of Nathan. There are many prophets to whom reference is made in the Scriptures of whom we have no record in terms of what they said. Or, we have what they said summarized in two or three verses and that is the entirety of what we know about their message.

Oral prophecies were announcements or proclamations from God that had significance for their day and time. The primary significance of the prophecies that were simply delivered orally was that they were not messages that were particularly relevant for all time. They were messages that zeroed in on a specific time and place. They were things that had significance at that time, but they really don't have a whole lot of implication for us today. God used many of the prophets as His representatives primarily in their own day, and their mission was pretty well limited to that point in time.

However, there are a number of prophets whom God used (15 specifically) whose works are recorded in the Scriptures (in books that carry their names), whose works were not primarily

for their day. They were written down for our admonition. One of the important things to understand about these scriptures is that the prophets were writing messages that had implications far beyond their day. They were not simply social reformers as some of the modern commentaries like to think. They were not out leading marches and crusades, trying to campaign for this or that fellow to get elected in order to bring about some social reform for their day.

Jeremiah 10:23, as Jeremiah put it, they understood, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." We are not going to reform the world or nation or bring about social justice simply by the hand of man. If man could establish government the way it should be, then why does Jesus Christ have to come back and set it up? The whole point of Biblical prophecy is the fact that "it is not in man who walks to direct his steps." The only solution to the problems that exist in this world is the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ came with the announcement, the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Daniel expressed it when he had gone through the succession of the world ruling empires in Daniel 2 and 7.

Daniel 2:44, he said, speaking of the final ten kings, "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

The Minor Prophets have a message that relates to the establishment of that Kingdom. It also relates to other nations and other powers.

One of the most important keys to understanding Bible prophecy, and perhaps the single most important key, is to understand the truth of the identity of Israel. That is crucial in importance because if you don't understand the identity of where Israel is, then you don't understand to whom reference is being made in the Minor and Major Prophets or any of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

If you don't know who Israel is, then you are in the same category as Jimmy Swaggart, Billy Graham and all the rest of the worldly ministers. They like to throw in a little bit about prophecy now and then, but they don't understand it. Why don't they understand it? Primarily because every time they read the word "Israel" in a

scripture (and you read it an awful lot when you read the Bible because it is mentioned quite a bit), they assume that it is talking about a nation in the Middle East today by the name Israel. They assume it is talking about the nation of the Jews. If that's what you think, then all of the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and all the way down through Malachi only relate to the Jews and that nation that calls itself Israel.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to raise this point years ago: 'Isn't it amazing that the Bible, in prophecies about the end time, would go into great detail about little nations such as Egypt (which you read of prophetically) and various other nations that exist in the world, and, yet, no mention is made of the United States, Great Britain and the western European powers—the great world powers that have dominated the last two centuries.'

When the Napoleonic wars ended in 1814, Britain stood absolutely supreme on the world scene from 1814 to 1914. The British Navy was larger than the navies of the next two powerful nations combined. Britain stood unchallenged throughout the 19th century. In the aftermath of World War I, the United States emerged, having been gradually moving up. Between the world wars, the United States and Britain together were clearly the dominant and most powerful nations on earth. In the aftermath of World War II, Britain's decline became very rapid. The United States had a period of dominance though it was, in terms of actual time, a much shorter period.

The point is: Where are our nations mentioned? Where does it talk about the United States? All the various ones—Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*—none of them know where we are identified. They can't tell you what's going to happen to the United States (to our nation) because they don't know where we are talked about in the Scriptures. And as a result, they don't have the key.

In *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy* booklet, Mr. Herbert Armstrong called that knowledge the key that unlocks Bible prophecy. It's sort of interesting. In Revelation 3:7, (the prophecy of the Philadelphia era), it talks about this era as having the key of David because the key that unlocks Bible prophecy is the knowledge of where the throne of David is. It is the key to understand where Israel is. The understanding of Israel unlocks the Minor Prophets. That's why we have an insight into what these 12 prophets are talking about.

An understanding of Bible prophecy is not necessary for salvation. The vast majority (even the prophets who wrote it) didn't understand it. So, is it necessary to understand where Israel is in prophecy in order to get into the Kingdom of God? No. Probably, all through the centuries, the vast majority of God's people lived and died, never understanding some of these things. Daniel didn't understand the book of Daniel. He wrote it and didn't understand it.

Daniel 12:8, he said, "... 'My lord, what shall be the end of these things?' " 'What's all this "stuff" talking about?'

Verse 9, he was told, "And he said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.'"

Verse 13, "'But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.'" 'You are going to die and sleep in the ground. You will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days, but these things are closed up until the time of the end.' It didn't say they were closed up forever; it said they were closed up until the time of the end.

Verse 4, knowledge would be increased; knowledge of the Bible would be increased. There is knowledge of things that have relevance for us today that simply did not have relevance in the same way for generations and centuries past. Those things were understood only in a very generalized way. Now, we don't understand everything. The closer we get to the end, the more details will be understood.

Peter compared that to the dawning of a new day.

2 Peter 1:19, "We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star [which is the sun] rises in your hearts..." The point is: How does daylight come? When it is still pitch black, you can't see anything. Then as the day star begins to dawn (the sun begins to come up), a little light appears in the eastern horizon and you begin to see shadowy outlines. Maybe you see clouds in the sky or trees, houses or barns. You can't make out any details like color of a horse or deer, etc., but as the dawn gets a little lighter, you begin to pick out a few details and recognize things for what they are. Finally, when the sun actually comes up, there is quite a bit of light coming through the sky from east to west, and as the light gets brighter, you can pick out and discern more and more detail. You see distinctions that you couldn't determine earlier.

That's the way prophecy is understood. The further we are from the return of Christ, the more pitch-black things occurred. This was the state of things at the time most of the prophets wrote. It was pretty pitch-black. The closer we come from a prophetic standpoint, the more a dim outline begins to appear. You see the dim outline that must be a house or barn. You think you know what it is. Maybe you're right and maybe you're not. As it gets a little closer and the light gets a little brighter, you say, 'No, that's not what I thought it was. That's something else.' You can see it more clearly. The closer we get, the more details unfold. Finally, when Christ returns, everything is totally clear and light. This is an important aspect to understand.

The understanding of the identity of Israel is very important to understand the implications of Bible prophecy. Without that knowledge, we have no basis of understanding what applies to us and where our nations are going to fit in. God obviously takes up quite a bit of space dealing with these matters.

There are four basic elements of Hebrew prophecy. There are four principle elements that are involved as to why prophecies were given and the purpose that prophecy serves.

First, the prophets had the responsibility of encouraging God's people to trust only in God's power and not in allies. The prophets made plain that it was futile to trust in other nations as deliverer. One message that runs through the prophetic writing of all the prophets is Jeremiah 17.

Jeremiah 17:5, "Thus says the Lord: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.'"

Verse 7, "'Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.'" If you trust in man and make flesh your strength, then what you trust will fail you. If our only confidence—and the thing we have to support us—is other nations or other human governments, then we are heading for problems and trouble. The prophets all encouraged God's people to look to God for deliverance and for protection, not to put their trust in other nations.

That is a message that applies to our people today. It's a message that our people have not taken seriously. We think that we can ensure our protection. We're looking to all these nations that are our "friends," and we think that they will be there to back us up. We are very vulnerable in some areas. The great sophisticated technology that we were able to show off during the Gulf War—do you realize the little most necessary

electronic components that make those things work are made in Japan? The Pentagon buys them from Japan. There are some of them that are no longer even made in the United States. We are dependant upon Japan for about one-third of those things. It hasn't been all that long ago that the last American company that made some of those things went bankrupt. We said, 'Why the Japanese are our friends; we can depend on them. Surely, they would never refuse to sell us those things. The Germans and Russians are our friends. Right? They would never take advantage of us.' We have a false confidence.

The prophecy focused in on the importance of God's people looking to God, trusting God and not trusting in allies.

Second, prophecy serves to remind people that safety was conditioned upon faithful adherence to the covenant. The prophets stressed a sincere, heartfelt, moral religion. Safety, blessings and prosperity were conditioned upon Israel's faithful adherence to the covenant. You couldn't go out and do whatever you wanted to do. They couldn't feel like they had some sort of special dispensation—that they could live any way they wanted to live and it would never come back to haunt them.

The prophets certainly illustrated the fact that the blessings and benefits that God's people enjoyed were conditional upon obedience. God was not after a religion that simply involved going through the motions which involved outward show and conformity. It was a matter of putting God's way into practice. The prophecies served, therefore, to warn nations of the consequences of disobedience.

Third, they also served to encourage Israel with respect to the future. One of the great roles of prophecy is encouragement. Remember back in one of the dark times (in 1979) when we were having a lot of difficulty? Mr. Herbert Armstrong, in one of his sermons that he sent out, made the point in encouraging us. He said to the effect, 'Brethren, I've read the book. I've read the end of the story and the end of the story is we win. We win! That's the way the book ends.'

One of the purposes of prophecy is to encourage the people of God in the midst of adversity and difficulty. When it looks like everything is going the wrong way, prophecy is there to remind us that the God of heaven is working out a great plan and purpose, and we have something we can look forward to. We have a reality that we can look forward to that goes beyond the things that can be seen, touched, felt and measured—the

things that can be physically discerned. If the only source you have for knowledge of the future is looking at the television news or weekly news magazines, you don't have a whole lot of encouragement. Things can look like they are going one way when they are not.

It was only a couple of years ago that the idea that the Soviet Union would lose its domination of Eastern Europe and slide from being the major world power offsetting the United States was viewed as something so remote and so far off that it really didn't have any particular application for us. There was no indication of the idea that the nations of Eastern Europe would be free to choose their own government. Nobody had any reason to think that would ever come about. In fact, all the experts had all kinds of reasons why it would certainly never be within the lifetime of any of us. It didn't work out that way.

The point is that in the midst of circumstances, God declares, as He says in Isaiah, the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). There is encouragement. As we see our nation headed down, we read in the prophets about a future regathering after Christ returns and a restoration of benefits and blessings that will result from national repentance. There is encouragement with respect to the future that the prophets provide.

Fourth, prophesy also served to seal the authoritativeness of God's message by the verification of fulfilled prophecy. One of the roles is that certain prophecies preserved in the Bible have already been fulfilled. Those prophecies serve to seal the authoritativeness of God's message. They make plain that one of the proofs of the Bible is fulfilled prophecy. Certainly, many prophecies that relate to the Messiah have been fulfilled.

And there are places you can go in Ezekiel, for instance, that prophesied that Egypt would be conquered by Babylon and never again be ruled by a native prince (Ezekiel 30:10,13). People can quibble about when the book of Ezekiel was written if they want to, but any amount of quibbling doesn't do away with the fact that it's certainly been around for about 2,500 years. The point is that prophecy is still being fulfilled. Regardless of quibbling about the exact date, Ezekiel said a native prince would never again rule Egypt.

You have to understand that Egypt had been one of the primary nations that had existed. Egypt, at the time Ezekiel wrote, had existed as a major world power ruled by native princes for 2,500

years. It passed into obscurity in a matter of years and it never again, from then until now, emerged as a major power and has never again been ruled by a native prince. Outsiders and foreigners have ruled it for decades and centuries, all the way to our time.

We see that there are many prophecies that certainly testify to the authoritativeness of the Word of God. There are prophecies of cities that would be destroyed and never rebuilt and prophecies of other cities that would endure and continue to endure. Prophecy serves as a sign and a proof of the authority of God. It serves to verify the authoritativeness of God's message. It serves to encourage His people with respect to the future. It serves to remind His people that safety and blessings are dependent upon faithful adherence and obedience to God. It encourages God's people to look to and trust God and not to depend on the physical allies and other things of the around. We have in the Minor Prophets things that very directly focus in on these things.

Some of the Minor Prophets are very short. Hosea is a little longer; there are 14 chapters in Hosea. Joel is pretty short. We are going to lump some of the prophets together and cover them in the same Bible study because we are looking for a sort of overview, and I think we will have time to adequately go into it.

The next Bible study we will cover the books of Hosea and Joel. The book of Hosea is a very important prophecy. It has very detailed prophecy about Israel, things that are going to occur with God's people, Israel, and the way that God views them. Joel focuses in on the Day of the Lord and on the events surrounding the return of Jesus Christ. Clearly, the setting of it is not ancient.

Joel 2:1-2, "Blow 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 is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations."

Verse 11, "The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?"

Joel 3:17, and ultimately, "So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion

My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again.”

Verse 20 describes a time when Judah will dwell forever in Jerusalem from generation to generation. It is clearly a time on into the future. The primary implication of these prophecies has to do with the future. Some of them, and some of the messages, will focus in as more contemporary. We will see that as we go through it.

There's a lot in the book of Hosea. There's a lot of detailed prophecy about the fall and captivity of Israel. There's a lot of insight into some of the specific things that are going to happen and take place.

Hosea 1:11, notice, “Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!” Here is a time when Israel and Judah are going to be gathered together. That is a time yet future. There are many things that we will see as we go through Hosea that clearly focus in on what God is going to do, and we will see the obvious proof that Israel and Judah are not synonymous. Hosea is a detailed prophecy of many of the things relating to Israel and Ephraim. If you don't know who Israel and Ephraim are, then you can't understand Hosea.

Joel focuses on the Day of the Lord. It is, in some ways, a more general prophecy in terms of identifying specific nations. We will go into that next Bible study.

Bible Study # 71
June 11, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Hosea and Joel

We are going to get into the books of Hosea and Joel this evening. Hosea was a native of the Northern Kingdom. The nation of Israel had split into two sections: the Northern Kingdom (the northern ten tribes called Israel) and the Southern Kingdom called Judah. The nation had split soon after the death of King Solomon. At the time we pick up the story, the split was approximately 130 years downstream. So, quite a bit of time had transpired. A lot of time had passed as far as the history of the nation when Hosea came on the scene.

One of the interesting things to note is that a whole cluster of prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah) all flourish right in the same general time period. The prophet Isaiah was in that same general time period. It's the greatest cluster of prophets of which we have any record or evidence. The interesting thing is that their work began at a time when Northern Israel was at its height. It was approximately 50-60 years before the collapse and the Assyrian captivity. There are several things we learn from that. One thing we learn is expressed in the book of Amos.

Amos 3:7, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets."

God will warn Israel prior to intervention, prior to punishment and captivity. God's greatest work in ancient Israel was done in a time of warning and witness. The nation was warned about where they were headed and the consequences of those actions. The warning came at a time when the nation was riding a crest of power. Now, that's an interesting thing, too. The warning didn't begin when the nation was on the way down and out and everybody could look around and say, 'Things are sure headed down; things are sure in trouble.' God began to warn when there wasn't any physical evidence that things weren't just going to get bigger and better.

When God raised up this work—Mr. Herbert Armstrong was used to raise up the radio program—the magazine began to go out, back in the 40s in the aftermath of World War II, through the 50s and through this time. America really was at a pinnacle of its power in the world. There are some of you sitting right here whose contact with the work goes way, way back to the

early 50s or late 40s. At a time when it seemed like America was on the way up and was at the pinnacle, Mr. Armstrong was giving warning that the nation was going down. At the time when Germany was down and at the bottom, he said Germany was going to come back; Germany was going to rebuild. He wrote the article "Will Russia Attack America" way back around 1951. That article was printed many times since because it was always a popular article. Up until the last few years, everybody thought that was the most likely thing. He had written an article on it way back at the beginning of the cold war. He understood from Biblical prophecy that would not occur. The point that I am making is that there is a parallel. *God raises up His work at a time when the nation needs to be warned based on what God says, not on all of the physical evidence.*

There's something interesting I am going to read to you. I'll read a little bit out of the *Soncino Jewish Commentary*, which talks about the circumstance in Israel and Judah at the time of this cluster of prophets—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, plus Isaiah (seven prophets) clustered in about that 50-60-year time span. There certainly were individuals who saw all of those men and heard their message. There was this great concentration of prophets because of what was taking place.

"The Introduction to Micah" says, "The eighth century witnessed the emergence in Israel and Judah of a commercial civilization of great material prosperity. [Now, you could substitute the words "20th century" and you would have a very good parallel to today.] Its foundations were laid in the peace and security, which Jeroboam II, who reigned from about 783-743 B.C., won for Israel, and Uzziah, who reigned from 778-740 B.C., for Judah." They overlapped considerably. The foundations of this commercial civilization were laid in the peace and security of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah.

"And in the extensions of the borders of their kingdom from Damascus to the Red Sea, from the desert to the Mediterranean, giving the Hebrew states command of all of the main trade routes of ancient days. But it was a civilization which displayed all the evils of a society making haste to be rich. Greed and covetousness, reckless and unscrupulous competition, a pitiless disregard of the claims of sympathy, charity and brotherly consideration, extremes of wealth and poverty which had been impossible in an agricultural society based on the Biblical system

of land tenure were dividing the nation into classes of possessors and dispossessed. The rich built up large estates with the help of corrupt judges; they added house-to-house and field-to-field, while the oppressed and dispossessed peasantry sought in vain for legal redress. The pursuit of commerce encouraged the development of cities and city life. And it was to the city that the landless farmers migrated in search of a livelihood where wealth, luxury and vice dwelt side by side with poverty, misery and squalor. With the exchange of goods went the exchange of ideas. New religious cults, standards of luxury and splendor and materialistic aims of living, which had hitherto been foreign to Israel, were introduced from Assyria and Egypt.”

Now, does that sound familiar? With just the change of a few words, you could be describing 20th-century America. Interestingly enough, from the 1790 census, the nation was 90 percent rural and 10 percent urban. Amazing changes have taken place and most of that has taken place in the 20th century. I believe it was the 1900 census that saw the shift from majority rural to majority urban—the rapid urbanization of this country.

Interestingly enough, what is described in the “Introduction to Micah” from the *Soncino Jewish Commentary*, which is a Jewish Commentary, actually includes all 12 of the Minor Prophets. In the Jewish order, they regard The Twelve as one book and this is the way they publish it. They have Hosea through Malachi.

Micah was a latter contemporary of Hosea. The introduction applies just as much to Hosea as it does to Micah because after all, Hosea starts out, Hosea 1:1, “The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam [II] the son of Joash, king of Israel.”

The time that Hosea wrote (the eighth century) witnessed the emergence of a great commercial civilization and an urban civilization. The foundations were laid in the peace and security that Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah won. You can compare their control of the great trading routes to the early part of this century—the period that culminated at the time of Franklin Roosevelt, World War II and the emergence of our nation from there as a great superpower. What he describes are the exact problems. We find individuals writing against the background of their time and their circumstances. One of the reasons why God inspired this—you’ve heard it explained and Mr. Herbert Armstrong stressed

over the years—was that prophecy was dual. Do you know why there is a duality? –Because you put the same people in the same circumstances and they do the same thing. You have Israel in the same circumstances, a circumstance of power and prosperity. What did it do? Well, the last time it happened to them was the period that ultimately set the stage for the Assyrian invasion and captivity. As we look at the book of Hosea, there is much in the background that is a parallel to our time today. What we’ve found is the same circumstances, which sets the stage for the same sins, and those sins set the stage for the same punishment.

As he describes the problems that came in—the extremes of wealth and poverty, the corruption, the rapid urbanization and landless farmers migrating to the city in search of a livelihood— isn’t that descriptive of what we have today? We have a lot of the urban ghettos and things built up that are very descriptive of that. The major cities have wealth, luxury and vice dwelling side by side with poverty, misery and squalor. Also, the exchange of ideas, the new religious cults, standards of luxury and splendor—haven’t we been inundated with all of these things coming in? It set the stage.

These are the circumstances that we find as we get into the Minor Prophets and as we get into the book of Hosea in particular. **At a time when Israel was at the height of her economic and military power, Hosea was beginning to warn of impending collapse and captivity.**

Hosea’s wife, Gomer, is used as a type of Israel. We will see some of that in just a few moments. God used much in Hosea’s life, as He did with many of the prophets, as things that took on a symbolic significance. Hosea married a wife who went into harlotry. The land was filled with immorality.

It was, in that way, not much different than in our land today—a land that is absolutely filled with immorality, where just recently they are having controversies in some of the so-called mainline churches about whether or not they should bless homosexual marriages. What do you mean marriage? There also is the controversy of whether they should ordain clergymen who are practicing homosexuals. Now that shows how far they have gone from the Bible. Go back and read what God says in Deuteronomy. He didn’t say anything about ordaining them. Now He did say something about “laying hands” on them, if I remember correctly, but they didn’t lay hands on them to ordain them. We have come so far in terms of

standards, that here are places that call themselves churches that are arguing over trying to redefine morality. And you wonder why they call themselves a church. Why do they even claim to be associated with the Bible and Christianity? They are free to start their own religion, but why drag God into it? Why claim that they have some sort of connection with Christianity or the Bible? It is totally their own invention. We live in a society that is not at all unlike the society that the prophet we read of here addressed.

Hosea married Gomer who proved to be and was utilized by God as a type of Israel. She lapsed into immorality and harlotry. Hosea ultimately put her away. There is a period of years that goes by in the first three chapters of Hosea. She is continually degraded. Hosea ultimately buys her back. He purchases her at a slave auction.

There is an analogy to God's dealing with Israel. God's relationship with Israel is a marriage relationship. God ultimately put away Israel because of spiritual harlotry. That involves the wife's responsibility of fidelity to her husband. Israel of old entered into all sorts of illicit relationships, looking to the kings around. Israel looked to the kings of other nations as her protectors and providers, rather than being loyal and faithful to God. Gomer ultimately hit bottom. Hosea extended mercy. He bought her back. He took her back and gave her another chance. There is an analogy through that period of years in his life. Those first three chapters of the book of Hosea go into that. It is used as an analogy to God's relationship with Israel.

Chapter 4 goes into the catalog of Israel's sins and why the nation was destroyed.

Chapter 5 deals with the fall of Judah and Israel. Both of them were seeking to Assyria instead of God.

Chapter 6, Israel finally learns a lesson.

Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 deal with Israel seeking the help of other nations. It shows her glory departing. It's a warning to Israel of future captivity.

Chapter 11 deals with the future deliverance of Israel.

Chapter 12 deals with God's warning and His ultimate deliverance.

Chapter 13 makes the point that Israel's punishment is her own fault. Israel's deliverance is the consequence of God's mercy.

Chapter 14 focuses in on that ultimate promise of mercy from God.

As we get into the book of Hosea, who is the book addressed to? One very crucial factor in

understanding Biblical prophecy is to know the identity of the nations being addressed. If you don't know, then you really can't claim to understand the prophecy at all. It's a mystery.

Now, the most fundamental error of most of the Protestant fundamentalists who discuss prophecy today is the lack of knowledge of the identity of Israel. When you read the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel and Amos and for that matter, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum on through Malachi—when you read all of the Major and Minor Prophets—over and over again the prophecies are directed toward Israel. Now, if you don't know who Israel is, if you think Israel is simply that little nation in the Middle East that calls itself Israel, if that's what comes to your mind and if that's what you understand when you read the book of Hosea or the book of Ezekiel, then you've come to one set of conclusions that's totally different than if you understood the fact that Israel and Judah refer to two totally separate nations.

When we go through the book of Hosea, it's very clear to whom Hosea is writing.

Hosea 1:10-11, “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, “You are not My people,” there it shall be said to them, “You are the sons of the living God.” Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!”

He is speaking of the end time. Hosea makes a distinction between the children of Judah and the children of Israel. Hosea didn't think they were all Jews. For that matter, anybody who has carefully studied the Bible knows Northern Israel went into captivity over 120 years before the Southern Kingdom of Judah went into captivity. Israel went into Assyrian captivity. Judah went into Babylonian captivity 120 years later. That's a long time.

It talks about the children of Israel abiding many days without a king.

Hosea 3:4, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.”

Hosea 4:16-17, “For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf; now the Lord will let them forage like a lamb in open country. Ephraim [Great Britain] is joined to idols, let him alone.”

Hosea 5:5, “The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them.” He is making a distinction between Israel and Judah. You can continue down.

Verse 13, “When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb; yet he cannot cure you, nor heal you of your wound.”

Hosea 6:10-11, “I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the harlotry of Ephraim; Israel is defiled. Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you, when I return the captives of My people.” He talks throughout about Israel and Ephraim. Ephraim is the leading tribe of Israel.

It’s very specifically a message for the modern-day nation of Britain and, secondarily, for the United States. In the book of Hosea, over and over, Ephraim is singled out. It is fundamental to understand the book of Hosea. You can’t understand the end time if you don’t understand the identity of the people being described.

That’s why, when most of the Protestant fundamentalists try to talk about Bible prophecy, they have no more idea than the “man in the moon” where the United States is discussed in Bible prophecy. They find reference to little obscure nations like Syria and Egypt. They recognize those, but they have no concept of where the United States, Canada and Great Britain are. They don’t understand that because they don’t understand the identity of our people. If you are going to understand Biblical prophecy, if you are going to understand the Minor Prophets and their application for our time today, then you have to understand the identity of the people being discussed. That shouldn’t be really hard to figure out.

We find Hosea’s family life (as already mentioned) had prophetic significance. His wife Gomer went into harlotry, was put away, ultimately came to repentance and was brought back—literally bought back and redeemed in the literal sense. She was forgiven by Hosea. It is a picture of God’s relationship with Israel.

As we get into the book of Hosea, God talks about a time when mercy will be extended. There will be a time of forgiveness.

Hosea 2:18-20, “In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely. I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness

and justice, in loving kindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.”

Verses 21-23, “It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer,” says the Lord; ‘I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, “You are My people!” And they shall say, “You are my God!””

What is the setting of that? Clearly, that’s the Millennium. That’s when Christ returns. That hasn’t happened, yet. That’s talking about conversion. It’s talking about God’s blessing. It’s talking about breaking the sword, the bow and putting an end to warfare—all of these things. Hosea’s message went on far beyond his day. There are implications for our time.

Hosea 4:1-3, “Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: ‘There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed after bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away.’”

Verses 6-7, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.” The more we have prospered, the more we have been blessed; the more that we have increased materially, the more we have sinned against God.

Most of us sitting here are living on a standard far beyond anything we grew up in—things we never dreamed of years ago. Our conveniences have been taken for granted. We are sitting here enjoying the air conditioning. It hasn’t been that long since air conditioning has been readily available. This school wasn’t built with air conditioning. It was built with windows to take advantage of the breeze. A lot of us sitting here didn’t grow up with air conditioning. I remember the first time I ever saw a car that had air conditioning in it. A neighbor of ours had it, and I was really impressed with it. I was

really fascinated with that. We now take it for granted.

Also, contemporary to that, it hasn't been that long ago when, particularly in rural areas, about the only lock most of us had on our doors were the latches on the screen door—and that was more to keep the cats and dogs from coming in or out.

The more we have multiplied and prospered materially in this nation, the more we have sinned against God and the further away we have gotten from God. We see evidence of that. God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Now, we have a knowledge explosion. We have all sorts of technological knowledge, but the knowledge that we are destroyed for lack of is knowledge we have rejected. It's the knowledge of God's truth.

Now, the Supreme Court of the state of California has, "in its great wisdom," ruled that when you have high school graduation, they can't open the service with a prayer because they don't want to, in any way, acknowledge there may be God involved in it. They don't want them standing for something like "God Bless America" and having an opening prayer at the high school graduation. We have rejected knowledge that has any sort of connection with God's law or with the Bible. It's absolutely incredible.

Several months ago, the Gideons got in trouble for trying to pass out Bibles in Bossier City in north Louisiana. They were coming around and had been passing out Bibles for years, but this was "horrible." The ACLU jumped in on it. You couldn't do that; passing out Bibles was unconstitutional. Now, at exactly the same time, New York City started passing out condoms in their schools. Nobody challenged that. Nobody saw anything illegal about that. You could give out stuff like that to kids in school without their parents even knowing anything about it and paying for it with the taxpayers' dollars. The taxpayers weren't buying the Bibles the Gideons were passing out. The taxpayers were buying these other things they were passing out in New York City.

Let me ask you something. Doesn't it say something about a society and its values when it takes for granted and sees nothing wrong with taxpayer dollars buying condoms and passing them out to school kids all the way down to seventh and eighth grade, yet, is it horrified at the idea that somebody might give them a Bible? Well, I would suggest that if they want to stop the spread of AIDS, it would be a whole lot

better to pass out Bibles than the rest of the stuff they are passing out because that's where the key is. If they really want to prevent the spread of some of these things, then they should hand them a Bible and say, 'Read it and follow the advice.' It's incredible.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."

Verse 11, "Harlotry [KJV, "Whoredom"], wine, and new wine enslave the heart." You know what has sapped the heart of the nation? – Immorality and drug and alcohol abuse—whoredom (immorality), wine and new wine (talking about drunkenness), which would certainly, by implication, cover the whole realm of substance abuse. It would cover not only alcohol but the whole realm of various drugs that people try to get their "highs" and "kicks" out of. God says, 'Whoredom and wine and new wine has enslaved the heart.' They have sapped the very fiber of the nation. Immorality and substance abuse have greatly impacted our nation. God focuses on that here.

Verse 12, "...For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God."

Verses 16-18, "For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf; now the Lord will let them forage like a lamb in open country. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. Their drink is rebellion, they commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor."

Hosea 5:5, "The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them." Now, that didn't happen the first time. It is going to happen this time.

Verse 7, "They have dealt treacherously with the Lord, for they have begotten pagan children. Now a New Moon shall devour them and their heritage." KJV, "...Now shall a month devour them with their portions." We have gone into earlier studies on prophecy and the fact of where this month fits in.

Daniel 12:11, if you go back, "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days."

Verse 7, he also describes the Great Tribulation as lasting a time, times and half a time or three and one-half years or 1,260 days. Now, between the abomination that makes desolate and the

onset of the tribulation is 30 days—one month. We find our missing month right here in Hosea. “A New Moon [month] shall devour them.” In other words, this 30-day period is the period of time that it takes for the “mop-up” operation. It takes a month for the nation to actually be completely devastated. Things begin and there is a month that sees this calamity to fruition. Verse 9 talks about Ephraim being desolate in the day of rebuke.

Verse 13, “When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb; yet he cannot cure you, nor heal you of your wound.” The difference between a wound and a sickness is that a wound is external and a sickness is internal. Ephraim saw his sickness—internal problems, economic difficulties; Judah saw his wound—external problems, things that were inflicted from an outside force.

Based on this verse (Hosea 5:13), Mr. Herbert Armstrong said back in the 1960s that Britain would try to join the Common Market and very likely would even be part of the Common Market for a while but would never be a part of the Beast Power. Britain would try and get involved in that because when they saw their sickness, they went to the Assyrians to bail them out. They looked to the Germans to help them out; they looked to join up with Assyria. Whether that is the final fulfillment of this verse or whether there is more yet to come, time will tell.

The latter part of the verse, Judah seeing his wound and going to the Assyrians, has not yet happened, but that ultimately is very likely the pretext on which European troops are going to enter the Middle East. There is an enigmatic statement that Christ makes in Matthew 24:15-16 and Luke 21:20-21 that helps to understand this.

Luke 21:20-21, Christ said, talking to His disciples, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.”

Let me ask you something. If the armies are hostile armies and are coming at you with guns blazing and bombs falling, do you need somebody to tell you that the desolation thereof is near? Even a dummy could figure that out by that time. Even Dan Rather and company or Peter Arnette and all those, by that time, will be able to figure that out. When the bombs start

dropping, it begins to dawn on some of them that the desolation thereof is near. Anybody can figure that out once it is here.

The other thing is, isn't it going to be a little bit late to flee to the mountains if the armies are coming in and the guns are blazing and the bombs are falling? You say, 'I think it's about time for me to flee to the mountains; see you guys later. It says right here I am supposed to flee, so I have to leave.' That's a little late. If one bunch doesn't shoot you trying to get out, the other bunch will shoot you when you do. You are in trouble. Once the bullets are flying it's too late to flee to the mountains.

Christ's statement in Luke 21 and Matthew 24 only makes sense if the armies surrounding Jerusalem do not give the immediate appearance of being hostile armies. Christ told His disciples, 'When you see the armies surrounding Jerusalem, then you will understand it's all over with. The desolation of Jerusalem is near and the abomination will be set up. That will lead to the desolation. You had better get out of there right now because if you wait, it is going to be too late. You won't have a chance to make a getaway.'

You can tie in, “when Judah saw his wound he went to the Assyrians” (Hosea 5:13). Evidently there's going to be something that's going to occur in the future that Judah is going to come out of feeling wounded and enter into some sort of pact with the Germans. The Germans are going to use it as a pretext to bring troops into the Middle East. The only thing is, when they get there, they are going to do something far different than what people suppose.

It's kind of interesting. I don't know how many of you saw it. There was an article in *U.S. News & World Report* a week or so ago about the change of NATO—that the Americans right now are agreeing to withdraw a large portion of their troops and what's left are going to be put under European command. We've never had that before. The only United States troops that have ever been under anybody else's command were some American troops under British command in World War II, but we're looking at putting some under German command, which is a totally different matter. We are looking at a totally different circumstance with our brother Ephraim. Another thing, there was a little article in the *Morning Advocate* in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, buried way back on the back pages. I don't know if any of you saw it. It was just a little short article. It said that negotiations are taking place between the United States and Germany for

German troops to now be stationed in the United States. The article pointed out that's the first time since 1812 that foreign troops will be stationed on American soil. They will be stationed here as part of an agreement. Up until 1812, there were British troops that were stationed up at what was then called the Northwest, some of the area like Michigan and Ohio. There were some British troop soldiers there. But for the first time since 1812, German troops will be stationed over here in this country. Some of the bases they are closing out, they are going to give them to the Germans. Just a small number of troops, you understand, here to help us and protect us.

Anyway, Hosea discusses some of these matters. Hosea is a very up-to-date book.

Notice God talks about how they are going to be brought down.

Hosea 5:15 (KJV), "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early."

Let's follow on in the context.

Hosea 6:1-3, "Come, and let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know; let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth."

What's being discussed here? If we go through the context of chapter 5, we see Israel going into the tribulation and we see the fact of repentance. It makes this sort of enigmatic statement, "after two days will He revive us and the third day He will raise us up." The tribulation—the three and one-half years or 1,260 days—is the prelude to Christ's return. The last year of that is really God's wrath on the Beast power. The first two and one-half years of that three and one-half-year period represents Satan's wrath against physical Israel and against the Laodicean Church, the remnant that is left behind as Revelation 12:17 defines it. The circumstance described here—as the Israelites in the concentration camps of the future in areas of South America, North Africa, Germany—as time progresses on into this period of tribulation, as they languish in some of these work camps and some of these places, they are going to think about and remember the message that they heard. It talks about people remembering the message they heard (Ezekiel 33:32-33).

Brethren, we have a great work yet ahead of us. We have a great work. The work is not finished; there is a work that remains to be done. Exactly when it is going to "blast out" to really shake the nation and world, this is God's time. We don't know exactly, but it's discussed and talked about in the Bible.

Ezekiel 2:5; 33:33, "...they will know that a prophet has been among them."

I don't think you can say that is really the case if the nation were to go into captivity today. The people would not really know to that great extent that there had been a prophet among them. A foundation has been laid. There is coming a time when the message of Ezekiel, etc., is literally going to shake this nation. In Ezekiel 33:30, it talks about how they are going to be talking everywhere about the message that is being broadcast.

Our responsibility, individually, is to be ready. We need to be close to God and ready to be used by God when it comes His time to really revive His work in the midst of evil. When the time comes to really go forward, a foundation has been laid. Our responsibility is to be close to God so that we are receptive to God's leading and can be used by God to accomplish what He wishes us to do. The timing is in God's hands, and we have to recognize and accept that. We need to not just go charging off "half-cocked," trying to do our own thing.

As people languish in these camps, they are going to say, "Come, let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up." How are they going to know that? They will know it because they have been told by this work!

"After two days He will revive us." "After two days"—after the first two years or so have gone by, God will begin to give them some relief. If they follow, then they are going to know—to really know—God. They are going to begin to understand the message that they heard, talking about "His going forth" and being prepared. They are going to understand how He is going to come (talking about the return of Jesus Christ) and various prophecies.

Hosea focuses primarily on Israel. A little bit of it focuses on Judah. Let's notice—we will pick out some places.

Hosea 7:1-2, "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they have committed fraud; the thief comes in; a band of robbers takes spoil outside. They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all

their wickedness; now their own deeds have surrounded them; they are before My face.”

Verses 8-11, “Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned. Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it; Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it. And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, but they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek Him for all this. Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense—they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.”

It talks about the involvement with various things that have sapped the strength of Britain and certainly America, as well, and the pride that is there, stood in the way of real repentance.

Hosea 8:1, “Set the trumpet to your mouth! He shall come like an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law.”

Verse 3, “Israel has cast off the good; the enemy will pursue him.”

Verses 7-9, “They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; it shall never produce meal. If it should produce, aliens would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up; now they are among the Gentiles like a vessel in which there is no pleasure. For they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey alone by itself; Ephraim has hired lovers.” Ephraim has entered into various alliances.

Verse 14, “For Israel has forgotten his Maker, and has built temples; Judah also has multiplied fortified cities; but I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces.” “Israel has forgotten his Maker and has built temples.” That is sort of an interesting statement. It is sort of a paradoxical statement. On the one hand, we have forgotten our Maker, and, yet, on the other hand, we really go in for the outward show and display of religion. Oh, we have temples all over and churches on every street corner. We like to pride ourselves on being such a religious people, and, yet, we don’t follow what God says.

There was an interesting article; I believe it was *U.S. News & World Report* that had the article on American attitudes regarding sex and immorality. The statistics they give is just incredible. It shows that the Bible is almost irrelevant in the eyes of the vast majority of people in terms of what they do and practice.

We have ‘forgotten our Maker and built temples.’ Judah has not made nearly the outward show of religion. They have just “multiplied fortified cities.” They have built up missiles and

all this kind of thing. God says, ‘I am going to send fire upon them.’

They had a little bit of a taste of that in the Persian Gulf War. It was just a little bit of a taste of that; there is going to be more. Our false religion can’t deliver us, and all their fortified cities can’t deliver them. There is going to be captivity.

Hosea 9:3, “They shall not dwell in the Lord’s land, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and shall eat unclean things in Assyria.” They are going to eat unclean things in Assyria. They are going to be transported.

Verse 11, “As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird— !...” It describes these things over and over.

Hosea 10:1, “Israel empties his vine; he brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the bounty of his land they have embellished his sacred pillars [images].”

Verse 5, “...because its glory has departed from it.”

Verse 13, “You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men.” It describes all these things that are going to come. Israel, over and over, is described as having sought after all kinds of allies as her protector, rather than God. The very ones that she put her trust in as deliverers ultimately are going to destroy her.

From a spiritual standpoint, as far as Israel is concerned, God labels that as adultery because God entered into a husband-wife relationship with Israel. Israel was to look to God to protect her and provide for her, rather than to put her trust in others. In that sense, God views Israel as a wayward wife. She is going to have to learn a bitter lesson and repent. Then God will take her back.

Hosea 12:1, “Ephraim feeds on the wind, and pursues the east wind; he daily increases lies and desolation. Also they make a covenant [treaty] with the Assyrians, and oil is carried to [or, through] Egypt.” It is very possibly some sort of reference to the Suez Canal—something that is going to transpire in the future.

Verse 2, “The Lord also brings a charge against Judah,” KJV, “The Lord also has a controversy with Judah,” Judah is separate from Israel, but they are going to be dealt with, as well.

Hosea 13:9, “O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from Me.” KJV, “O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help.”

That's the key! We have destroyed ourselves; our destruction is the consequence of our own actions.

We need to understand these things are real. It is talking about being carried into captivity into North Africa, Germany and various places. That is literally going to happen. That's going to happen to those who don't take this warning and this message seriously. It's going to happen to some who have warmed seats in God's Church. It's going to happen to some who have grown up in God's Church who sort of tuned it out and haven't paid any attention to it. It's going to happen to people who have heard the broadcast and read the magazine. It's going to happen! *It's going to happen!* It is something that we had better take seriously and realize that God puts these warnings in here for our good and for our benefit. We ignore them to our peril.

Hosea 14:1-3, God says, "O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity; take words with you, and return to the Lord. Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, 'You are our gods.'" For in You the fatherless finds mercy."

Hosea 14 ends with the focus on repentance and return and God's mercy and forgiveness.

The book of **Joel** is a little short book. We find a focus on economic and agricultural devastation. **The whole theme of Joel is the day of the Lord.**

Joel 1:4-7, "What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten. Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth. For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; he has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white."

Verse 10, "The field is wasted, the land mourns;"

Verse 12, "The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered;"

Verses 14-15, "Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord. Alas for the

day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty."

The first chapter of the book of Joel focuses in on the agriculture sector. We have to realize that agriculture underlies the whole strength of the economy. I once saw a bumper sticker when we were traveling through the Midwest. A pickup truck had a bumper sticker on the back, and it said, "If you eat, you are involved in agriculture." That's how basic agriculture is. If you eat, then you are involved in agriculture—and everybody eats. The basis and starting point of economic strength and economic stability goes back to the agricultural sector.

According to what Joel says, we are going to experience some real devastation.

Joel 2:1-2, "Blow 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 is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations." It describes this army.

Verse 3, "A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them."

Verses 10-11, "The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?" Christ is going to come back and He is going to have a great army with Him.

Verses 12-16, "'Now, therefore', says the Lord, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him—a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room.'"

This talks about a warning message that God is going to take to His people, Israel, a warning of

the events that are going to come and a call to repentance.

Verses 28-32, ““And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.””

We find part of verses 28 and 29 quoted back in Acts 2:15-21—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At least part of this has been partially fulfilled in Acts 2, but the great fulfillment is yet future.

Revelation 6:12-17 focuses in on the time when the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood—the time of the great day of the Lord.

Revelation 6:12-14, “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.”

Verse 17, “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Joel 2:30, “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.”

You have to tie that in with Revelation 6.

Joel 3:1-4, “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy in exchange for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink. Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you

retaliate against Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head...” It describes the things that have occurred.

Verses 9-10, “Proclaim this among the nations: ‘Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and our pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’”” That is pretty descriptive of what we have going on right now with the arms race. “Let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’” That sounds like old Saddam Hussein going around bragging about the “mother of all battles” and all that he was going to do—this type of thing.

“Proclaim this among the nations: ‘Prepare for war. Wake up the mighty men.’” Get ready! We have this gigantic, obscene expenditure for arms in all these third-world nations that can’t feed their own people. They are beating their plowshares into swords. They are spending money on weapons that they should spend on an agricultural infrastructure. They are going to have a chance to use all those weapons because all nations are going to be gathered together in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. God is going to finally put a stop to this foolishness. He is going to gather all nations and bring them into battle there in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. That is outside the area of Jerusalem. Armageddon is the place where the armies gather. They converge on Jerusalem, and when Christ returns, the destruction takes place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

Verses 12-17, ““Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The Lord also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again.””

It will no longer be the place that is trodden down by every rampaging army going back and forth as has been the case all the way down through time.

Verses 19-20, “Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.” God describes these events that are going to culminate in the return of Jesus Christ. The focus is the day of the Lord. Clearly, when you go through prophecies in Hosea and Joel, it is not primarily talking about what happened 2,500 years ago. Did these things happen exactly that way then? Go back to Revelation 6 where it describes the sun becoming black, the moon becoming blood red—the events of the day of the Lord, the events that are going to culminate in the return of Jesus Christ to this earth and the establishment of the government of God.

The phrase “blow the trumpet” is used over and over. The blast of the shophar was a signal of warning and alarm. The implication is that God’s work is going to sound that alarm. The admonition, “blow the trumpet in Zion”—who is going to blow that trumpet?

Isaiah 58:1, “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.” That’s going to be fulfilled.

What we’ve done up until now has only been a partial fulfillment of that. It has only laid the groundwork for the great fulfillment yet to come. What we need to be doing is staying close to God, really walking with God and drawing close to Him, so that God will allow us to be used to finish the job that He has called us to do. We, individually and personally, can be a part of the great work with which God is going to shake this earth and this nation. We are living in what the Bible describes as perilous times (2 Timothy 3:1). If you are navigating a perilous stream, it’s important that you depend on a very experienced navigator.

I remember one time where we were going through an area on a canoe trip. We were going to shoot some rapids. I had not been on this stretch before, but there was an individual who had. He knew the river. When we got up to the spot, some just went bounding right on through, and it didn’t take long before they crashed. I kind of stopped and paddled so as to just stay still because I wanted to watch the guy who knew his way through. I saw what he did and I waited until he got through. I saw what he did and the way he went through. After he was out of the way, then I tried to follow through and do exactly what he did. We got through, too. We were a couple of the only ones who made it

through without capsizing because he knew what he was doing and I followed him. I didn’t know what I was doing, but I knew that he did.

There’s a lesson there because we are in the process of navigating a pretty perilous stream, a pretty perilous set of rapids known as “the end time.” Jesus Christ knows how to navigate the rapids. He knows exactly how to do it. If we think we know how to do it and go charging ahead, we are going to crash somewhere in the process, but if we follow through exactly as He leads, we will be fine. That’s one of the key things to keep in mind at the point in which we find ourselves. We need God’s help, guidance and direction. We need to stay close to God to fulfill that for which God has called us.

Joel refers to the valley where the last battle is going to be fought. Joel 3, verses 2 and 12 refer to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The world talks about the Battle of Armageddon. In reality, there is not a battle of Armageddon. The armies gather there, but the battle is outside Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. That’s where the armies are destroyed. The armies are gathered to Armageddon to converge on Jerusalem. It’s the Valley of Jehoshaphat where they are actually going to be destroyed.

God is going to win. He is going to set the stage at this time to begin the events of the Millennium. We converge on Jerusalem, here in the book of Joel, and see a focus on the end time—on the Day of the Lord.

The book of Hosea focuses in on Israel and it’s primarily for the end time. If it was primarily for back then, why is it in the prophets? If all Hosea is, is a historical book that’s talking about something that occurred 2,500 years ago, then it’s pretty much irrelevant to us except as a part of the history. We have the history back in 2 Kings. Hosea is here to tell us the events that are going to come to pass. Joel is here to tell us the events that are going to come to pass.

These books of the Minor Prophets have a tremendous amount packed in. There are things that apply very directly and very emphatically to us in our time and day and in the time ahead of us. We are going to sort of skim through them rapidly. We will come back at later times and pick up other portions. But the way to get the maximum benefit out of it is to read the books and study them in conjunction with other literature that we have published over the years. Go through, read and study the books. Use the study guide and then we will try to hit the high points next Bible study. We will sort of pick up speed. The books that we are going to cover next

time—Amos, Obadiah and Jonah—are fairly short books. We will get a little bit of an overview on some of those.

Bible Study # 72
July 9, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Amos, Obadiah and Jonah

We are getting into the books of Amos, Obadiah and Jonah this evening. We're taking three books in the Minor Prophets. Primarily, we are going to focus on Amos. It is the longest of the books; there are nine chapters. Obadiah is one short little chapter; Jonah is fairly short with four chapters. **We are going to focus in on these books this evening, but primarily on Amos.**

Amos was a prophet who prophesied about the same time as Obadiah and Jonah. In fact, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah all prophesied in the same general time period. Roughly speaking, they were all contemporaries. There is a little bit of variation, but they all overlapped some. In fact, not only were there those six Minor Prophets, but also the prophet Isaiah. There were actually seven prophets of God who flourished at that same time period. As I mentioned last Bible study, their period of prophecy was at a time when the nation of Northern Israel had reached sort of a height or peak of its prosperity.

Northern Israel had its beginnings at the time of King Solomon's death when the kingdom of 12-tribed Israel split. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, took the southern tribe, Judah, there in Jerusalem and portions of Benjamin and Levi. The northern ten tribes originally went with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who put himself forward as king and founded a dynasty that continued for a short time and then was replaced by other dynasties.

There was a lot of turnover in Northern Israel. But finally in the early part of the eighth century, there arose a period of prosperity in Northern Israel and in Judah. There were two very lengthy reigns: King Jeroboam II, the king of Israel reigned for about 40 years and King Uzziah of Judah reigned for a comparable period of time. They both reigned in the neighborhood of 40 years. They were roughly contemporary—not exactly, but for a considerable period of time. Their periods of reign overlapped 30 to 35 years. Since there were monarchs who were in that position for a period of time, it was a time of stability for Israel and Judah.

The Hebrew states gained control of the major trade routes at that particular point in time, and as a result, there was commercial prosperity that began to build up both in Israel and in Judah.

This produced not only material benefits, but also various problems. As a commercial civilization grew and thrived, there were also difficulties that came in. A greater and greater percentage of people moved off the land and into the cities in search of jobs.

In effect, it was not dissimilar to what we have experienced in the course of the 20th century in terms of the number of families who have moved off the farms and into the cities. In fact, next Bible study when we study the book of Micah, we will go into a little more detail and depth on the background and you will see an amazing parallel between eighth-century Judah and Israel and 20th-century America and Britain. It's interesting because you see that when you put the same people in the same circumstances, they tend to do the same thing over and over and over. There is predictability to human nature.

Prophecy and history are simply the same thing seen from different directions. There is a time setting of the background of these prophets. As Israel, and to a lesser extent Judah, went through some of these things, there were problems that were engendered. There were various things that happened and there was a consequence that came about. God raised up these prophets. There were seven who flourished at this time—from the beginning of the eighth century down to the captivity and shortly beyond. God raised up these prophets to give a warning at a time when Israel seemed to be reaching a pinnacle of power. God raised up His prophets to sound an alarm, to sound a warning to the nation. The nation of ancient Israel did not heed that warning.

We are going to see that what Amos had to say was not popularly received. As we study through the Scriptures, we find that God's prophets have never been very favorably received. A little later we are going to notice one exception that stands out because it is such an exception. But, as a rule, God's prophets have not been popularly received. Their message has not been popular because God's prophets have never taken a poll to find out what was popular so they could go and preach it. They preached what God said, and that's enough to get you into trouble. After all, Jesus Christ was crucified for it, wasn't He?

We find that Amos was not very popular as a result of what he had to say. One of the things they told him was, 'Why don't you leave? Just head back to where you came from. You came from Judah. Go! We don't need you here in Israel. We don't need you here in Samaria; this is the king's city, the king's palace and temple. We don't need you here and we don't like what you

have to say.’ They didn’t like it because it was not a popular and pleasant message.

There is a great deal of parallel between what we find in our nation today and what we find at this time in the eighth century. **The events that served as a background of Amos’ writings served as a prelude and background to the things that set the stage for the Assyrian captivity and deportation of Northern Israel.** The same things that set the prelude for the captivity and deportation of ancient Israel set the same prelude for the captivity and deportation of modern Israel. As we go through the book of Amos, we are going to find that the message Amos had went far beyond his time and his day. **Amos had a message for his day, but the impact of his message went beyond eighth-century Israel.**

As we get into the study, we might notice briefly the time setting in Amos to sort of set the stage.

Amos 4:12, “‘Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.’”

Amos 5:15, “Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.”

Verse 18, “Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!”

Verse 20, “Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, and with no brightness in it?”

He talks about the calamities and the upset conditions in the heavens.

Amos 8:9, “‘And it shall come to pass in that day,’ says the Lord God, ‘that I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight...’”

Amos 9:8-9, “‘Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,’ says the Lord. ‘For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.’”

Verses 11-15, “‘On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ says the Lord who does this thing. ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of

grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,’ says the Lord your God.”

Obviously, the time setting of the end of the book of Amos goes down to the time when Christ is going to return. There are certain ones who read Amos and disregard the fact that much of the Bible is prophecy. They want to read the prophets and say, ‘This is all about long-dead nations and long-dead peoples, and it certainly doesn’t have any connection with us today.’

Well, has God raised up the tabernacle of David? Have you seen David walking around anywhere here lately? Has David been raised up? Has Israel been re-gathered? Have they built up the old waste places? Has Israel been planted in their own land, never again to be pulled up?

There are those who don’t understand the identity of Israel. They think this is just talking about the Jews and that they have gone back to Israel after World War II. Do you think they are planted in their land and are never going to go forth again? Well, go back and read the book of Zechariah.

Zechariah 14:1-2, “Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.” It talks about the inhabitants of the modern-day state of Israel in the Middle East (the Jewish state) going into captivity.

It is going to take Jesus Christ coming back as King of kings and Lord of lords to redeem them and to bring them back.

Verses 3-4, “Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,” We are going to see that the nation that has been re-gathered in the Middle East is not all of Israel. They are the nation of Judah, the remnant of Judah. There are two nations.

Amos was from Judah, but he went up to Israel to prophesy. Israel was taken into captivity over 100 years before Judah went into captivity. Israel

was taken into captivity by a different nation (the Assyrians) and to a different place.

2 Kings 17:6, we are told, “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.” This is in the area up between the Black and Caspian Sea.

Judah was taken into captivity by the Babylonians and settled in the southern Mesopotamian Valley in the area of Babylon and the environs of greater Babylon. They were in a different location. It was a totally different group of people and a different place.

Amos clearly focuses in on events that will culminate with the return of Jesus Christ and the re-gathering of Israel. The message that Amos had, though it is set against the background of his day and the circumstances in which Israel found itself in his day, contains a message that has implications down to our time today.

The first chapter or so of Amos are prophecies against the Gentile nations.

Amos 2:4-5 would be prophecies against Judah. Then the rest of chapter 2 would be a prophecy against Israel.

Chapters 3 and 4 prophesy punishment on Israel. Chapter 5 is Israel’s captivity.

Chapter 6 is Israel’s complacent attitude. You’d almost think Amos was talking a lot about Israel! Chapter 7 makes for a little bit of a historical inset.

Chapter 8 then goes back again to Israel being condemned for its greed.

Chapter 9 is the final punishment and millennial restoration.

Israel reached a high point militarily and economically during the time of Jeroboam II. After his death, the stability and prosperity of Israel ceased. Within a matter of about 40-45 years from the death of Jeroboam II, Israel went from being on top to being on the bottom. Then the Assyrians ultimately invaded and took them captive.

Amos 1:1, we are introduced to Amos, “The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam [II] the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” Tekoa was a little village in Judah. It was about six miles south of Bethlehem. Yet Amos’ ministry was primarily in Northern Israel. He was a herdsman and a gatherer [tender] of sycamore fruit (Amos 7:14).

He was given a message that he was to go to Israel. We find in chapter 1:3-5 he starts out by talking about Damascus, Gaza (v. 6), Ashdod, Ekron, Philistine (v. 8), Tyre (v. 9), Edom (v. 11), Teman (v. 12), the children [people] of Ammon (v. 13) and the Moabites (Amos 2:1).

You find they are all Middle Eastern nations. Even today, Damascus is the modern-day capital of Syria. He starts out with a focus on the Middle East, on the modern nation of Syria and on the area down in the Gaza strip.

There’s an area called the Gaza Strip. You know what they are having over there? They are having riots and trouble. They are having what the Palestinians have called the “Entefada.” The areas of Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron are in the same area down there. The word “Palestinian” is derived from “Philistine.” So, you have problems in Syria (Damascus). You have problems with the Palestinians. You have problems in Lebanon; Tyre is located in the modern area of Lebanon. Edom and Teman are addressed in verses 11-12. Teman is a subdivision of Edom; Edom basically is a reference to Turkey. Ammon (v. 13) would certainly refer to Jordan. Moab (Amos 2:1-2) would be portions of Jordan and Iraq.

So, what do you have addressed? –The whole Middle East! Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, the Palestinians—that sort of sounds like today’s newspaper, doesn’t it? –The same bunch. God named them off—every one of them. And what are they doing? They are having problems and there are going to be more problems. God is going to deal with it. He talks about some of the problems and some of the warfare that is going to break out over there.

Amos 1:4, ““But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.”” That refers to Damascus, the capital of Syria. It talks about sending a fire there. That’s a pretty good description of launching some missiles. When war breaks out over there, you had better believe there is going to be fire sent over Damascus. When the Jews unleash some of what they have, there’s going to be a regular firestorm in Damascus.

It talks about the various problems that are going to come, the warfare and strife that are going to occur. These events were pre-staged in ancient times, and we are going to find parallels in the modern times. There are events that are going to bring about a European presence in the Middle East. There’s going to be a warfare that is going to break out in the Middle East that is going to set the stage for European intervention. Some of

these things are addressed in the first chapter of Amos.

Then he addresses Judah in chapter 2.

Amos 2:4-5, “Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray, lies after which their fathers walked. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.’” You are going to see full-scale warfare breaking out in the Middle East. It talks about fire coming on the palaces of each of these areas. That’s talking about missile attacks. They are going to be launching missile attacks and there’s going to be fire coming on all those places. That’s going to set the stage for European intervention in the Middle East.

Verse 6, “Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.’” Now if Judah and Israel are the same ones (the same people), why is Israel addressed separately here?

This is why the Protestants don’t understand. Even though Jimmy Swaggart and some of these others may talk about prophecy from time to time, they don’t understand prophecy. They can’t begin to understand prophecy. They can’t understand any of the Old Testament prophets because they don’t understand the identity of Israel. You can waste your time listening to some of these characters or reading what they write. They may know in a general, vague way that Christ is going to return, but they don’t really understand what He is going to do when He gets here. They certainly don’t understand the events that are going to lead up to that. They don’t understand events that set the stage for it because they don’t understand the identity of the people addressed. They don’t know how the United States and Britain and the Commonwealth nations fit into prophecy. They don’t understand that because they don’t know where we are identified.

Why is God going to deal with Israel? What is reflected here? It talks about greed and materialism.

He says, “I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.”

There is sort of a play on words. In ancient times, there was a custom of sealing a legal agreement where one pulled off his shoe and handed it to the other.

Go back to the book of Ruth and read the account of Boaz when he made the agreement with old “What’s his name” about Ruth (Ruth 4:7-9). I refer to him as “What’s his name” because he was an individual who was unwilling to do what God said, so his name was blotted out of the genealogy. It doesn’t give you his name in the book of Ruth. The name of the fellow who was actually the closer kin than Boaz was blotted out. He goes down through history as old “What’s his name.”

You read how, when Boaz made the agreement with him, he pulled off his shoe. That was a custom showing that a legal transaction was rendered. The Jewish commentary brings out that the expression, “selling the poor for a pair of shoes,” had to do with taking advantage of people under the “color” of the law. It’s pretty descriptive of some of the modern lawyers and “shysters” who use the law to their own advantage. It may be justice, but it’s not justice with equality. It is a matter of people using the law in a manipulative way to dispossess and take advantage of others who are maybe not in a position to defend themselves. God indicts the nation for its greed, its obsession with materialism and immorality.

Verse 7, “They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, and pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the same girl, to defile My holy name.” It talks about greed, materialism, sexual looseness and immorality. These are problems for which He indicts modern Israel.

Amos 3:3, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” This is a fundamental principle. If we are going to walk with God, we have to agree with God. As a nation, if we want God’s blessings and benefits, we have to agree with God. As a nation, any agreement that we ever had with God has been very quickly left behind. It’s incredible the things that people want to do. They want to rewrite the rules. There was a great “hue and cry” in the media over the proposal that was in the Presbyterian Church to redefine morality. Basically, it was to put the stamp of approval on immorality, whether it was fornication, adultery, homosexuality or anything. People don’t like the idea of God telling them what to do.

Verse 7, “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” Before God intervenes in world events, God sends His servants to proclaim and announce that intervention. God doesn’t just do something in a corner. Inevitably, when you look

through the Scriptures, God sends His servants to announce and proclaim that intervention and to announce and proclaim the need to repent. When God gets ready to do something, He is going to make it plain.

Verse 9, “Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say: ‘Assemble on the mountains of Samaria; see great tumults in her midst, and the oppressed within her.’” Samaria was the capital of Northern Israel. Samaria is used as symbolic of the ten tribes of Israel. They are defined as being riddled with great tumults, as well as a lot of oppression. A great tumult means a lot of internal civil strife.

One of the things that is going to riddle this nation is civil strife and discord. We are going to come unraveled in our major cities with civil strife. When things start getting really serious economically, you are going to find some major civil strife and unrest in our cities. God talks about dealing with these things.

Amos 4:1, “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring wine, let us drink!’” He is not talking about cows in the field. God is not indicting cows for their sins. This is a reference to people; specifically, the reference is to a “fat-cow” society. The Jewish commentary brings it out as the women who encourage and nag their husbands causing them to be cruel in getting ahead.

Verses 2-3, “The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: ‘Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon,’ says the Lord.”

The term “Harmon” in the Hebrew would better be rendered as a place name. It is a reference to Armenia, which is where much of Northern Israel went into captivity.

Verse 6, “Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities [He is not talking about good dental hygiene; he is saying there won’t be anything to eat.]. And lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me,’ says the Lord.”

Verses 7-9, “I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink

water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,’ says the Lord. ‘I blasted you with blight and mildew.’”

He talks about upset weather conditions. Some places are not getting any rain and other places are getting too much rain. It sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Have you seen any mildew around lately? He is talking about the upset conditions and the things that are going to endanger the food production because you can be wiped out with too much rain or too little. That’s going to happen. We are obviously not in the throes of some massive famine right now, but that doesn’t mean it won’t happen. It simply means that it is not yet that time. It is not here yet.

We are in the midst of upset weather conditions, but it has not yet taken that serious a toll. Some farmers in this area have taken a toll because it has been so wet and they haven’t been able to get into their fields and do the things that they need to do. It depends on how long it goes on as to how bad the toll is. One of the things we have to realize is how vulnerable we are. We are dependent on what God gives—rain, sun and wind. Man likes to think that he is so much in charge of his own life and yet everything around us depends on what God provides and gives.

Verse 10, “I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; ...” We find described in Amos 4 the drought, famine and disease that are going to be national punishment.

Then he talks about the captivity that is going to come on the house of Israel.

Amos 5:1, “Hear this word which I take up against you, this lamentation, O house of Israel...” Here’s a lamentation for the house of Israel.

Verse 3, “...‘The city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel.’” Ten percent of those who go into captivity are going to survive and be alive at the end of the tribulation.

Verse 4, “...‘Seek Me and live...’”

Verse 5, “‘But do not seek Bethel, nor enter Gilgal, nor pass over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nothing.’” Don’t look to the places that you have been looking to.

Verse 6, “‘Seek the Lord and live, ...’”

Verses 11-13, “Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink

wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins. You afflict the just and take bribes; you divert the poor from justice at the gate. Therefore the prudent keep silent at that time, for it is an evil time.” God talks about His judgment that is going to come.

Verse 21, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies.” Some want to take that out of context and say, ‘God hated all those old feast days; you shouldn’t keep them.’ Did God say, ‘I despise My Feast Days’? He says nothing about despising His Feast Days. He said, “I despise *your* feast days.”

Which feast days did Northern Israel keep? Go back to 1 Kings 12:25-33. What was the very first thing Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, did when he established an independent kingdom in Northern Israel? He changed the festivals. He substituted man-made feasts for God’s Feasts. Israel never again kept the right days.

God hates our feasts—Christmas, Easter and all that junk. He hates the things that Israel does using His name. People want to invent their own religion and then attach God’s name to it. Why don’t they call it by their own name and quit calling it Christianity? It doesn’t have anything to do with Christ. Some of these churches want to perform homosexual marriages. Well, call it by their name. Why drag God into it? Why try to bring Jesus Christ and the Bible into it. Why not call it the Sodomite religion or the Church of Gomorrah? Why bring God into it?

Amos 6:1, “Woe to you who are at ease in Zion [They say, ‘Oh, nothing is going to happen to us.’], and trust in Mount Samaria [modern Israel; Samaria was the capital of the house of Israel. People trust in our great power and strength.], notable persons in the chief nation [first rank among the nations], to whom the house of Israel comes!” Here are a people who put great trust and confidence in our great national power. This is the area to which the house of Israel came.

Verse 3, “Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near...” Oh, they think bad times are way far off. They say, ‘We will just elect the right guy and everything is going to be great.’

Verse 4, “Who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall...” They are really enjoying the good things of life. This is talking about a very materialistic self-indulgent society.

Verses 5-6, “Who chant to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; who drink wine from

bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” They are really boozing it up, drinking wine by the bowlful. They are caught up in sort of an “eat, drink and be merry; wine, women and song.” There is nothing wrong with eating a good meal or with enjoying a glass of wine or good music. It is not talking about these things in moderation and in a proper way. It is talking about a society that is obsessed with revelry and partying. It’s very descriptive, “[they] are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” They are not bothered by the things that are going on. They are not bothered by sin. They are all caught up in materialism, in listening to the newest group and getting high or stoned, getting what they can get. They are not concerned about the problems of the nation. They are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.

Verse 7, “Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed.” God says those who have that attitude will be in the front of the line when the Germans march them off.

Verse 14, “‘But, behold, I will raise up a nation against you, O house of Israel,’ says the Lord God of hosts; ‘And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the Valley of the Arabah.’”

Amos 7 is a little bit of an inset. The people accused Amos of being a traitor. They said the nation couldn’t put up with him. They wanted him to leave.

Amos 7:10-13, “Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, ‘Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said: ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.’” Then Amaziah said to Amos: ‘Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy. But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is the royal residence.’”

They said, ‘We don’t need your kind around here. We were getting along just fine. We like our religion, and all our preachers say nice things and tell us how good we are. We like that and we’re comfortable with it. Here you come along saying that we are going to go into captivity. You are saying God indicts this nation and He’s going to punish this nation. You have conspired against us. You are a traitor. You shouldn’t say things like that. Why don’t you get out of here!’

Go someplace else. Get you another place to preach. We don't need you around here.'

I'll tell you what brethren, before the end of this age we are going to find ourselves in the same position because when the time comes for God's message of warning to really be "let loose" and to really shake this nation, we are going to find about the same reception that Amos and all of God's other prophets have ever gotten. Amos didn't back off from the situation. He said he didn't ask for the job. God put him there and told him to go prophesy unto the house of Israel.

Verses 14-17, "Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: 'I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, "Go, prophesy to My people Israel." Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord: you say, "Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not spout against the house of Isaac." Therefore thus says the Lord: "Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall be divided by survey line; you shall die in a defiled land; and Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land."'"

How do you think they liked that? When they got through reading Amos, they said, 'We think you had better get out of here, buddy. We don't like your kind around here telling us those things.'

Amos didn't "tuck-tail" and run. He looked them in the eye, pointed his finger in their face and he said, 'Let me tell you something. I didn't ask for this job. I am here because God told me to be here, and I have a message for you. Your wife is going to be a harlot in the city and your sons and daughters are going to die by the sword. You are going into captivity.' Amos was not very popular when he said that.

Amos 8:5, "...Making the ephah small and the shekel large, falsifying the balances by deceit..." That means selling less and less for more and more. The ephah is what they are selling; the shekel is what they are getting in return. They are selling less and less for more and more. What they are describing kind of sounds like inflation.

Verse 6, "That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals— ?..." Who gets hurt the worst by inflation? The elderly and people on fixed incomes. They are the ones who really suffer the most. The widow and fatherless are those who are least able to defend themselves. God indicts a nation whose priorities are greed and materialism.

He talks about the events and things that are going to come.

Verse 11, "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord God, 'That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.'" They didn't want Amos to tell them those things. Amos told them, 'The time is going to come when you won't be hearing them because I will be gone and there is going to be a famine in the land. When things really start getting bad, you are going to wish somebody were around to tell you what's happening.'

Amos 9 focuses on God's intervention.

Amos 9:8-9, "'Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,' says the Lord. 'For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.'"

In other words, when ancient Israel went into captivity they are known in history as the lost tribes of Israel. Were there going to be any lost tribes of Israel? Were they going to be the lost ten tribes? To whom were they lost? Did God lose them? Did God forget where they were? Did they get lost in the shuffle and God hasn't been able to find them? He's not going to fulfill all the prophecies of the Bible because the tribes of Israel got lost? They went into captivity, were sifted among all the nations and they got lost? No! He said, 'I will sift you among the nations, but I am not going to lose you.' "As grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground." He said, 'I am going to collect all of you.' Israel went into captivity anciently and was sifted through the nations. Yet at the end time (the right time and place), they are collected. God prophesied that.

Verse 11 talks about David being resurrected. It talks about the time of the Millennium, the time of plenty.

Verse 13, "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'when the plowman will overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.'" It discusses a time when the bounty is going to be so much that those who are ready to plow the field have to wait on the ones who are harvesting. The harvest is so great they are overwhelmed trying to get all the harvest in.

Verses 14-15, "'I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste

cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,' says the Lord your God."

It describes a time of great abundance and great plenty. It describes a time when Israel is going to be re-gathered and the old waste places rebuilt—a time when they will be planted in their own land, never to be taken out forcefully again. That's a prophecy that has not been fulfilled yet. It's a prophecy for the end time. If that's been fulfilled, when was it fulfilled? When was Israel planted in their own land never again to be removed? That's yet future.

Obadiah is a little short book. It has one chapter. There's no clear proof in the book of Obadiah exactly when it was written. **It is primarily a prophecy against the Edomites who anciently dwelled nearby.** The Edomites were descended from Esau. There are various groups of people who are descended from the Edomites. One particular branch, Teman, is addressed here in Obadiah.

Verse 9, "Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed," Teman was one of the major tribes of Edom. We would trace back the modern-day nation of Turkey primarily to the Teman branch of Esau. Turkey, up until after World War I, was known as the Ottoman Empire. It was spelled very similar to this. This was an ancient name. They were the Ottoman Turks. There are many different kinds of Turks, some of which have no connection with Esau. There was an area in Soviet central Asia that was ancient Turkistan, and there were various peoples in Soviet central Asia that were ancient Turkistan. There were various peoples who lived there. The generic name "Turks" was applied to anyone in that general area. Many of these peoples were unrelated to one another. They lived in that general geographic area.

The Ottoman Turks or Temanite Turks descended from Esau. Back a little less than 1,000 years ago (back about 800 or 900 years ago), Turkistan came out and invaded the Middle Eastern area. Over a period beginning about 1200 A.D. on up to about 1450 A.D., they moved across and conquered what is now the modern-day nation of Turkey. They forced out the Greeks and other peoples who were previously there. They conquered a great deal of the Middle East and on up even into Europe and the Balkan areas. Then in the aftermath of World War I, they were sort of pushed back and forced

into the Asia Minor peninsula, which took the name Turkey. They were a people that had the reputation in the Middle East as the most brutal warrior peoples that the Middle East had ever seen. They were known for their brutality and for their oppressive regime—and they are noted for that in the Middle East today. There are no people in the Middle East that are more feared and hated by the Arabs and all the Middle Eastern peoples, even the Armenians. In fact, the Armenians to this day nurse a great grudge against the Turks because of the massive slaughter of Armenians right around the time of World War I. They were noted for wanton brutal violence and that sort of thing. They ruled the Middle East in that way.

The Edomites are addressed here in Obadiah. It is a prophesy against them.

Verses 9 and 18 basically describe an annihilation (a destruction) of the nation.

Verse 9, "Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter."

Verse 18, "The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau,' for the Lord had spoken."

We find that Jeremiah bears in a little bit more on this.

Jeremiah 49:10-11, "But I have made Esau bare; I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself. His descendants are plundered, his brethren and his neighbors, and he is no more. Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me."

When you tie in Obadiah with Jeremiah, you find that basically the women and children will be preserved, but for all practical purposes, the adult male population is going to be pretty well exterminated. There's evidence of that here.

Obadiah 10-14, "For your violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. In the day that you stood on the other side—in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem—even you were as one of them. But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of

their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped;”

The crossroads is very likely Turkey that sits astride one of the major crossways—the Dardanelles—that controls their entrance from Asia to Europe.

It describes treachery, deceit and betrayal that are going to take place and severe punishment that is going to come as a result.

Verse 21, “Then saviors [plural] shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” Christ and the saints with Him are ultimately going to return to Mount Zion. At that time, there will be saviors that will come to judge the Mount of Esau. Saviors (plural)—that’s Christ and those with Him who will finally bring the way of salvation and set things straight. It will be the time when the Kingdom is the Lord’s.

Obadiah is a short little book; but nevertheless, it is an insight into some of the events that are transpiring and will transpire in that area.

Jonah is also a very short little book. The story of Jonah is a little different than the other prophets. There is a lot that can be learned from Jonah. **There’s a lot that we can learn in terms of the attitude that we need to have as God’s people and doing God’s work.** Jonah was given a job.

Jonah 1:1-3, “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.’ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”

If you look at a map, you will find that from where Jonah was Nineveh was one direction and Tarshish was the other. Nineveh was to the northeast and Tarshish was to the west. Tarshish was a city on the coast of Spain. So, instead of heading east, Jonah headed west. God told Jonah He wanted him to go to Nineveh; Jonah hopped on the first boat going the other direction. He did not want to go to Nineveh. That is almost an understatement.

He did not want to go and give Nineveh God’s message. That’s fine. God has ways of getting your attention. If God wants you to do something and you don’t want to do it, God can get your

attention. God says, ‘Go here,’ so you take off and go the other direction. God can get your attention. So, Jonah hopped a boat, and here they are sailing along the Mediterranean when a storm comes up. Jonah goes to sleep down in the bottom of the boat. The storm was “going” and they thought the ship was about to break up. All the soldiers were hollering out in these various languages to their gods. Finally, the shipmaster came down there, saw Jonah asleep, and said, ‘We need everything going for us that we can get. You had better wake up and pray to your God, too. We’re about to drown here.’

Because they decided that they needed to find out who brought this evil upon them, they cast lots. They were a superstitious lot, but God used that. When they cast the lot, it fell on Jonah. God sort of guided that. He doesn’t generally involve Himself in that sort of thing, but He wanted old Jonah pointed out. They asked, ‘What have you done to get us into all this trouble?’ Jonah told them. So they threw him overboard. As soon as they did, the waters became as calm as it could be.

Verses 15-16, “So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.” Boy, you had better believe they got religious in a hurry. They came up with a real “foxhole religion.”

Verse 17, “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” People sometimes wonder what kind of fish it was and how Jonah could have survived in the fish. Was it a whale? Well, it says right here what kind of fish it was. It was a special Jonah-fish. It says the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. How could Jonah have survived in the belly of the fish? –Because the fish was prepared for Jonah to survive. This was a special fish that had been prepared to swallow up Jonah—a special Jonah-eating fish. It was what it was designed to do, so it did it very well. The fish swallowed up Jonah, and Jonah was down there three days and three nights.

Jonah 2:1, “Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish’s belly.” You better believe he prayed. Here he was trying to get away from God and now he was awfully glad that God could find him. He was surely hoping that God could find him because he was down there in the belly of this fish and he had to do some serious praying. Sometimes people wonder what position we should get into and what’s the best

position for prayer. Well, I don't know. Jonah might have been in a variety of positions as this old fish was sailing through the water, just bouncing around. But I suspect that whatever position he was in was a good position to really be fervent because he was really crying out to God.

Verse 2, "And he said: 'I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice.'"

Just get the picture here.

Verse 5, "'The waters encompassed me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head.'" Here's old Jonah down there. Fish smell bad enough from the outside; can you imagine what it smelled like from the inside? And old Jonah was down there covered with slimy seaweed. This fish was moving right along. He was zooming up through the Mediterranean and Black Sea. It came down and spit out old Jonah right there near Nineveh.

Verse 10, "So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." Jonah had been praying for three days and three nights. The fish comes skidding to a stop right up there on the shore. The fish got indigestion really bad about this time, and out comes Jonah. I don't know what else came up with Jonah, but he must not have been a pleasant-smelling individual. He was certainly not an attractive-looking sight when he sort of picked himself up off the beach.

Jonah 3:1-2, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.'"

Verse 3, this time Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh.

A few things had happened to change Jonah's perspective. He wasn't looking for the next boat out. When he considered what the alternatives were, going to Nineveh didn't seem like such a bad deal. And to top it off, the Ninevehites (the Assyrians) worshiped Dagon, the fish god. If Jonah had just gone like God had told him to, he probably wouldn't have been paid any attention to more than anything else. But by being delivered on the spot by this great fish that just kind of shows up and spews him out, this is their god that they worship. Here comes this great fish and a man pops out of it. They were pretty impressed. All of a sudden, Jonah had an audience that he wouldn't have had before. He comes through Nineveh, looking and smelling like something that a fish spit out.

Verses 4-5, "And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' So the people of Nineveh believed God [It scared them to death when they saw this and heard the message.], proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them."

Verses 6-7, "Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water.'" Everything and everyone was going to fast with typical German efficiency.

Verse 8, "'But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.'"

Even let the cows join in. I tell you what—if you didn't feed a cow for three days and three nights, it will be crying out for all it could cry out, too. Can you imagine the commotion that must have been going on there by about the third day? All these people were wailing and lamenting and crying out to God. Since they didn't even feed the livestock, you can imagine by the third day every cow was lowing and every sheep and goat and dog was howling. That must have been pandemonium around there. They even put sackcloth on the cows. It was real German efficiency. When they were going to repent, they were *all* going to repent, right down to the last cow. So, they were all lined up there. And God looked down and He just kind of shook His head.

Verse 10, "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it." God saw what they were doing and thought, 'You know, you have to appreciate the effort.' He changed from what He was going to do and said, 'I think I'm going to give you a little more time.'

Jonah 4:1, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry." You would think Jonah was happy because the people listened. No, Jonah wasn't happy. Jonah wanted to see them "fry." Jonah wanted to see them really "get it"—which is probably part of the reason he didn't want to go down there to warn them to begin

with. He was afraid something would happen and they might change.

The Ninevehites were great enemies of Israel. They were a threat. They were a great nation that was sort of rising up on the horizon. Jonah would really have liked to see them “get it.” ‘God is mad at them? Good! Let God just wipe them out.’ He didn’t like the Assyrians anyway. God told him to go down and preach to them. He didn’t want to go preach to them. God got his attention and sort of persuaded him. God gave him a little incentive. Jonah went down and he preached, but he didn’t really want them to act on what he said. But sure enough, wouldn’t you know it, he preaches to them and they repent. Jonah was displeased.

Verse 2, “So he prayed to the Lord, and said, ‘Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm.’”

He said to God, ‘Isn’t this what I told You? This is why I left and went to Tarshish. I knew You were a gracious God and merciful. I just knew as soon as I came down here and told them, You were going to feel sorry for them and let them “off the hook.”’

Verse 3, “‘Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!’” Jonah said, ‘I wish you would just go ahead and let me die. I would rather die than live if this is the way it’s going to be.’ Jonah was really feeling sorry for himself. He didn’t like it. Things hadn’t turned out the way he had expected.

Verse 4, “Then the Lord said, ‘Is it right for you to be angry?’” God said, ‘Do you think you have a good reason for being mad?’

Verse 5, “So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.” He was just going to sit there on the mountaintop and watch. Countdown until the 40 days was over, but he was hoping that maybe God would change His mind and “fry” them. Jonah was just sitting out there.

Verse 6, “And the Lord God prepared a plant [KJV, “gourd”] and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful [KJV, “exceedingly glad”] for the plant.”

We have a lot of special things in the book of Jonah. We have a special Jonah-eating fish, and

here we have a special Jonah-shading gourd. It’s not your ordinary run-of-the-mill gourd. It’s a gourd that came up in a day’s time. You talk about “Jack and the Beanstalk!” This is “Jonah and the Gourd Stalk”! And it grew just about as fast.

Old Jonah was sitting out here. The sun is beaming down. He’s hot and mad. He’s sitting there in a bad attitude. He’s sweating and he’s watching to see what’s going to happen. This gourd begins to grow. It springs up very quickly and all the dense foliage comes out. He was very grateful because of the gourd. ‘Now isn’t this nice and pleasant.’ But God played a dirty, rotten trick on him.

Verse 7, “But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered.” God prepared a gourd and a worm. This was a special gourd-eating worm, and this worm had a very healthy appetite for a worm because the worm basically devoured the gourd. The gourd wasn’t anymore.

Verse 8, “And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah’s head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, ‘It is better for me to die than to live.’” God sent in this extra hot desert wind and the sun was blistering. Jonah was miserable and passing out. He was really feeling sorry for himself. He wanted God to just go ahead and take his life.

Verse 9, “Then God said to Jonah, ‘Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?’ And he said, ‘It is right for me to be angry, even to death!’” Jonah said, ‘I am so mad; I wish You would just let me die.’ God said, ‘You really liked that gourd didn’t you?’ And Jonah said, ‘You bet I did. That was my gourd and I liked it. It was nice. You took it away from me, and I am mad.’

Verse 10, “But the Lord said, ‘You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night.’”

God said, ‘You really felt sorry for that gourd. You’re feeling all terrible because your poor gourd died. You just feel terrible about that. You had pity on the gourd. You didn’t labor for the gourd. What did you do to make the gourd? You didn’t plant it. You didn’t make it grow, but you feel sorry for it. Here you are being sorry for the gourd, which you have not labored, neither made it to grow. It came up in a night and perished in a night. It was a special quick-growing gourd. Zoom, it was here. You didn’t do anything to make it grow and now you are all depressed and feeling sorry for yourself. You are all miserable

and sad because the gourd is gone. If you can feel bad because of the gourd, can I not pity Ninevah?’

Verse 11, “‘And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much livestock?’” God said, ‘You feel sorry for the gourd. You wish the gourd were still here. You miss the gourd. You didn’t have anything to do with making the gourd. You didn’t create it or have anything to do with making it come up. You feel bad because of the gourd. You miss the gourd. Well, what about Me? Here’s 120,000 people down here in Nineveh, plus all the livestock. Don’t you think I should have a little pity on them? After all, I made them. They are the work of My hands. I brought them into being. If you can have pity on the gourd, then I can have pity on the Assyrians.’ Jonah had never really looked at it that way before.

There are various things we see in the book of Jonah. The book of Jonah shows God’s great mercy. It shows that God will accept anyone’s repentance, as long as it is genuine and heartfelt. God is merciful and God desires to be merciful. God desires to give us a chance to change. Certainly, there are other lessons we can derive from it. If God wants you to do something or if God wants you to go somewhere, you had better go. If God wants you to do it, you had better do it. If you try to “duck out” and hide to get out of it, God has ways of getting your attention. You will wind up really wanting to go and to do what God wants you to do. God has ways of dealing with us and ways of getting our attention.

One other thing about Jonah is that Jonah’s three days and three nights in the fish’s belly was symbolic of Jesus Christ being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Matthew 12:38-41, “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.’”

In His prophesy, Jesus Christ said that what Jonah went through was, in effect, a type of a death and a resurrection. If God hadn’t

intervened and if this fish hadn’t spit him out, Jonah would have died. That would have been Jonah’s grave. He would have been buried in the fish’s belly. But God brought him forth after three days and three nights. God worked that miracle and actually used it as symbolic of the length of time the Messiah would be in the grave before He would be brought forth—in His case, to a literal resurrection, a resurrection to power and glory.

There’s a lot that can be learned from the little short book of Jonah and the things that are packed in there. There’s an awful lot packed into the Minor Prophets. The book of Amos is more of what we think of as a prophetic book in the sense that the focus of it is prophecy. The focus of it is the end time. The book of Obadiah is a very short book that focuses on one aspect of end-time prophecy. The book of Jonah gives us a little insight into prophesies altogether.

Those who are doing God’s work, those who are representing God, need to be filled with a desire and a yearning to carry God’s message. There needs to be willingness and a desire to carry God’s message, to proclaim God’s message and to appreciate and to value God’s mercy. They should never take those things for granted. There’s a lot packed in there.

Next Bible study we are going to go through the books of Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah. Again, they are fairly short little books. There’s some overlap that we will see. Micah is the primary one of these books and the lengthiest of the group. We will go into those next Bible study as we progress through this series on the Minor Prophets. We will have a chance to wrap up those books next time.

Bible Study # 73
July 23, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Micah, Nahum,
Habakkuk and Zephaniah

We are getting into several of the Minor Prophets this evening. These are all short books and yet they are books that have a lot of meaning packed into them. We **are going to cover four books this evening—Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah.** Most of them are short. Micah is the longest of the four and it is the one on which we will spend the most amount of time. Micah was written at a time roughly contemporary with that of the previous prophets we covered. We have gone through Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah and Jonah. Micah was roughly contemporary with those individuals. Those six prophets, together with Isaiah, were all roughly at the same period of time. They prophesied in the latter years of the dominance of Northern Israel (ten tribes).

Remember, the ten tribes went into captivity at an earlier time than did the southern tribes. Northern Israel was transported into captivity well over 100 years prior to the tribe of Judah. Certainly there were a few remnants of the northern tribes that escaped the earlier deportation and there were some individuals who came south at the time of King Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chronicles 30). The deportation by the Assyrians took place over a period of years, but the bulk of them were transported in bulk over 100 years earlier. And gradually others were transported. There were some small remnants that migrated at a later period of time, but that gets off into another subject.

I would like to read a few comments on Micah from the "Introduction to Micah" in the *Soncino Jewish Commentary* because Micah's time greatly paralleled our own 20th century. One of the ways God used Micah and the other prophets was to write of events that mirrored our time, day and age because there was a very strong parallel between the events that went on in the eighth century B.C. and the events that went on in the 20th century. These events set the stage for the same sort of problems. Human nature is such that if you put the same people in the same circumstance, they tend to do the same thing. The reason why there is a repetitive basis to history is because we see over and over the same people getting into the same circumstances and they tend to respond the same way. When we

read the book of Micah, we find the events dealt with our ancestors, the tribes of Israel.

The comments in the *Soncino Jewish Commentary* say: "The eighth century witnessed the emergence in Israel and Judah of a commercial civilization of great material prosperity. Its foundations were laid in the peace and security which Jeroboam II (783-743 B.C.) won for Israel and Uzziah (778-740 B.C.) won for Judah during their long reigns."

They each reigned for periods of about 40 years in the early eighth century B.C. Both of their reigns ended about 20-25 years prior to the Assyrian invasion. We are looking at a period of prosperity where Israel reached its height. One thing to understand, and it is sort of an interesting parallel, Israel reached the height of its prosperity only about 25 years before they went into the depths of captivity. It's sort of an interesting point because when people are "riding high," it seems very difficult for them to imagine that life won't always go on that way. They think it's all taken care of and life is always going to go on that way. And that is not reality; that's not the way it is.

It goes on to mention that these kings "extended the borders of their kingdom from Damascus to the Red Sea, from the desert to the Mediterranean, giving the Hebrew states command of all the main trade routes of ancient days. But it was a civilization that displayed all the evils of a society making haste to be rich—greed and covetousness, reckless and unscrupulous competition and a pitiless disregard of the claims of sympathy, charity and brotherly consideration. Extremes of wealth and poverty, which had been impossible in an agricultural society based on the Biblical system of land tenure, were dividing the nation into classes of possessors and dispossessed." It talks about how "the pursuit of commerce encouraged the development of cities and city life. And it was to the city that the landless farmers migrated in search of a livelihood, where wealth, luxury and vice dwelt side by side with poverty, misery and squalor."

That's pretty descriptive of some of our major cities. Wouldn't that be pretty descriptive of a place like New Orleans, New York or for that matter Houston, Dallas or Washington D.C. where wealth, luxury and vice dwell side by side with poverty, misery and squalor. You have extremes.

It talks about how this period of time saw the influx of a great rural migration to cities. Now, that is what has happened in the 20th century. It

happened at the beginning of the century for the nation as a whole. For most of the South, it did not happen until after World War II. Most of our cities didn't really begin to "take off" until the aftermath of World War II. Since World War II, the South has undergone the urbanization that the rest of the country had undergone half a century or more earlier.

So, there are problems. **Micah is describing a civilization, a society that in many ways mirror social patterns that we have undergone centuries later. Social problems beget social problems. There are various problems that are dealt with in the book of Micah.** We are going to focus on Micah perhaps a little more than the others. It is a much longer book. Most of the others are short little books, but we are going to focus on them as well.

Micah 1:1, "The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." This is concerning all of the tribes of Israel. Samaria and Jerusalem represent the capitals of the northern ten tribes as well as Judah to the south.

Verse 2, "Hear, all you peoples! Listen, O earth, and all that is in it! Let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple." Who do we have addressed here? To whom is the book of Micah addressed? It is addressed to the entire earth. So, here is a message that has worldwide implication. What is the time setting of the book of Micah? Was he writing primarily for his day and time—the eighth century B.C.?

Verses 3–5, "For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place; He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. All this is for the transgression of Jacob 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?"

We notice here that we are focusing on a time when God is going to come forth—a time when the Messiah is going to come and exercise His government and His rule.

The historical setting is clear because we are told the kings who were ruling during the time that Micah prophesied. Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were the kings of Judah during the time that Micah prophesied. We are given some insight. Micah prophesied in the very latter part of the time of Northern Israel before they went into

captivity. It talks about the transgression of the house of Jacob and the sins of the house of Israel. This is clearly a reference to the time period prior to Northern Israel's captivity.

"What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?" This focuses on the fact that the capital cities epitomized the sins of the nation in the things that were going on there. Verse 9, "For her wounds are incurable. For it has come to Judah; it has come to the gate of My people, even to Jerusalem."

Micah 2:1-2, "Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance."

I want to read this [the Jewish version] and a comment that brings out a little bit extra.

Micah 2:1-2, "Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they execute it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away; thus they oppress a man and his house, even a man in his heritage." The comment brought out here is on "coveting fields and seizing them." This reference "to seize them" is, "By corrupt legal processes, rather than by force. This legalized robbery was more galling and immoral than violent expropriation. Against it there was no defense."

It's talking about individuals who were in power (control) and manipulate that power to get their own way. It is talking about individuals who control the wealth, power and legal resources to sort of manipulate, maneuver and gain their own way. That is a descriptive aspect. You can manipulate things through taxation, through raising and lowering of the discount rates and interest rates. It's a matter of inflation. There are many, many processes.

God indicts many of those who are at the very helm of society for the greed and corruption that have motivated them and the pitiless disregard for fairness and for justice with equity.

In this century, we have seen the destruction of rural communities and rural life in this country. There have been many factors in that, but some factors have certainly included the greed and manipulation by those who are in a position to do such things. And it has brought about extensive consequences for our nation.

“Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.” They go to sleep thinking about how they can take advantage of somebody, how they can manipulate, maneuver and take advantage of somebody. As soon as it gets daylight, they go out and act upon a new scheme.

Verse 6, “‘Do not prattle,’ you say to those who prophesy. So they shall not prophesy to you; they shall not return insult for insult.” KJV, “Prophesy you not, say they to them that prophesy: ‘they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame.’” They don’t want to hear the truth.

Micah 3:1, “And I said: ‘Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know justice?’” Here, again, is an indictment to the house of Israel, not to Judah. It’s not to the Jews of today but to the house of Israel.

These books, such as the book of Micah, only make sense and are only understandable if you understand who is being addressed. That’s one of the reasons why some of the evangelicals and fundamentalists among the Protestants who comment on prophecy do not understand it. They do not understand it because they do not understand the key that unlocks Bible prophecy—which is the identity of Israel. They read Micah and think it is talking about the Jews—that little nation in the Middle East today called Israel. And because that is what they think, they misunderstand and misapply the entire message.

Now, there are prophecies that focus on the state of Israel, and we are going to get into some of those next time. There are interesting things that are coming up in the Middle East right now. There are some very remarkable events. By the way, don’t hold your breath until Secretary of State Baker brings peace in the Middle East. Though I don’t question his good intentions, I think that’s going to prove slightly beyond him.

Verse 2, he indicts them, “‘You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones...’” Boy, they’d pick it clean. Here are the leaders who should know right from wrong and should be teaching the people and setting an example. Instead, they are out to pick the carcass clean. They are out to get what they can get. We have had scandal after scandal of people in high places who have been up to something. We had the latest thing (sort of a midnight raid) that the United States Senate made. They waited until

late at night when the reporters and cameras were gone, and then they very quickly came up and voted themselves about a \$25,000 raise. That’s quite a deal! If you want a raise, all you have to do is vote in favor of it. How many companies do you know that all you have to do is get together and vote yourself a raise?

It gets off into another subject.

Verse 8, “But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.” The job of God’s work and His true servants filled with the power of the Spirit of God is to “declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.” Here is a message of repentance for the nation.

Verses 9-11, “Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, ‘Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us.’”

Here is a message that is going to shake this nation because it is addressed to the heads of the house of Jacob, to the rulers of the house of Israel who are to be indicted by God’s work, as those who “abhor judgment and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity.” They are in it for what they can get. They are in it for the money. You talk about an expose! There are some things that are going to be laid bare.

What do you think is going to happen when this message is delivered by God’s work to the nation? They are going to be glad to see us leave. They will probably help us pack and encourage us to go. That time is going to come. It is going to come in God’s time. God is the one who orchestrates the time. God has ‘reserved the times and the seasons in His own authority’ (Acts 1:7).

Micah 4 addresses something that is important. It again sets the stage for the time period Micah is describing. Is Micah primarily talking about his own day and his own time?

Micah 4:1, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it.” “In the latter days” the mountain of the house of the Lord is going to be exalted. God’s government is going to be established in the latter days. Now, if you want

to read another description of it, you can go back to Daniel 2 and Daniel 7.

Daniel 2:44, ““And in the days of these [ten] kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed;” The God of heaven is going to step in and set up a kingdom and a government.

Micah 4:1-2, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

Jerusalem is going to be the world capital. It’s not going to be in Washington, New York, Moscow, Rome, Berlin or some other such place. It’s going to be in Jerusalem. After God’s government is established, there are going to be many nations that are going to come and look. They are going to want and be seeking what they see. Israel is going to be regathered and begin to ‘blossom and bud as a rose’ (Isaiah 35:1-2). They will blossom and bud and fill the earth. As Israel begins to prosper (blossom and bud), the surrounding nations are going to want that. The government of God, within a matter of years, is going to expand out into the entire world. Within a matter of a few years, the entire earth will be brought under the government of God.

Verse 3, “He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off;” There are going to be those who come voluntarily and seek to learn of God’s way. They want to know what works. They want the blessings they see. And there are going to be others that sort of have a belligerent, recalcitrant attitude and are going to have to be rebuked, to be dealt with. They are not going to be allowed to abuse their neighbor. They are not going to be allowed to go in and take their neighbor’s property. They are not going to be allowed to learn war any more.

Verse 3, continuing, rather, “...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Verse 4, “But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.”

There are two or three things that come out here. Many times over the years and centuries, there

has been the concept that a utopian society would involve some form of communism or socialism. There have been various utopian schemes that have attempted to be carried out in that way—none of which has ever built an enduring society because you remove the incentive. Some of them have lasted longer than others. Those that have been voluntary, where people have been committed to a cause and pitched in for the common good, lasted for a while. But that’s not the way God will do it.

God is not going to build a communistic or socialistic society in Tomorrow’s World. ‘Every man will sit under *his* vine and *his* fig tree,’ not under the community vine or fig tree. There is that principle. One of the Ten Commandments protects private property—“thou shall not steal.” That recognizes there are things that could be stolen. Since there is property and there is a right to property, there are many ramifications to that commandment.

We see here a couple of things. ‘Every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree.’ We see that there will be individual possessions; individuals will own property. And we also see that it says, “and none shall make them afraid.” There’s not going to be fear and the things that intimidate people.

It’s interesting. There are so many different ways a society is structured. Just one small way—look at the taxation structure. In ancient Israel, there was no such thing as a property tax. That may seem like a small thing, but over the years there have been farmers who have lost their property, particularly years ago in the aftermath of the War Between the States. There were many of those who lost their farms because they couldn’t pay the taxes. This sort of thing happened.

My grandfather came from Arkansas to Louisiana as a young boy. That’s what had happened to his family. Back in certain times, it has not been an uncommon thing. The whole concept of property tax really means that even though you have a deed to your property, you don’t own your property. It goes back to a feudal concept that the title to all the land ultimately resides with the king and, in effect, you have to pay him rent on it every year. You may not think he does, but just don’t pay it for a few years and you will find out who owns it. It’s a concept of ownership and that ownership ultimately resides in the crown. In this country, since we don’t have a monarch, it resides in the state. And in order to use this property, you have to pay the state a fee every year—a fee that the state assesses. And if you fail to pay it over a period

of time, they can come in and take it away from you.

In ancient Israel, that was not the case. Title of the land ultimately belonged to God. God gave it to individual families and, under God's law, the family could not lose it forever. They could mortgage it. In effect, the most they could do was lease it for 49 years because at the Jubilee it always reverted back to the family. If somebody was a "ne'er-do-well," a spendthrift and not a good manager, he could bankrupt himself, but it wouldn't have implications for generations to come because, in effect, every generation got a fresh start. You had a chance to learn lessons from the past and get a fresh start.

"But everyone shall sit under his vine and fig tree, and none shall make him afraid." There won't be terrorists or a lot of crime in the streets. Today, sometimes, you would be afraid to sit under your own vine and fig tree unless you had security lights around and maybe put up a big fence. Some people are almost living in a jail. There are bars on their doors and windows because they are afraid of people breaking in, robbing or murdering them. Can you imagine living in a society where "none shall make you afraid"? You can sit out in the yard and you don't have to fear anyone. The government's not going to come and take it away, nobody is going to come and steal it, and no one will do violence to you. This is the sort of society that is being talked about.

Verse 5, an interesting verse, "For all people walk each in the name of his god," All the commentators scratch their heads about this verse. They can't understand it. What does this mean? Does it mean that in Tomorrow's World, everybody will worship every god they want to? No, all people will walk in the name of his god. Who is going to be the god of those various people? —Well, various members of the God Family—you and me and others. We are going to be assigned as the God-Being who is ruler over this or that community or this or that state. All these people are going to walk in the name of their god.

Verse 5, continuing, "...but we [those of us in God's Family] will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever." They will orient toward us and through us, to Christ and the Father because we will also be part of the Family of God. When we put on immortality at the resurrection, we become a part of the very Family of God. We will be worthy of worship. It says so in Revelation to the Philadelphians.

Revelation 3:9, "Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you." That can only be done to a God-Being.

Revelation 22:8-9, you remember when the Apostle John fell down before the angel, "...I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, 'See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.'" He said, 'Don't worship me. I am only an angel; you can't worship me.'

Acts 14:15, remember some of these people were worshipping Paul and Barnabas and they said, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men..."

In fact, there is an account of Peter concerning that (Acts 10:25-26). It is a good account to remember. It is good proof that Peter wasn't the first pope because if he had been, he would have said, "Kiss my toe." He didn't tell them to kiss his toe. He told them to stand up.

There is a statue in the Vatican where the big toe is literally worn away because so many people have kissed the toe over the centuries—probably millions of people when you consider how many centuries it's been. They've come in there and have done obeisance to that big black, ebony statue that's supposedly Peter. It's called St. Peter today. When it was originally built, it was called Jupiter Olympus, but they just changed the name. They cut the scepter away and replaced it with a set of keys. They sprinkled a little water on it and said, 'You were Jupiter Olympus, now you are St. Peter,' and everything goes right along.

By the way, if it's not the identical statue that Antiochus Epiphanies set up in the temple that was the abomination that made desolate in ancient times, it's an exact copy. It is very likely that statue is going to be the physical object that will be moved to Jerusalem in the future as the abomination because it was exactly the same thing that Antiochus Epiphanies set up (Daniel 11:31). It's interesting that there is an exact counterpart that is set up there.

Another thing set up in St. Peter's Square is the great obelisk. I am sure many of you have seen pictures of it. That's not just any obelisk. That one was transported from Egypt. That was the ancient obelisk of the sun. It's made direct reference to by way of a prophecy against it. It's an interesting story in history because they did it

centuries ago. It was a mammoth feat to transport that thing across the Mediterranean from Egypt to Italy to bring it up there and set it up. They had no mechanized equipment to do it, but they did it. They went to a lot of trouble to get the exact thing that God singled out that He hated. They went to a lot of trouble to get it, bring it up there, set it up in the middle of St. Peter's Square and say, 'This is great, we have the real thing!' I'll tell you, there are some people that are going to be in for a surprise.

Micah 4:5, "For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever." This is an important verse.

Verses 6-7, "'In that day,' says the Lord, 'I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast and those whom I have afflicted; I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcast a strong nation; so the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever.'" It describes the time when the government of God is going to be set up.

Micah 5:2, "'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel,'" Here is a direct prophecy of where the Messiah would be born.

This is the verse that the priests and scribes quoted to Herod in the New Testament when the wise men had come to Jerusalem to inquire, Matthew 2:2, "...Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?"

Verses 3-6, Herod was a little bothered by that because he thought he was king of the Jews. This disturbed him somewhat, and he decided he ought to look into this matter. He called the chief priests and scribes in and demanded of them where the Messiah was to be born. And when he put them on the spot, they told him that it was written in the prophets and quoted Micah 5:2.

Micah 5:2 (latter part), "...whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." In Hebrew, "from everlasting" literally means "from the days of eternity." The Messiah was not simply to be a human being. He was to be God in the flesh. His goings forth has been from of old, from eternity.

Verse 3, "Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth [in other words, until the Church is established and prepared]; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel."

Verse 4, "And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; and they shall abide,

for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth..."

Verses 7-8, he describes events that will take place, "Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, that tarry [wait] for no man nor wait [delay] for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, who, if he passes through, both treads down and tears in pieces, and none can deliver."

Here, he is speaking prophetically of the might and the power that the Israelite nations would have.

Verse 9, "Your hand shall be lifted against your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off."

Then God talks about how He would deal with Israel and ultimately would punish them.

Micah 6:1-4, "Hear now what the Lord says: 'Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O you mountains, the Lord's complaint, and the strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a complaint against His people, and He will contend with Israel. O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me. For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.'"

Verses 6-8, "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

What is God after? Is He just after great sacrifices and great ritualistic observances? Can we just go through the motions of religion and God is satisfied and pleased with that? What God wants is *religion from the heart*. God doesn't simply want the outward show and outward manifestation. He doesn't want us to simply go through the motions.

He says, 'What does God require? Three things! Very simple! -To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God.' It is interesting if you look at the three. The first—to do justly—

has to do with our own personal conduct. It has to do with what we do. It has to do with our relationship in terms of what we expect of ourselves—that we keep the commandments, that we do justly. The word “justly” could just as easily be rendered “righteousness.” It comes from the Hebrew word “*tsidqah*,” which means “righteous” or “righteousness.” What does God require? He requires us to do righteousness. What is righteousness?

Psalm 119:172, “...all Your commandments are righteousness.” We are to do righteousness. We are to keep the commandments. In terms of our relationship with ourselves, in terms of what we expect of ourselves, we are to obey God.

What about our relationship with our neighbor? We are to love mercy. This has to do with the way we treat others. In our own lives, we are to concentrate on obeying God and doing what God says. We are to do what’s right and just. We are to have an attitude of mercy towards others. We are not to have an attitude of condemnation, gossip, judgment, put-down and all these other things. We are to love mercy.

In our relationship with God, we are to walk humbly with God. We are to see ourselves in proper relationship with God. We are to see ourselves in perspective with God—how we stack up. We are to walk humbly with God because when we see how great God is and how weak and puny we are as human beings, how can we walk any other way than humbly?

You know, Nebuchadnezzar walked before God in pride.

Daniel 4:37, Daniel told him, “...those who walk in pride He is able to abase.” The moral of that story is to not walk before God in pride; walk humbly with your God. You are to love mercy in terms of your dealings with neighbors. In terms of your expectations of self, you do justly. It is sort of interesting. These three categories focus on *ourselves*, our *neighbor* and *God*—a one-word summation of relationships in each of these categories.

It talks about the greed and corruption of the nation.

Micah 6:10-13, ““Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the short measure that is an abomination? Shall I count pure those with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore I will also make you sick by striking you, by making you desolate because of your sins.””

Verse 16, ““For the statutes of Omri are kept; all the works of Ahab’s house are done; and you walk in their counsels,”” Omri was the father of Ahab. Omri is not one whom we tend to focus on very much from a Biblical standpoint. We generally have given more attention to Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab was the son of Omri; Omri was the founder of that dynasty. It was one of the most significant dynasties of the northern ten tribes of ancient Israel. He was the founder of the dynasty and gave his name to it.

In fact, in ancient history, the entire nation of Israel was known by the name of Omri by some people. The Assyrians and the Assyrian monuments of the nation of Israel are called “Bit Khumri” which literally translated means “the house of Omri.” Omri was evidently an individual of renown. He founded a dynasty that came on down for several generations—the most notable of which was Ahab, who married Jezebel.

That term, by the way, on the Assyrian monuments referring to Bit Khumri or Omri, is the name that Israel was known by when they went into captivity. That’s where the name “Cimmerians” originates. It is the name that the Celtic peoples were known by. In fact, Langer’s *Encyclopedia of World History* brings out some of that. This was the same name that was used in the Assyrian monuments. That’s why Israel was known by those names when they began to migrate up into Europe.

Micah characterizes society with greed and corruption being rampant.

Micah 7:2-4, “The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net. That they may successfully do evil with both hands—the prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe, and the great man utters his evil desire; so they scheme together. The best of them is like a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge; the day of your watchman and your punishment comes; now shall be their perplexity.”

It describes the corruption, and I think “the judge seeks a bribe and the great man utters his evil desire” is sort of an interesting description. We’ve had some of those things on tape. We’ve had several indictments of recent date—the guys asking for money. That’s exactly what happened. KJV, “The great man utters his mischievous desire.” I like that description. It is a rather poetic phrase, but it is so apt and descriptive. That is the state of things. God is going to intervene and God is going to have to punish the

nation. We see that the book of Micah focuses on God's punishment of Israel and the things that He will do. It is a major prophetic book. It is one of the longest of the Minor Prophets.

Nahum, on the other hand, has three chapters. Habakkuk has about two and one-half pages; Zephaniah is about the same—two and one-half or three pages. We find three much shorter books.

Nahum was written at a later time. It was written basically after Israel had gone into captivity but before Assyria had been punished. God used the Assyrians to punish Northern Israel, but then He was going to deal with the Assyrians and punish them. **The book of Nahum is a prophecy against Assyria.** Nahum sort of took up the story where Jonah left off. Jonah didn't follow God's instructions and tried to run away. He went the other way, but he got delivered to Nineveh to give his prophecies in such a remarkable way. What he feared came to pass—they repented. Things went on for another 100 years or so. But it doesn't take people long—they gradually forget and drift back into their old ways. So, now, God sends another prophet, Nahum, with a prophecy against Assyria—against Nineveh. The books of Habakkuk and Zephaniah both deal with the events prior to the Chaldean captivity of Judah.

Let's notice briefly the book of Nahum.

Nahum opens with a psalm of God's majesty and then prophesies the fall of Nineveh.

Nahum 1:1, "The burden against Nineveh [This is where the prophecy is addressed.]. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite."

Verses 2-3, "God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; the Lord avenges and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies; the Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet."

Verses 6-7, it goes on to show, "Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him." God knows who's who and He knows what's what. You don't have to worry about that. God knows those who trust in Him. When God steps into history—when He intervenes—He knows who His people are and who are not.

We go down and it describes the events that are going to occur.

Nahum 2 talks about the Assyrians.

Nahum 2:3, "The shields of his mighty men are made red, the valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots come with flaming torches in the day of his preparation,"

I am going to read this out of the Jewish translation. I think, in some ways, it may be slightly more poetic.

Verses 3-5, "The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots are fire of steel in the day of his preparation, the cypress spears are made to quiver. The chariots rush madly in the street, they jostle one another in the broad places; the appearance of them is like torches, they run to and fro like the lightning. He bethinks himself of his worthies; they stumble in their march; they make haste to the wall thereof."

It talks about the events.

Nahum 3:1-3, "Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs. The noise of a whip and the noise of rattling wheels, of galloping horses, of clattering chariots! Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of slain, a great number of bodies, countless corpses—they stumble over the corpses..."

It describes the pomp, grandeur and all of the great panoply of might—the display of greatness and grandeur. You can almost hear the clanking of metal down the street, the marching of the troops, the glistening, shining reflection off the weapons, the great evidence of war power—the power of great military might that is so impressive. It describes this great Assyrian (modern-day Germany) power, the very head of what will ultimately come to be the beast power. It describes that greatness that is there.

There is an interesting statement that I would call to your attention.

Verse 4, "because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries [KJV, "witchcraft"], who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries."

The word "witchcraft" (both in the beginning and latter part of the verse) is a word that is derived from the Hebrew word "*kesheph*." This is the word that is used in Malachi 3:5 to translate "sorceries." It is a word that is rendered "*pharmakaia*" or "*pharmakon*" in the Septuagint translation, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew, "*mekhashef*" refers to one specific aspect of sorcery or witchcraft, which had to do with concocting mind-altering potions. "*Pharmakon*"

or “*Pharmakaia*” in the Greek language, which is also rendered “sorcery” in Revelation 18:23, is the word that our modern word “pharmacy” comes from. It has to do with drugs. And specifically in ancient times, there were various poisons and potions, many of which were hallucinogenic or what we would term “mind-altering” narcotics and things of this sort.

Anciently, these things even played a role in various religions. You can read about it. You have to look long and hard, but there are references to it. There are references to the role that hallucinogenic and psychedelic drugs played and the mystical, spiritual visions that were seen as a result of that, particularly, in the oriental religions.

In fact, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* claims that Buddha actually died of an overdose from psychedelic mushrooms. When you look at the size of him, you figure he must have eaten a powerful “passel” of mushrooms. He evidently overdosed on that. He took one last “trip.” Some of the hallucinogens, like LSD, that were made derived from or synthesized from things of this sort.

What I want to call to your attention is this word “*mekhashef*.” There are different words for sorcery and witchcraft. This word had to do with the aspect of sorcery or witchcraft that had to do with concocting potions, poisonous solutions, hallucinogens and this sort of thing.

When you have that in mind, read, “Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot [You can go back and compare that with Revelation 17:2 where it talks about the great false church, how all nations have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication (whoredom).], the mistress of sorceries [or the mistress of drug dealing], who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries.” It’s sort of an interesting focus when you compare it with Revelation 17 and 18. I’ll tell you, when all is said and done, we may be shocked and amazed by some of the things we find at the bottom of some of the problems that are going on today.

Verse 5, God says, “Behold, I am against you,” says the Lord of hosts; ‘I will lift your skirts over your face, I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame.’” In other words, God says the time is going to come when He is going to show to the whole world exactly what’s inside of this whole system. It describes the destruction that is going to come. It describes what God is going to do.

Verse 7, “...“Nineveh is laid waste!””

Verses 18-19, “Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; your nobles rest in the dust. Your people are scattered on the mountains, and no one gathers them. Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?”

Habakkuk sort of goes on from there. It was written at a little later time. It was written perhaps 20-30 years after Nahum. We know that Nahum was written prior to the destruction of Nineveh. Some of the commentaries try to date it afterward. That’s because they (Habakkuk and Nahum) prophesy the destruction of Nineveh and it’s hard for them to imagine that somebody could have known ahead of time that it was going to be destroyed. And that’s because they don’t really believe that there is a God who knows the end from the beginning and declares it (Isaiah 46:10-11).

Habakkuk is written a little later. He would be contemporary with Jeremiah and Zephaniah. Habakkuk is a very important book; **it deals with the struggle of faith.**

Habakkuk 1:1, “The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw.” First of all, he looks at things and sees all the sins of the nation of Judah. He sees what’s going on and he says, ‘O God, how can you let this happen? How can it go on? Why don’t You do something? These people deserve judgment.’ Then God says, ‘I’m planning on doing that. I am going to send in the Chaldeans and they are going to really wreak havoc.’

Then Habakkuk looks a little further and says, ‘The Chaldeans are worse than the Jews. How can You let them get by with it?’ In effect—‘How can You let the Jews get by with it?’ God says He is going to send the Chaldeans to punish them. ‘Yeah, but how can You let the Chaldeans get by with it? They are even worse.’ But God says He is going to “get” them, too.

It doesn’t take faith when you see everything going the way it ought to go. Think about that! When you see things the way they ought to be, it doesn’t take faith. You’re not walking by faith; you are walking by sight—you see it. It takes faith when physical evidence contradicts what God says. Then you have to make a choice. Do you believe what God says or do you believe what you see?

That’s why Abraham was the father of the faithful. God said, ‘I am going to make of you a great nation’ (Genesis 17:4). Abraham looked at his 90-year old wife who was barren and, let’s face it, there wasn’t a whole lot of physical evidence to give Abraham a lot of reason to

think, 'Boy, God, I can sure understand that. I certainly see how You are going to make me a great nation.' He just kind of scratched his head and said, 'Well, alright Lord, if You say so.' He believed God. He believed God!

Habakkuk 1:2-4, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, 'Violence!' And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds."

I remember back in 1975, '76 and '77 when some of us in the ministry were reading these verses and wondering if they weren't descriptive of the state of things we saw around us at that time. There were a number of us that discussed some of those things privately. We took great comfort from the book of Habakkuk because it was a message of faith.

Verse 5, "'Look among the nations and watch—be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you.'" 'I am going to work a work in your days.' This verse is actually quoted back in Acts 13:41 referring to the work of God.

In the context of Habakkuk 1:5, it is talking about raising up the Chaldeans to punish Judah, but it's really saying that God will do something. God will step in and intervene in ways that you and I cannot imagine. God will do what He does in ways that you and I would never have imagined.

When God got ready to solve the problems in His work and in His Church back in 1978 and '79, He did so in ways that we would have never imagined. Some of you in the Church, did you imagine that God was going to do things the way He did? Would you have ever second-guessed the way that God stepped in and solved some of those problems back in '78 and '79? It would have been the most far-fetched scenario. I don't think there was a single one of us in the work that could have imagined that God would have stepped in and done it. I can think of various ones (including evangelists) that I remember discussing some of those things with just, literally, weeks before some of those actions came about—and none of us could imagine. We knew that it was going to happen, but we couldn't imagine how.

There's a lesson of faith. God wants us to learn a lesson of faith. God wants us to trust Him and to look to Him. That's a lesson that we can look

back on. Habakkuk looked around and saw the iniquity in Judah, and said, 'Lord, how can this be? How can all this go on and nothing happens?' God said, 'Look, Habakkuk, I am going to work a work in your day, and you are not going to be able to imagine it.'

Verse 6, "'For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs.'" They are going to come in and deal with these things.

Habakkuk 2:2-4, "Then the Lord answered me and said: 'Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.'"

The point of Habakkuk is not just simply for ancient times. It is for our time.

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the time of the end it shall speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

That's the message of faith. Just because you don't see God doing what you think He ought to do, it doesn't mean He's not going to do it. Has God retired and gone way off somewhere? We want to put a time limit on God. We pray and ask God for help or deliverance and we want to set a time limit for it. God put time in His own authority (Acts 1:7). The point is that *even though it tarries, wait for it; it will surely come.* The point is *'the just shall live by faith.'* Whose faith? It's the faith of Christ in us.

Galatians 2:20 brings that out, "'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.'" The just shall live by faith. It is not just any faith; it is not just faith that we work up but the faith of Christ in us.

Habakkuk 2:9, it goes on, "'Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of disaster!'" It's an important principle; you don't really get ahead by seeking to entrench yourself by wrong methods.

"Him that covets evil gain for his house...set his nest on high." There are various ones that sought to ensconce themselves. This has been the history of God's people, both in the physical sense (in Old Testament Israel), as well in the

spiritual sense. We experienced some of those things back in the '70s with certain individuals—one man who thought he had ensconced himself. In fact, more than one man had ensconced themselves pretty well, and when God got ready, He intervened. He dealt with it.

It talks about a time—the time that we look forward to.

Verse 14, “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” That’s the time to look forward to. That’s the time of God’s government holding sway on this earth.

Verse 20, “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

Habakkuk 3:2, “O Lord, I have heard your speech and was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.”

In Romans, God talks about the time when He will make a short work.

Romans 9:28, “For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.” The point is that God is going to accomplish what He chooses. He will revive His work “in the midst of the years.”

God has a plan that He is going to carry out. The book of Habakkuk is very much a book of faith. It was written in the context of the prophet looking around and seeing everything the way it ought not be. His faith was tried. What do you do? He cried out to God and he said, ‘O Lord, how can this be? Here are Your people, the nation of Judah, filled with iniquity.’ God says He is going to deal with that. God has a plan. He has a schedule.

The book of Zephaniah, which was written about the same time as Habakkuk, is also an interesting book. **It focuses in on the period of the Day of the Lord in prophecy and who is going to be protected.** Habakkuk is in many ways a lesson of faith. It is certainly appropriate for the end time—a time when we will see iniquity, a time when our faith will be tried, a time when there will be all sorts of chaos and confusion around us and we find ourselves in circumstances and many things that we will only be able to go through walking by faith and trusting God. If God’s not in charge, then we are in trouble anyway. We are in a heap of trouble. If God is in charge, then what is there to worry about? We certainly should have an appropriate concern of going to God but, primarily, to stay

close to God so that we might come into the category that it talks about in Zephaniah.

The word “Zephaniah” means “the hidden of the Eternal.” The book of Zephaniah focuses in on the Day of the Lord, and who is going to be protected in the Day of the Lord’s wrath. “The hidden of the Eternal”—in other words, God’s people who are protected and are in a place of protection or place of safety.

Zephaniah 2:3 talks about that, “Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility.” Who is doing that? Well, God’s people, God’s Church. Who is seeking righteousness and meekness? God’s people are enjoined to seek God, to seek righteousness, to seek meekness.

Verse 3, continuing, “...It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger.”

Zephaniah talks about the great Day of the Lord.

Zephaniah 1:14-18, “The great day of the Lord is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath; ...”

Much of Zephaniah talks about the Day of the Lord. It talks about the great Day of the Lord’s wrath. Who’s going to be hidden? Who’s going to be protected?

Revelation 12:14, tie that in with, “But the woman [the Church] was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half time, from the presence of the serpent.”

Revelation 3:10, it says to the Philadelphia Church, “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial [tribulation] which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

It talks here about God’s people being hidden in the day of God’s wrath. Zephaniah deals with the time of God’s wrath. There’s sort of an interesting expression used in Zephaniah. I would call your attention to it.

Zephaniah 1:4, “I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place, the names of the idolatrous priests [KJV, “chemarims”] with the pagan priests...”

The KJV simply renders it “chemarim,” which is not a translation of the word; it is the Hebrew word. It is just transliterated into English. The Jewish translation renders it, “I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place and name of the idolatrous priests with the priests.” “Chemarim” was a term that certainly referred to idolatrous priests, but it has sort of an interesting meaning because the word “chemarim” in Hebrew means “black-robed ones.” It was descriptive of the idolatrous priests.

It is interesting. God’s priests (the Levites) who ministered in the sanctuary always wore white robes. Sometimes there were certain colored threads and extra ornaments that went with it, but the basic robe was white. It’s sort of interesting that there are priests of a particular religion that have normally been identified with black garments. Usually, it’s right on down to where there’s just one little tiny strip of white right there at the neck. In ancient times, the priests of Baal and some of the various ones wore black robes. It is the term used here. It means idolatrous priests. But the term that God chose to use for them was “the black-robed ones,” and I think that’s sort of an interesting analogy and an interesting point.

Zephaniah 1:7-8, “Be silent in the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand, for the Lord has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests. And it shall be, 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 foreign apparel.”

He’s going to punish people.

Verse 9, “In the same day I will punish all those who leap over the threshold, who fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit.”” “Leaping over the threshold” is a pagan superstitious expression.

The expression goes back to an event mentioned in 1 Samuel 5:4-5. Remember when the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant and brought it into the temple of Dagon. The next day they came in and the idol of Dagon had fallen down before the Ark of the Covenant. The head of Dagon had broken off on the threshold in the temple of the Philistines. Well, there developed a pagan superstition of jumping over the threshold because stepping on the threshold was bad luck. It’s sort of a superstition that goes

back to old Dagon’s head being broken on the threshold. It’s an expression that has to do with pagan superstition and those who practiced various pagan superstitions.

Zephaniah 1:12, “And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, ‘The Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil.’” –Those that have sort of a comfortable, laid-back, lukewarm, lackadaisical approach and say, ‘God’s not going to intervene; God’s not going to do anything.’ God says, ‘I am going to search out and find the people who think this and I’m going to deal with them.’

It talks about the events of the Day of the Lord that are going to come.

Verse 18, “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath; ...”

Zephaniah 2:3, we have already focused on, “Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, ...”

Isaiah 55:6, “Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.” It goes on to talk about that sort of thing and the destruction that is going to come on various ones of the people around in the Day of the Lord.

Zephaniah 3:1-5, “Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city! She has not obeyed His voice, she has not received correction; she has not trusted in the Lord, she has not drawn near to her God. Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning. Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. The Lord is righteous, He is in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, but the unjust knows no shame.”

The indication, here, is that Jerusalem is being used as a type of not only Judah but, certainly, also all of Israel.

“They have done violence to the law.” Certainly, in many ways, you could say the Talmud crucified the law. When the scribes and the Pharisees got through with it, they had done violence to God’s law. Christ indicted them pretty severely for that in the time of the New Testament.

Verses 8-10, “‘Therefore wait for Me,’ says the Lord, ‘until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth

shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy. For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering.”

God talks about the time when all nations will finally be turned to Him with one pure language. It talks about a time of regathering.

Verse 13, “The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.” That’s not talking about the state of Israel in the Middle East now. That’s talking about Israel brought back after Christ’s return. That’s talking about conversion.

Verses 17-18, “The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you in His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly,”

God will bring back the captives. There are many prophecies of God’s intervention and the things that God will do as He steps in.

We find that both Habakkuk and Zephaniah are set in the setting of Judah at the time of Jeremiah—a time when God was getting ready to deal with His people, Judah. It’s sort of a background to the account of Josiah in the book of Lamentations.

Habakkuk and Zephaniah were contemporaries. They were with that particular time period. Micah was much earlier. Nahum was sort of in-between. What we see here are four short books. Three are fairly short; Micah is a little longer. There are a great deal of messages packed in there. There are messages of faith, messages of confidence, the story of God’s intervention and the ultimate establishment of the Government of God to hold sway over all the earth.

Next Bible study we will be covering the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi—three books that are all related to after the exile of Judah. Next Bible study will conclude our brief survey with the Minor Prophets. We will come back at a little later time and pick up quite a bit more prophecy in much more detail when we go through the book of Revelation.

Bible Study # 74
August 13, 1991
Mr. John Ogwyn

Minor Prophets Series—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

We are finishing up our Minor Prophets series this evening—particularly the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi—the final portion of the Minor Prophets.

The first grouping of prophets who wrote the Minor Prophets all wrote in the same general time period. They wrote at a time prior to Israel's original captivity. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah—all of those—wrote within the same scope of years. They wrote at a time prior to the captivity of Northern Israel. Those, together with the prophet Isaiah, all prophesied at the same general time period. There was a focus there at the time prior to the captivity of Northern Israel.

Nahum prophesied a little bit later. He prophesied following the captivity of Northern Israel but prior to the rise of Babylon. Nahum prophesied the destruction and judgment that was going to come upon Assyria and the rise of Babylon.

Habakkuk and Zephaniah came down a little closer to the time of the Babylonian captivity and the circumstance prior to Nebuchadnezzar's taking the Jews to Babylon. They both prophesied in that general time period. They prophesied a little bit later than Nahum and prior to the time of the exile.

We have, beginning in 604 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Jerusalem and subsequent reinvasion in 596 B.C. Finally, in 587 B.C., he came in, burned the temple, destroyed the city and took the Jews into captivity to Babylon. They were there for decades.

Then we come to a situation as recorded in the book of Daniel. The city of Babylon in 539 B.C. fell to the Medes and the Persians, almost 70 years after Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Jerusalem (Daniel 5:30-31). This was a period of 50 years after the final destruction of Jerusalem. Now 50 years is a long time. Fifty years ago would take us back prior to the beginning of the American involvement in World War II. A lot of things have happened since then. Some of you remember that event. But probably most sitting here would not remember that event at all. This is what we are looking at because as we come

down about 50 years after the final destruction of Jerusalem, Babylon fell.

The Medes and Persians came in. A short time after, a decree was issued that allowed the return of the Jews from Babylon. They returned under Zerubbabel who was appointed governor by the Persians. Joshua was the high priest. He was the grandson of the previous high priest in Jerusalem prior to the exile. Zerubbabel and Joshua led a remnant out of Babylon back to Jerusalem, and they came back for the purpose of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple. They had permission from the Persian governor to do that. They came back and problems arose.

You can read the account in Ezra 4:1-3 and you will see what happened. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, first came in and proposed that the Samaritans work with the Jews to rebuild the temple. Zerubbabel said, 'They don't have anything to do with this. This doesn't pertain to them; these people are idolaters. We are not going to have them involved in doing the work of God.'

Verses 5-7, when Sanballat and the Samaritans could not get control of the situation by sort of "worming" their way on the inside, they then hired counselors and went before Artaxerxes. "Counselors" is equivalent of our word "lawyers." They hired individuals proficient in the law of the Medes and the Persians who were capable of representing them at the court of the king. They came before the Persian king with all sorts of accusations. It details those accusations in Ezra 4.

You might want to read verse 12 because it shows how you can make something that is harmless sound bad. 'You know, those Jews are building up the walls of that rebellious city and they are building up the foundations of it.' Boy, this sounds bad. That was what they came back for—that should have been no mystery. They were given permission to come back and rebuild the city. How are you going to rebuild the city if you don't rebuild the foundation? They said, 'They are rebuilding the walls and building up the foundations of that rebellious city.'—A little bit of innuendo and accusation to make that sound bad.

Verse 13, they went on to say, 'The only reason we are writing this to you, king, is we really are concerned that you won't get your full payment of taxes. We figure these people are going to rebuild the city and quit paying their taxes. You won't be getting all the money that's due you. And since we are such loyal, patriotic citizens,

we do not want to see a terrible thing like that happen.' Now, don't you know that was really their motive! Isn't it something how people can have all these accusations and impute motives? How did they know that the Jews were going to quit paying taxes when they rebuilt the wall? They didn't know that; it was an accusation.

Verses 23-24, they got an order by the court of the Persian king that ordered work on the city and the temple to cease and desist. He sent down a squad of soldiers and posted the notice that until further notice from the Persians, there was to be no further work. They wanted things stopped. This set the stage for the books of Haggai and Zechariah.

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are called "post-exilic" prophets. That is a fancy way of saying that they wrote their books after the Jews returned from exile to Babylon. They are the last three books of prophecy written for the Old Testament.

I want to read something that I think is a rather remarkable admission. I am reading this from the *Soncino Commentary*—their introduction to the book of Haggai. It is a Jewish commentary. It represents the traditional Jewish understanding of the books of the Old Testament.

"Both Haggai and Zechariah are mentioned in Ezra 5 and 6 as the prime movers in the restoration of the temple. According to Talmudic tradition [The Talmud is a record of Jewish thought.], Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were the founders of the great synagogue. Haggai is quoted in the Talmud in various places. These three [Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi] were the last of the prophets. The Talmud declares that with the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel."

I think that is a rather remarkable admission. And the truth is, it did not reappear again in terms of any written record of God's work until the time of John the Baptist. There was not a direct succession of prophets after that. The Jews themselves recognized in their tradition, after these men died, that was the end of it. That's why there were no other books accepted into the canon because they recognized that God simply no longer worked through them the way He had. There was no longer a succession of prophets. Even though there were many other books written, there were no books after Malachi that was accepted into the canon because even the rabbis understood that the Holy Spirit had departed from Israel and the canon was sealed up.

God raised up John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elijah after an interim of about 400 years—the time between the testaments. I think it is an interesting statement. It's a remarkable admission that they would acknowledge. But, nevertheless, they do.

This evening we are taking note of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. They wrote in the context of the work on the temple having been shut down for over 50 years. When the Persian soldiers came in and served the injunction from the Persian king, that enjoined work on the temple and the city work stopped. People got sidetracked on various other things. They began to get absorbed in building up their own homes and rebuilding their own businesses. Here were people who had left Babylon and had come back to Judea because their heart was in doing the work of God. They got there and trials, obstacles and problems arose. They became discouraged and got sidetracked. They lost the original commitment that they had.

We pick up the story in **Haggai**.

Haggai 1:1, "In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, ..." God raised up Haggai, which we would date approximately 520 B.C. God's word came by Haggai to Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil and religious leaders of the Jews.

Verse 2, "'Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: 'This people says, 'The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.''" People had excuses as to why it wasn't time to rebuild the temple. They had gotten sidetracked and had just never gotten around to really getting back to it.

Verses 3-6, "Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?' Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.'"

Verses 8-10, "'Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,' says the Lord. 'You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?' says the Lord of hosts. 'Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you

runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit.”

The point was the people had their priorities wrong. They were planning on getting around and returning to the work of God, but they were going to do it when it was convenient. They said, ‘Well, you know, we are going to get back to doing it again, but things are “tight” right now and we can’t really afford to do God’s work. But once we get a “handle” and get on top of things, we will get back to it.’ Haggai said ‘You have it backwards. You know, the harder you struggle to get ahead, the further behind you’ve gotten.’

Verse 6 gives a pretty good description of inflation. It described them as earning money to be put in bags with holes in them. Have you ever felt like you were putting your money in a bag and it was going through holes in the bottom? It’s like pouring water through a sieve—it just rolls out. They kept thinking, ‘When I get enough collected in here, I’ll get back to doing what I need to do.’ Well, here is what Haggai told them. He said, ‘You are never going to get ahead this way.’

From Genesis to Revelation, one of the most important principles that always comes out of the Bible is nobody ever really gets ahead by putting God last. It’s a very basic principle; you simply don’t get ahead by putting God last. The Jews, here, needed to understand that principle.

There’s much in the book of Haggai that relates to the work of God. The work of God in the days of Haggai and Zechariah had to do with rebuilding a literal temple—the second temple. It was called Zerubbabel’s temple. It was the temple to which Jesus Christ came when He came to earth. There are many principles that apply very directly to the work of God. There are principles that can be derived as a message for us. **Haggai’s message is not only for us at this point in time right now, but also a message for God’s people through the centuries in terms of what should be our priorities and in terms of finishing the job God has set before us.**

This was a book that many of us (Mr. Herbert Armstrong included) gave very special note to back during the period of 1979, ’80, ’81 and even back during the 70s prior to that. It seemed that there were very many parallels that we encountered in terms of some of the things that are mentioned.

Haggai 2:1, he continues, “In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, ...” —On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Verses 2-3, “Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: “Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?”” The second temple was not nearly as magnificent and impressive as the temple that Solomon built.

Verses 6-9, God goes on to say, “For thus says the Lord of hosts: “Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations [a reference to Jesus Christ], and I will fill this temple with glory,” says the Lord of hosts. “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the Lord of hosts. “The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,” says the Lord of Hosts. “And in this place I will give peace,” says the Lord of hosts.”

People were making a comparison that the temple of Zerubbabel was not nearly as impressive as the temple of Solomon. Haggai said God’s message is, ‘Look, the thing that really is significant is not the silver and the gold—all that belongs to Me anyway—but the Desire of All Nations was going to come and the glory of the latter house was going to be greater than the former.’ In other words, Jesus Christ the Messiah was going to come during the period when the second temple was standing. He would come into the second temple, and as God in the flesh, He certainly brought with Him greater glory than all of the things with which Solomon filled the first temple.

Haggai 1:14, we find as a result of Haggai’s message, “So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God...”

God stirred up the Jews and stirred up their leadership to get back to doing the work. He stirred them up to get their priorities straight and not to wait until it was comfortable to do the work. If you wait until you get ahead, it’s convenient and you have time, you will never get around to it. It’s sort of like waiting until you have time to pray. You notice how you somehow don’t get around to it? You get up and you don’t concentrate on it at the beginning. You think, ‘Well, I’m going to wait until I really have a

convenient time.’ Somehow, things get filled up and it gets hard to find that time. Or you get your check and you think, ‘Well, when I get everything else caught up and finally situated, I am going to start tithing and being diligent with God.’ If you leave God for last, you never find a way to fit Him in. The only place God will fit in is the first place. When God comes in first, He makes every thing else fit. When we leave God out, somehow, there is never enough left for God. So, that’s an important principle.

The people were stirred up to return and to finish the work of God. A lesson was to be learned.

Haggai 2:11-12, “‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying, ‘If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?’” Then the priests answered and said, ‘No.’”

If somebody brought in a sacrifice offering, the priests were carrying it in a garment and if somehow the edge of the garment touched something else, was holiness transmitted to what they touched?

Verses 13-14, “And Haggai said, ‘If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?’ So the priests answered and said, ‘It shall be unclean.’ Then Haggai answered and said [here’s the point], ‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.’”

It was a matter of priorities. Could the people live their lives in any old sinful way, and did the fact that they were coming into contact with the work of God (building the temple and doing God’s work) transmit holiness to them and make it okay regardless of what they were doing?

It’s sort of the premise that you can go out and live like the devil the rest of the week, warm a seat in church on Saturday and somehow be better off for it. Some people have the idea that it doesn’t matter what you do as long as you show up at church. Somehow, it’s like some of God sort of rubs off on you and it’s okay. Well, he lies, steals, fornicates, gets drunk and does this “stuff” all week, but he goes to confession every Sunday morning. He’s a good fellow. It does not work that way.

The point God was making through Haggai was that the people were not to operate under the illusion that they could live any way they wanted to live. Just because they were involved in doing God’s work of building the temple and doing something holy, that did not make up for the

other “stuff” they weren’t doing. It didn’t work that way. Holiness didn’t transmit itself to everything in which it came into contact, but uncleanness did. If they came in and they were unclean, then everything they touched was unclean. The point is that if we are going to do the work of God, we are to be clean.

It ties in with the admonition of one of the other prophets.

Isaiah 52:11, “...be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.”

We can’t think that our involvement in doing the work makes us holy. There have been people who have operated that way in the local Church. They have sort of equated their spirituality with the fact of doing certain works of service. They were spending all the time serving and helping in this or that way and used that as though it made up for a lack of personal prayer, Bible study and personal Christianity in their own lives. Well, it doesn’t work that way. It’s not that the good of what we are doing sort of rubs off and rubs out everything else.

If we are not right and our heart’s not right, it has a contaminating effect. If we are unclean spiritually, then that has a contaminating effect on our service. When there is corruption that exists, just because it exists within the scope of God’s people, God’s Church or God’s work, it doesn’t excuse it nor can you make up for it. In fact, it has a contaminating effect. That’s the point that Haggai brought out here. If the people were really going to do God’s work and have God’s blessing, then they needed to straighten up.

Haggai 2:14, “Then Haggai answered and said, ‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.’” Our sacrifice, our service, is unclean if our attitude and our conduct is not what it ought to be. So, first, God wants *us* more than He wants just simply our money, our time or something we can do. God doesn’t need the things that we can do. We need God. **God can take us and use us if we yield to Him first and foremost. We have that emphasis here in the book of Haggai.**

As we come to the book of Zechariah, we find that he was contemporary with Haggai. In fact, according to Zechariah 1:1, his prophecy begins two months after Haggai begins his prophecy. Zechariah covers a little broader scope of things. Haggai dealt primarily with the work of God and there certainly are prophetic implications for the end time work of God. You can go through

Haggai and notice there are a number of references that tie in clearly to a time beyond simply the rebuilding of the second temple. There are references that deal with the time of the Messiah's coming and events that are connected in that way. Haggai 2:21-22 talks about a time when God shakes the heavens and the earth, overthrows the thrones of kingdoms and does these things, so there certainly are very direct prophetic implications of the message of Haggai applying to the work of God.

But while Zechariah has implications of that, it is a more general prophecy. **It deals with more prophetic subjects.** It is a longer book. **Zechariah opens up with ten visions that are described in the first six chapters.** We want to briefly note these ten visions. In Zechariah, we will see a little bit of what they mean and some things that very directly tie in to the time where we are today. Zechariah was contemporary with Haggai.

Zechariah 1:8, the **first vision** that Zechariah sees, "I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow; and behind him were [three other] horses: red, sorrel, and white."

Zechariah asked the same question you and I would have asked.

Verses 9-12, "Then I said, 'My Lord, what are these?' So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, 'These are the ones whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth.' So they answered the Angel of the Lord, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, 'We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly.' Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, 'O Lord of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years?'"

By that time, it had been a period of almost 70 years since destruction had come there. We have this vision of these four individuals.

Hold your place and go back to Revelation 7. You will find four horsemen are mentioned back there in Revelation 6.

Revelation 7:1-2, "After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels

to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea..." These four angelic beings that are described here tie in with Zechariah.

We find the first vision Zechariah had in chapter 1. When we go to Zechariah 6, he ends up with pretty much the same thing.

Zechariah 6:1-3, "Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled [grizzle or speckled] horses—strong steeds."

Verse 5, "And the angel answered and said to me, 'These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.'"

It talks about the various directions.

Verse 6, "The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country." We have described here four angelic creatures, four angelic beings, which are sent out into the four quarters of the earth, so to speak. They go forth from God's throne and go back and report to Him.

Zechariah's set of ten visions opens with something that is related to that and closes with something that is related to that. We see a reference back in Revelation 7:1 to these four angels standing on the four quarters of the earth. Zechariah opens up with a vision. There is quite a bit of correlation between some of Zechariah and some of Revelation. We will go into greater detail in some of that in a later Bible study when we cover the book of Revelation.

The question comes up as to how much longer God's punishment upon Judah will last.

Zechariah 1:17, the answer is given, "..."The Lord will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem.'""

Verse 18, the **second vision** begins, "Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns." Horns generally symbolize kings or kingdoms. Zechariah wondered what these were.

Verse 19, "And I said to the angel who talked with me, 'What are these?' So he answered me, 'These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.'" These specific four are not cataloged as to what they were, but the Jews have traditionally reckoned them as the four kingdoms that destroyed and scattered Israel and Judah: Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians and Syrians. Those were the empires or kingdoms

that warred against and scattered either Israel or Judah.

Verses 20-21, the **third vision** is, “Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen [KJV, “carpenters”]. And I said, ‘What are these coming to do?’ So he said, ‘These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one could lift up his head; but the craftsmen are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it.’”

These represent those whom God used to restore Judah. There are implications of end-time fulfillment, some of which may not be entirely clear to us because we are not at that particular point. The Jews have traditionally applied the four horns to the four kingdoms that made war against Israel and Judah. And they have often tied in the four carpenters with the Maccabees who led the Macadaean revolt and restored independence by driving out the Syrians who were the successors of the other kingdoms that had warred against Judah. That may have historical application, but I am not persuaded that’s the only application. There is perhaps some end-time fulfillment in it, but there is at least a certain amount of historical correlation of kingdoms that scattered their power and individuals that God used to bring about a restoration.

Zechariah 2:1-2, the **fourth vision** begins, “Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said, ‘Where are you going?’ And he said to me, ‘To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.’”

You can compare that with Revelation 11 and you will see that there is a distinct connection.

Revelation 11:1, “Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.’”

Then it discusses the two witnesses.

Verses 3-4, “‘And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands standing before the God of the earth.’”

Zechariah 2:2, “So I said, ‘Where are you going?’ And he said to me, ‘To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.’”

You can also compare that with Ezekiel 9 where God describes setting a mark as he passed through the city.

Ezekiel 9:4, “...‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a

mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’”

Zechariah 2:4-5, “...‘Run, speak to this young man, saying: ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. For I,’ says the Lord, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’”” Part of the message here is descriptive of the Millennium.

Verse 8, “For thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.’” God says, ‘I will deal with that.’

Verse 9, “‘For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me.’”

Zechariah 3:1, the **fifth vision** is a vision of Joshua the high priest, “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.”

Verse 3, “Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.”

He is described as being cleaned up.

Verses 4-5, “Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him.’ And to him He said, ‘See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.’ And I said, ‘Let them put a clean turban on his head.’ So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by.”

He was representative of the priesthood. He was the religious leader and high priest of the Jews that had been regathered. There is a vision concerning his being cleaned up, forgiven and made clean.

Zechariah 4:2-3, the **sixth vision** is given, “And he said to me, ‘What do you see?’ So I said, ‘I am looking, and there is a lamp stand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.’”

Verse 11, “Then I answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive trees, one at the right of the lamp stand and the other at its left?’”

Verse 14, “So he said, ‘These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.’”

If you tie that in with Revelation 11, you find a picture, a prophetic description which ties in with the two witnesses. Zerubbabel, the governor

of Judah, together with Joshua, the high priest, represented the leadership of God's people at that time. They are used as types of the two witnesses that God will use at the end time. When you go through Zechariah 3 and 4, this is made plain. The point is God works through human instruments.

There are certainly parallels to the way in which God has worked through His servants at one time in history and the way He works through servants at other times. Many of God's servants that He has used in His work in times past, in the things that He has done and the way that God has used them, have served as a type or as a representative of something that God is going to do yet future, particularly at the time of the end.

The reference in verse 9 was a message to Zerubbabel, the governor, who God had used to begin His work of rebuilding the temple. God would use him to finish the job that God had used him to start. Certainly, others came along and continued the work of God, but Zerubbabel was used to finish what he had been used to start.

That principle was a parallel that many of us focused on (and Mr. Herbert Armstrong himself focused on) back at a period in the aftermath of Mr. Herbert Armstrong's heart attack in 1977 and his subsequent restored involvement in the work in the spring of '78. Much of the 70s were in many ways very lean years. Certainly, God used him to finish up the phase of His work that He had used him to begin. That doesn't mean that one particular servant of God lasts forever, but certainly there are parallels. At that particular point in time, Mr. Armstrong said, 'I know how long I will live. I will live as long as God wants me to live and as long as the job that God wants me to do is still there.' That's the case with all of God's servants down through time. God has a particular phase of His work that various individuals may have been used by Him to do.

Here was an encouragement to Zerubbabel to go ahead and finish up the temple and to do the things that God was inspiring Haggai and Zechariah to tell him. God would use him to finish what he had been used to start—that particular phase of God's work. These two leaders of God's work at this particular point in time (the two anointed ones in Zechariah 4:14) are parallels with the two witnesses that are mentioned in Revelation 11.

Zechariah 5:1-2, the **seventh vision** is given, "Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll. And he said to me, 'What do you see?' So I answered, 'I see a flying scroll. Its

length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.'" Here is a scroll floating in the air. Its length is about 30 feet and width about 15 feet.

Verse 3, "Then he said to me, 'This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: "Every thief shall be expelled," according to what is on this side of the scroll; and "Every perjurer shall be expelled," according to what is on that side of it.'"

It is a curse that goes out. The scroll is symbolic of containing this curse that God sends on those who have dealt treacherously with lying and stealing. It has to do with an end-time curse that is going to come about. Actually, it is the end-time curse that is going to come upon Babylon the Great.

Verses 4-5, "'I will send out the curse,' says the Lord of hosts; 'It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name. It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it, with its timber and stones.' Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, 'Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth.'"

Verse 6, the **eighth vision** is, "So I asked, 'What is it [What does it symbolize?]' And he said, 'It is a basket [KJV, "ephah"] that is going forth.' He also said, 'This is their resemblance throughout the earth...'" This was the symbol of the sinners mentioned above who had been involved in lying and stealing. It was something that had economic implications because the symbol is a vessel, an ephah-like vessel, which is a large vessel that would hold about eight gallons. This big vessel that was used to hold or collect grain was a symbol of international commerce. It was a vessel by which grain was traded back and forth. We are told here that there's a curse that goes forth for those involved in lying and stealing.

We are told in the next vision this great eight-gallon measure of grain that was symbolic of international commerce and trade was symbolic of the sinners mentioned above. In other words, those who were involved in lying and stealing and, verse 6, "this is their resemblance throughout the earth."

In Amos 8:5, we read of those who 'make the ephah small and the shekel great'—in other words, economic manipulation, selling less and less for more and more.

We are dealing, right now, with some of the implications of that. We are on the brink of seeing some major financial scandals (that are worldwide in their implications) of banks and trading companies and all sorts of things. I don't

think it is going to unravel in terms of people really realizing where the “buck stops” until it gets to the end.

You read in Revelation 18 of Babylon the Great, the great end-time economic combination. Babylon is an economic combine as well as a religious, military and political combine. The economic implications are emphasized. All the merchants weep and lament or mourn (Revelation 18:11) because of this tremendous commercial endeavor. Even the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-17; 14:11) has economic implications and is tied in with participating in economic activity.

Here is an indictment of those who have manipulated through lying, stealing and manipulating the world’s economy. That ties in with Babylon the Great from the economic standpoint, and there is a curse that is going to come forth. The curse is the destruction of Babylon the Great. If you read Zechariah 5 and then read Revelation 18, it sort of ties in.

Revelation 18:16-18, “and saying, “Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.” And every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, “What is like this great city?”” Everything has gone up in smoke.

Here is the curse that goes forth, and it ties in with this symbol of economic activity.

Zechariah 5:6-7, we are told, “...‘This is their resemblance [of their iniquity] throughout all the earth: here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket’...” They had this vessel that was the symbol of economic activity (this eighth vision), but when he lifted up the weight, instead of it being filled with grain, what’s inside? –A woman. And the woman is the personification of lawlessness (wickedness).

Verse 8, “then he said, ‘This is Wickedness!’ And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth.”

Verse 9, the **ninth vision** is the woman being transported back—removed from Palestine to Shinar—to the bottomless pit. The woman was lifted up in this vessel and transported.

Verses 10-11, “...‘Where are they carrying the basket?’ And he said to me, ‘To build a house for it in the land of Shinar [Babylon]; when it is ready, the basket [ephah, the symbol of such sinners and their guilt] will be set there on its

base.’” The woman who’s actually inside (at the heart and core) you read about in Revelation 17.

Revelation 17:5, “...MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

In Revelation 18, you read about some of the same things, but you read it from a different slant. The emphasis in Revelation 18 is on the economic aspect. Revelation 17 deals more with the religious and, to an extent, military and political aspects. But you see it is one big new world order (to coin a phrase). The phrase is not original on my part, but one that is being handed about. I think some are going to find that this new world order is not exactly what they had in mind. Zechariah described it a long time ago.

Zechariah 6:1, finally, the **tenth vision** is, “Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze.” This is a tie-in with the first vision. It sort of ends up where we started.

Verses 2-5, “With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ And the angel answered and said to me, ‘These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.’” It describes that.

Verse 12-13, “Then speak to him, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: ‘Behold, the Man [Christ] whose name is the BRANCH [In my Bible that’s all capitalized and probably is in yours, too.!] From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord; yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.’”” He’s talking about the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Coming down a little further, Zechariah 8 describes a little bit of insight into Jerusalem during the Millennium.

Zechariah 8:3-6, “Thus says the Lord: “I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the Lord of hosts, the Holy Mountain.” Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in

his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.” Thus says the Lord of hosts: “If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes?” says the Lord of hosts.”

God says that time is going to come, the time of restoration (Acts 3:21).

Jerusalem is not yet a place that’s safe for little children to be out playing and for old men and women to be able to walk down the street. You have terrorism going on. Certainly, this is descriptive of no city I know. Now, you’d better be off the streets or you would get run over, knocked in the head, mugged or something.

It’s descriptive of what it’s going to be like. Streets are going to be a safe place. Children are going to be able to play; elderly people will be able to walk not having to fear being molested, attacked, robbed or in any way dealt with in that way.

Verses 7-8, God talks about regathering His people.

Verse 13, ““And it shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel [there is a distinction], so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hands be strong.””

Verse 23, ““Thus says the Lord of hosts: “In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”” People are going to want to learn God’s truth. They are not going to be prejudiced against the Jews or anybody else at that time. In fact, they are going to want to learn God’s ways and will be seeking out God’s people.

Zechariah 9:9, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” We find the fulfillment of this prophecy back in the New Testament. Matthew 21:4-11 is Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

It talks about God saving His people.

Zechariah 10:3, ““My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds. For the Lord of hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them as His royal horse in the battle.””

Verse 6, ““I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They

shall be as though I had not cast them aside; for I am the Lord their God, and I will hear them.”” Again, there is the distinction between Israel and Judah.

Verses 9-10, ““I will sow them among the peoples, and they shall remember Me in far countries; they shall live, together with their children, and they shall return. I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, until no more room is found for them.””

Zechariah 11:7 is a description of two staffs that are called Beauty and Bands, “So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bonds [KJV, “Bands”]; and I fed the flock.”

These are symbolic references with what God is going to do. The reference has to do with the covenant that God has made. The staff that is called “Bands” (or Union) had to do with covenants that God had made and God’s working with His people. We find the reference having to do with shepherds. “I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staffs: the one called Beauty, and the other called Bonds [or Bands], and I fed the flock.”

Verses 10-13, “And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples. So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the Lord. Then I said to them, ‘If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.’ So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.”

This first staff has to do with Jesus Christ and His betrayal by Judas Iscariot. The second one, verse 14, has to do with the national covenant that God made with Israel and Judah and breaking the band of brotherhood between Judah and Israel. One has to do with the spiritual aspect and the other with the physical aspect of God’s covenant with His people. It has to do with the sacrifice of the Messiah, His betrayal and then also the captivity of Israel and Judah.

As we come down into chapter 12, we get into some things that really tie in with the headlines in today’s newspapers.

Zechariah 12:2-3, “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness [KJV, “trembling”] to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy [KJV, “burdensome”] stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.”

He talks about Jerusalem becoming a cup of trembling (or a cup of poison) and a burdensome stone for all people. Everybody who gets tangled up with it is going to get cut. This has been the case since God has been regathering Judah to Jerusalem.

Verse 5, he talks about the governors of Judah. They’re the ones who have been gathered to Jerusalem.

What are we having right now? The focus of things in the Middle East has to do with Jerusalem. They are talking about getting together and negotiating in the Middle East. Well, the real issue, and the issue that is not going to be resolved, is the issue of Jerusalem. The Jews told the Arabs, ‘We will sit down and talk with you. We will meet, but nobody in your delegation can have been born in Jerusalem.’ You know why they said that? They wanted nobody there that could even begin to remotely say, ‘We have a claim; I’m from there. I was born there.’ The Jews say, ‘We are not even going to talk to any Arabs that were born in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is ours and there is nothing to even negotiate about. We will discuss with you some of these other things.’

That is not going to be satisfactory. But anybody who has followed the situation knows that is one issue that is simply not negotiable.

Verse 6, “In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a fire-pan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem.” That’s pretty descriptive of what’s been going on over there since 1948.

KJV, “...the governors of Judah have been like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf;” Have you ever seen a stubble field burn? It goes pretty fast. That’s the way most of those wars have been over there. The governors of Judah have been like somebody set fire to the stubble. Poof, it’s gone! That’s very descriptive of the six-day war back in 1967 that saw the recapture of Jerusalem—after almost 1,900 years of Jewish exile from

Jerusalem, their recapture of the old city. Anybody who saw on television the filmed reports of the first Jewish soldiers to pour into the old city and to reach the wailing wall knows there’s no way in the world they will ever, ever, ever voluntarily turn loose of it. For 1,900 years, they would close every Passover service with the prayer, “next year in Jerusalem.” They didn’t do that for all those centuries simply to turn around and give it away. God talked about the fact that Judah was going to be regathered there in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12 is descriptive of the end time. The events that have occurred over there had to occur because there was a time period when there weren’t Jews in Jerusalem. The Jews didn’t control Jerusalem. Zechariah 12 describes the time when they do.

Verse 7 talks about when Christ returns, how He will save the tents of Judah first.

Verse 9 is how He will deal with the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12:10, “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” There will be great mourning in Jerusalem when Jesus Christ returns to intervene and save.

Of course, at that time, all nations will have been gathered to Jerusalem. He will destroy the armies there in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and save the people. At that point, the scales are going to fall from their eyes.

He says, ‘I am going to pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication.’ Then He is going to begin to deal with them spiritually, and they are going to come to repentance. They are going to look upon Him whom they have pierced—the One for whom centuries earlier they yelled, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him, His blood be upon us and upon our children forever’ (Mark 15:13-14; Matthew 27:25). They are then going to mourn and grieve and deeply repent. They are going to realize that their Messiah had come centuries earlier only to be rejected and crucified. But this time they are going to understand! Then God is going to begin to deal with them.

Zechariah 13:1 talks about cleaning away the sin and the uncleanness.

Zechariah 13:4, “And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision

when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive.”

Verse 5 is a little bit funny. It talks about the false prophets and how they are going to be ashamed, ““But he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.’”” In that time, nobody is going to want to claim or admit, ‘Oh, yeah, I used to be a priest or a preacher; I used to be on television.’ No, you are not going to get them to admit it. ‘No, I’m a farmer. That’s all I am. I am not a prophet. I’m nothing but a farmer.’ They are not going to want to admit to the fact that they deceived people for years. They will be doing something constructive for a change.

Zechariah 14:1-2, “Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.” The issue involves half the city, the old city. That’s what they are fighting about. There is going to be a multinational force that will ultimately come against Jerusalem.

Verses 3-5, but when that occurs, “Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You.”

Verses 8-9, “And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—‘The Lord is one,’ and His name one.”

Verse 11, “The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.” That’s certainly not true now, but it will be true in the Millennium.

Verse 16, “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to

year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.”

Verses 17-19, if anybody doesn’t want to keep the Feast, God’s going to convince them, and they are going to want to do it. There is a description that certainly shows the Feast will be kept in the Millennium. God’s festivals are going to be observed. The Feast of Tabernacles is clearly a time that looks forward to the time when Christ is going to rule over all the earth.

Malachi was written a little later than Haggai and Zechariah. He was a much younger contemporary of Haggai and Zechariah. He would have been contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. Haggai and Zechariah were evidently young men as prophets. Malachi came along perhaps 40-50 years after Haggai and Zechariah had begun their prophecy. Tradition retains record that they were contemporary, so we would conclude from that that they must have been fairly young at the time.

It’s just the same as we have those who were around and in various positions in World War II. Now we are at a later point and some of those people are still in prominent positions—President Bush was in the military service during World War II. It is not impossible to have an overlap where you can have a separation of 40-50 years.

Malachi comes along contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. There was sort of a lull after the completion of the temple. We really don’t read anything else of what transpired. We pick up the story later in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra. You will find that if you read through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and notice the chronology carefully.

When we pick up the story again, we find that attraction to the world around had sort of sapped the spiritual strength and fervor of the people of God.

Ezra and Nehemiah were together with Malachi. Nehemiah was the governor; Ezra was the priest. Malachi was the prophet. God raised them up to restore His work. Malachi represents sort of a concluding or a summing up in terms of the prophets. The work that God did, you can tie in a great deal of it to sort of the aftermath of some of the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. There certainly are things that we can glean from it.

“Malachi” means “my messenger.” **It has to do with the return of Jesus Christ and preparing the way for that.**

The book of Malachi opens up in chapter 1 by **focusing in on the sovereignty of God.** God chooses. He elects and makes choices. He indicts

the priesthood for showing disrespect for God by treating God's service casually and carelessly, by not being strict in their obedience to God and by having a casual, careless attitude that shows a lack of respect for God—an attitude of people who are not zealous for God and for not doing things exactly the way God says.

Malachi 2:1-2, “And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,” says the Lord of hosts, ‘I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart.’”

He describes the responsibility of the priesthood. Verses 6-7, “The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” That's the job of God's ministry, and it was the job of the priesthood anciently. They should be a source of the knowledge of God's way. They should teach the people God's law and should be God's messenger.

The priesthood of Judah was indicted.

Verses 8-9, “But you have departed from the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” says the Lord of hosts. ‘Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways but have shown partiality in the law.’” They have dealt treacherously, have compromised and have not been as they ought.

Verse 11, “Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the Lord's holy institution which He loves: he has married the daughter of a foreign god.” God is going to deal with that.

Verse 14, “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”

Verse 16, “For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce,” There had developed sort of a compromising, carnal attitude of trying to elevate self-will far above God's will.

Verse 17, “You have wearied the Lord with your words; yet you say, ‘In what way have we wearied Him?’ In that you say, ‘Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and

He delights in them,’ or, ‘Where is the God of justice?’” ‘You have made excuses for those who do evil. You feel like God is way off somewhere and you don't have to worry about Him.’

Malachi 3:1, “Behold, I send My messenger [John the Baptist], and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts.” John the Baptist came as a messenger.

You can go to Mark 1:1-14 and Luke 1:13-17.

Mark 1:3, “...‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His path straight.’”

Christ came as the messenger of the covenant. Malachi 3:2-3, He came as the messenger of the covenant and He is going to come back to complete the New Covenant and to refine, purge and to come to judgment.

Malachi 3:5, “And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and the fatherless, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me,” says the Lord of hosts.”

The term “sorcerers” is used two or three other places. There are several different words that are used in the Hebrew language referring to sorcerers and magicians. This particular word is not really a word that means “magician” in that sense. It comes from a root word in the Hebrew that means, literally, “to shred,” as in one who shreds drugs into a potion. The quote from the Hebrew Lexicon on this is sort of interesting. If you are looking in terms of ‘Christ coming back for judgment and to be a swift witness,’ and to deal with the problems of society, who's He coming back to deal with? Is the worse thing going on some little tiny obscure thing where somebody is practicing and muttering incantations somewhere?

One of the most pervasive problems that exists on the face of the earth right now is the problem with drugs—the international drug trade and all of the tragedy that occurs. Well, He says (in modern parlance), ‘I am going near you to judgment and I am going to be a swift witness against the drug dealers.’ That's what this term means. And He'll be swift against the adulterers. God says, ‘I am going to deal with those who have been involved with the drug trade. I am going to deal with immorality and its consequences. I will deal against false swearers and against those who have, through various means, taken advantage of and oppressed

through manipulation and all sorts of legal subterfuge, those who are least able to defend themselves—the wage earners, the widows and the fatherless.’

Who does some of the economic manipulation (the major bank failures, etc.) hurt the most? The wage earner, people on fixed incomes and the elderly are the ones hurting.

The point that God is making is that Christ comes back for judgment, and there are going to be some people who are going to have to give some answers. They are going to be called into account. Do you think that with all of the drug trade, pornography, the economic manipulation and mistreatment and taking advantage of people, there’s going to be no calling into account for that? You better believe it! There’s going to be a reordering of society and there are going to be some things that are going to have to be dealt with. When you go through and understand what’s being indicted here, it has to do with the way God views the major areas of problems in the end time and the major segments of society that are going to have to be confronted—everything from all of these various things.

Verse 6, “‘For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.’” God says, ‘I am consistent. That’s why you’re still here.’

Verse 8, “‘Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, “In what way have we robbed You?” In tithes and offerings.’” It discusses the subject of tithing. The place to start is to put God first and God will take care of things.

He indicts an attitude about those who may go through the motions of serving God, but they do it in a bad attitude and are envious of what the world gets by with.

Verses 14-15, “‘You have said, “It is vain to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; yes, those who tempt God go free.’”

People may go through the motions of serving God, but their attitudes stink. They sort of look enviously at what the world gets by with and say, ‘Boy, I wish I weren’t in the Church. Boy, I could really make some money. I could really do this or that.’ God says, ‘Fine, you are going to have to give an account because God takes that sort of an attitude personally.’

Verse 13, He says, “‘Your words have been harsh against Me,’ says the Lord, ‘yet you say, “What have we spoken against You?”’” Frankly, this is an attitude of people who are going to go through the tribulation.

Verse 16, on the other hand, talks about a book of remembrance being written for those who feared the Lord and meditated upon His name.

Verse 17, “‘They shall be Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘on the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.’” It is clearly a distinction between those who serve God half-heartedly and in a bad attitude and those whose hearts are really in it.

Verse 18, God is going to return and discern between the righteous and the wicked.

Malachi 4:1 is proof that the hellfire of the Bible is not the hellfire of Protestantism and Catholicism. It is not an ever-burning hellfire that people are going to be tortured in forever. It is a hellfire that is going to burn up the wicked and leave them neither root nor branch.

Malachi 4:3, “‘You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,’ says the Lord of hosts.” It talks about destruction, about burning up.

Verse 4, then it ends up, “‘Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.’” The last thing the prophets tell us is to remember the law. People read their Bible straight through and the last thing they read in the Old Testament is “remember the law of Moses.” They turn the page and promptly think they are supposed to forget the Law of Moses. Makes a lot of sense, doesn’t it?

Why is it that the last thing God says is to remember the Law of Moses and all the statutes and judgments, and people then turn the page and say, ‘I’m sure glad we can forget all of that’? Isn’t it interesting! The Old Testament ends up with the admonition, “remember the Law of Moses My servant”; the New Testament opens up with, in Matthew 5, the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:17, “‘Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.’” So, people immediately forget the Law of Moses and think that Christ came to destroy it. He ends up by saying “remember” and starts off by saying He didn’t come to destroy any of what went before. People get all “balled up.” How plain does God have to get?

You and I read that and it is very simple. How many hundreds and thousands of scholars have gone through and debated the Hebrew of Malachi and the Greek of Matthew and never got the point—didn't keep the Sabbath, didn't keep the Holy Days, didn't do any of these things. They never got the point! So, remember the Law of Moses.

Verses 5-6, he ends up saying, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse [with utter destruction].”

Now, clearly, John the Baptist came, as Luke 1:17 shows, in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the first coming of Christ (Matthew 3:1-3). Christ is coming again, and if it was necessary that there be a forerunner to prepare the way for the first coming, certainly there is to be a forerunner to prepare the way for the second coming.

That, of course, is why God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong. This work, of which we are a part, represents a continuation of the work that God raised up through Mr. Herbert Armstrong, going back to the 1930s. He raised up this end-time work through him and used him as one who was to restore the knowledge of the true religion in Israel—just as Elijah and John the Baptist did.

We end up here in Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. We end up with books that were written after the exile—**books that focused in on the importance of doing the work and reviving the work that God was doing through His people.**

There are many lessons and parallels that are applicable for God's people throughout all ages, and particularly here in the end time, as we look toward the culmination and completion of the great plan that God is working out.

Next Bible study we will begin a new series on the Writings, the third division of the Old Testament.