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MINOR
PROPHETS

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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

THE
MINOR PROPHETS

The Prophets of the Decline

Obadiah — Joel — Jonah
Amos — Hosea

by

Paul T. Butler

College Press, Joplin, Missouri

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PREFACE

For a number of years we have longed to put in book form certain special studies we have made in the Old Testament Prophets together with ten years or more of classroom exegesis. We are persuaded this book will serve the purpose of God to men of honest and sincere hearts who really want to know His will as expressed in the Prophets.

Our purpose is best expressed in the following words of John P. Milton in his book, "*Prophecy Interpreted*," when he says:

"Since this is an age of fear it is not strange that there should be an increased interest in prophecy. We might call it an interest in eschatology, which has been defined as the doctrine of the last or final things . . .

"But all too often the emphasis in the study of prophecy is such as to increase rather than to allay fear. There are preachers and students of prophecy who seem to delight in playing on the fears and anxieties of people. They magnify the threat to peace and say little of 'the things that make for peace.' They are much concerned to identify men and nations and events today in terms of some specific Biblical prophecy. They focus attention on 'antichrists' rather than on Christ; and they seem more concerned to prove what prophecy says about Russia, or about Israel, than to proclaim what it says about the kingdom of God . . .

"There is in this wrong use of prophecy a mistaken emphasis and a faulty exegesis. The emphasis is wrong because attention is focused primarily on transient events instead of on the redemptive activity of the living God. The exegesis is wrong because it does not understand the fundamental nature and purpose of prophecy, and therefore ignores basic evangelical principles of interpretation."

Studying the Minor Prophets will be a MAJOR experience for you! Your soul will soar to the highest heights of praise man is capable of composing. Your heart will revel in the revelation of God's love and faithfulness. You will tremble when you come face to face with the Righteous Lord's judgment upon sin.

The message of the "minor" prophets is as relevant as this morning's newspaper. The basic issues of life today are the same as they were then—social injustice, lying, killing, stealing, adultery, trusting in material prosperity or military might instead of God. The prophets

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speak to these issues as though they were among us today. God and His purpose is the final arbiter of history—not politics or economics. The message of the prophets will never be out of date.

But even more important, you must understand the prophets in order to understand what God has done in Christ Jesus. "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). You will read of Jonah whose humiliating experience in the belly of the great fish typified the humiliation of the Messiah; you will read Joel whose prophecy of the Holy Spirit foretold the establishment of the church on Pentecost; you will read Amos whose "rebuilt dynasty of David" was fulfilled when Gentiles were received into the church; you will read Hosea whose prophecies are quoted by Peter, Paul and Matthew, and applied to redemption in Christ.

You will know what the apostle Peter meant when he said: "we have the prophetic word made *more sure*. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." (II Pet. 1:19)

We shall be forever grateful to Editor, Don DeWalt, and his College Press for presenting us the opportunity to have this work published. We are also deeply indebted to a very capable and dedicated secretary, Mrs. Charlene Schell, for clerical assistance on the manuscript as well as fulfilling other duties of our's as Registrar of Ozark Bible College, leaving us free to devote extra time to this work. Our sincerest appreciation to the many authors and publishers who have given permission to borrow from their labors.

May your heart be filled with abundant peace and joy and your faith in your Heavenly Father be strengthened by your study of His Word through the agency of this commentary.

INTRODUCTION

Prophet and Prophecy: A *prophet* (*Nabi* in Hebrew), (*prophetes* in Greek), means literally, "one who speaks for another." A prophet is one who utters the words that another has put into his mouth. *Prophecy*, his communications, may have reference to the past, to the present, or to the future and may also extend to absolute and universal truth as well as to specific events and persons. A prophet is not so much a foreteller as he is a "forth-teller." In Hebrews 1:1, the writer informs us: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." In times past the voice of God spoke through the prophets. Now God is still speaking, but He does it through His Son. That word *spake*, according to one excellent Greek scholar is the word from which we get our English word, "lullaby." Of course, God was not talking in the past in our ordinary sense of lullaby, but a deep profound sense of the word everything that God has said to restless, feverish, crying, agonizing humanity is a great lullaby!

Minor Prophets: The books commonly called "Minor" Prophets, are in no way minor. They are not in the least inferior in their degree of inspiration, authority, reliability or in the importance of what they have to say! The entire Old Testament revelation would be tragically incomplete without, for example, the book of Malachi, or the book of Hosea, or Joel, or any of the other "minor" prophets. There would be enigmas in the New Testament without them. Yes, God spake unto the fathers through the prophets in many sections and on many topics. But remember, no one prophet had the completed perfected, revelation of God. Even a cursory glance over these wonderful writings will reveal how marvelous are the subjects dealt with, and many sections provided; and when we finish Malachi we can say, "Now we need The Prophet."

The Jews had two classes of prophetic books. One was called "the earlier prophets" which might be characterized as "prophetic historical books." Included in this first class were the books of Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, and I and II Kings. The second class of books called "the later prophets" might be characterized as "prophetic predictive books." Included in this second class were two other classes; "greater prophets," namely Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; "lesser prophets," namely Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Malachi. The "later prophets" were also referred to by the Jews as, "The Book of The Twelve," and were con-

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sidered as *one* book by the Jews for they regulated the number of the books in the Hebrew Scriptures by that of the Hebrew alphabet, which consists of twenty-two letters.

All these books were received into the Hebrew Canon as possessing divine authority and are found in all the ancient catalogues. Josephus (a Jewish historian of the 1st century A.D.) confirms the canon of the O.T. exactly as we have it today. The Council of Jamnia (about 90 A.D.), a council of Jewish rabbis who met to confirm the canon of the O.T., establishes the canon of the O.T. in the first century the same as it is today. We would like to discuss at more length the canon, inspiration, and textual integrity of the Old Testament, but that is a separate study which would require a large volume in itself. Each of the five Minor Prophets dealt with in this volume has its own Introduction at the beginning. For additional technical information we suggest reference to either "An Introduction to The Old Testament," by Edward J. Young, pub. by Eerdmans; or "A Survey of Old Testament Introduction," by Gleason Archer, pub. by Moody Press.

Minor Prophets and The Dead Sea Scrolls: Perhaps this will be valuable information which, so far as we have found, is not contained in any of the older, conservative commentaries on the Minor Prophets listed in our bibliography. So far, eight manuscripts have been found (in cave 4Q) of the "Book of The Twelve," or the Minor Prophets. 4Qx11C indicates Hosea, Joel, Amos, Zephaniah, and Malachi, 4Qx11D Hosea, 4Qx11E Zechariah, and 4Qx11F Jonah in the contents. Cross says: "None is complete. We cannot always be sure that all twelve Minor Prophets were copied on a given scroll." Portions of Micah, Jonah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Zechariah, in Greek, were among the fragments brought to light by the Bedouin shepherd-boy in August, 1962, but their provenance is unknown. Of the 382 manuscripts represented by the fragments of cave 4Q, about 100 are Biblical manuscripts. Every book of the Hebrew Bible, with the exception of Esther, is represented.

Not only is the integrity of the text of the Old Testament well authenticated, its historical accuracy is also confirmed in many and various ways. We have included here a small listing of the Kings of both the chosen people and heathen nations most of whom are contemporaneous with the period of history during which the Literary Prophets wrote. All these kings are confirmed by archaeological inscriptions.

DEDICATED TO
The
TRUSTEES
ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY and STAFF
and
STUDENTS
of
OZARK BIBLE COLLEGE
whose christian faith and love have made teaching and
writing a pleasure and a privilege
and to the
PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

whose lives best express the poem below written by
my Mother

"MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE."

My way seemed so long and dreary
My burdens were so hard to bear;
I said, "Dear Lord, please have mercy,"
But no answer came to my prayer.
I bowed my head in self-pity
Crying, "Lord, don't you care about me?"
And then I did hear Him answer:
"My grace is sufficient for thee!"

Oh God, forgive my murmuring;
I lost sight of your cruel cross.
My eyes were blind to *your* suffering,
Your stripes, humiliation, and loss.
Now that my eyes have been opened,
Give me courage instead of release;
Let me hear again your whisper,
"My grace is sufficient for thee!"

And when I come to cross Jordan,
I know you'll be there with a smile,
My hand you'll hold in Your pierced one,
Travelling the last weary mile.
We'll go through the gates of splendor,
My great God I at last shall see,
He will say, "My child, I told you,
My grace is sufficient for thee."

by Lois Butler

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MINOR PROPHETS

SPECIAL STUDY ONE

THE LITERARY GRANDEUR OF THE O.T. PROPHETS

by Janet McFarland

The prophet was a forth-teller, or interpreter, of the mind and will of God in reference to the past, the present, and future. Some names of prophets are *seer* (one who looks beyond carnal things to spiritual things), *Ish Haruach* (man of spirit or an inspired one), *man of God, servant of God, and shepherd or watchman*.

Zephaniah, Daniel, and Isaiah were of royal blood; Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Zechariah were of priestly rank; Amos was of the peasant class, and Hosea was of the middle class. The literary method of impartation of truth used by each of these men shows individuality. Their writings show evidences of heredity, environment, and training. These differences show in the patrician sublimity of style and majesty of thought of Isaiah, the sad spirit and general social atmosphere of Hosea, and the hatred of sham and an atmosphere of the trees and streams found in Amos.

There was one thing that made these men of varied gifts and backgrounds alike: It was the call of God to be his spokesmen:

and the Lord took me from following the flock,
and the Lord said to me, "Go, prophesy to my
people Israel."

Amos 7:15

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,
"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Jeremiah 1:4,5

The first two chapters of Ezekiel and the sixth chapter of Isaiah tell how God called them. This is where they received their inspiration and authority. It is why they prefaced their messages with "Thus saith the Lord."

The book of *Isaiah* is the *prime example of the literary power of the Old Testament prophets*. *Unity of design, structure, and spirit* is one of the *necessary qualities of good literature*. The unity of style in the book of *Isaiah* is shown in the use of poetic embellishments. In chapters 9:8 to 10:4 there is a poem of four strophes, and each of these beautifully organized strophes is followed by the musical refrain

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"For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." The same poetic mind is shown in the well-planned ode of chapter 49. There are some differences of style but not any more than would be expected from an author dealing with varying moods or different thoughts. The first poem is a song of sin and the second is a song of salvation, but in both the voice is the voice of Isaiah.

The literary *unity* and *organic wholeness* of Isaiah's prophecies are seen in the part of his work which is about the future. In chapters 24 to 27 there is a picture in the foreground in which there are blackness, darkness, and tempest. These are symbols of Jehovah's wrath that will be poured out without mixture upon an ungodly world. However in the background of that picture, above the clouds and breaking through, there are streaks of light which are messengers announcing to Israel the dawn of a brighter day of clear resplendent with heavenly light.

Among the book's other literary qualities is Isaiah's fine ability in *description*. The record of his call to service is unsurpassed in the sublime and beautifully poetic way it describes how God, His throne, and His angels look.

Isaiah's style is described by Dr. Robinson of Chicago as having *no superior or even a rival in versatility of expression and brilliancy of imagery*. Dr. Dillman, the noted German critic, asserts that *every word from Isaiah stirs and strikes the mark*. This is illustrated by Isaiah 32:1,2.

Behold, a king will reign in righteousness,
and princes will rule in justice.
Each will be like a hiding-place from the wind,
a covert from the tempest,
like streams of water in a dry place,
like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.

Isaiah's *vocabulary*, though not extensive, is selective and characterized by universality of taste in the sources from which he got his words. A list of words and phrases taken at random show this. Though the prophet had a keen eye for the moral significance of events he was also interested in natural facts. The list includes: sand of the sea, stem of a tree, well of water, bird's nest, ox, wilderness rock, gold of Ophir, garden of cucumbers, plumb line, plow, bruised grain, threshing machine, overflowing stream, falling tower, devouring fire, tempest, hailstones, tabrets and harps, silver, horses, camels, lions, fruit, wilderness, locusts, lambs, goats, vines, fig trees, and mountains. All these words and others he places in well-ordered surroundings.

LITERARY GRANDEUR

The prophecy of Isaiah is made rich by an unusual *literary eloquence*. Isaiah was not an orator in the Greek sense. The eloquence of the prophet consists in the psychic power of the message, a power that makes the reader feel that the writer has put himself completely into his writing. The reader is convinced of an unexpressed and reserve power which distinguishes the man of eloquence from the man who is only a public speaker. From the beginning of his book to the end there is sustained power. There is no lowering of the grand, sublime style.

In all the prophetic writings there are certain qualities that make for good literature. Isaiah's book gives evidence of wide knowledge not only of Palestine but of the nations around it. All of the other prophets show knowledge in proportion to the major or minor nature of their works.

Imagination of a high order is also found in the prophetic writings. The strong glow of this creative faculty of the soul adds beauty. Isaiah takes some of the facts of an external nature and paints a picture of the wilderness transformed.

The imagination which produced this picture was powerfully influenced by environment, for the idea is borrowed from the topography of the country. He drew from the country the facts which his imagination needed.

Isaiah along with the writers of Hebrew poetry saw nature as the garment of deity. Through the world around him he saw God as though looking from an open window. All visible things were but a mist between them and the Invisible a rushing stream flowing from his hand. So Isaiah writes, "Break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest and every tree therein." In this way nature is regarded as a transparent medium which is consumed in the vision of deity and rolled away like a curtain. The glory of the visible world with its perfect balance and harmony is dwelled on and broadened so that a sense of the power and beauty of God is impressed on the reader.

The same author goes beyond the facts of nature and sees through to the place of the King who sits in the heavens. This is the poetry of the throne of God around which is a "rainbow . . . in sight like unto an emerald." This poet's patrician imagination lifts our thoughts from an earthly throne in the old Jerusalem to the heavenly throne in the New Jerusalem.

Optimism is another quality of the literature of the prophets. They believed that they could justify the ways of God to men. Their song was of sin, but it was also of salvation. They sang of the blackest sin of Israel and Judah, and they sang of the way out. They lifted their

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eyes to the hills to look for the first sunlight of the coming golden age. The Sun of Righteousness was already shining in their prophetic souls. "Arise shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee," Isaiah wrote. Isaiah was the most optimistic of the prophets. This may be due to the fact that he has the most complete view of the world and of the hand of God in history.

Linked with optimism is *emotionalism*. When the prophets express a belief in the ultimate triumph and glory of the Kingdom of God their belief goes out from them with a psychic power that stirs the souls of their readers. This psychic power is unique because it intensifies thought and makes it the literature of power.

This shows in Isaiah description of the majesty of God.

Have you not known? Have you not
heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary,
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might he increaseth strength.
Even youths shall faint and be weary,
and young men shall fall exhausted;
but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:28-31

It is also demonstrated in Habakkuk's picture of the majesty of God.

God came from Teman,
and the Holy One from Mount Paran.
His glory covered the heavens,
and the earth was full of his praise.

Selah

His brightness was like the light,
rays flashed from his hand;
and there he veiled his power.
Before him went pestilence,
and plague followed close behind.

LITERARY GRANDEUR

He stood and measured the earth;
He looked and shook the nations;
then the eternal mountains were scattered,
the everlasting hills sank low.
His ways were as of old.

Habakkuk 3:3-6

When the Prophet Joel describes the on-coming of God's terrible judgments he becomes a tongue of poetic fire:

The earth quakes before them
the heavens tremble.
The sun and the moon are darkened,
and the stars withdraw their shining.
The Lord utters his voice
before his army,
for his host is exceedingly great;
he that executes his word is powerful.
For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible;
who can endure it?

Joel 2:10,11

Another quality in the literature of prophecy is *spirituality* which is the expression of the fellowship which man holds with his Maker. This fellowship the inspired writers held with Jehovah. He was the point of departure and return in all their thinking. Ezekiel is so conscious of this intimacy with God that he says, "The word of Jehovah came unto me, saying," thirty-eight times and "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah," several times.

Isaiah speaks of the source of his authority by saying, "Thus saith the Lord." Jeremiah uses, "The word of Jehovah came unto me, saying," and "The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying." All the prophets claim that their messages are God-breathed.

In the prophetic writings this spirituality is expressed in the author's belief in a personal God whose throne is in heaven, whose footstool is the earth and whose character is both Justice and Love.

The quality of spirituality in the writings of the prophets also appears in the belief in man's spiritual possibilities. Their chief aim is to bring Israel into spiritual fellowship with Jehovah and to promote this fellowship.

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Prophecy in one of its aspects may be described as the philosophy of history in the form of a drama. As one mode of conveying their conceptions the prophets display the incidents before our imagination working toward their goal with the realistic clearness of drama. When examined such prophetic compositions are found to go beyond the machinery of dramatic literature. They borrow from all other literary departments special modes of treatment and blend them together into the most highly wrought and spiritual of literary forms which is called the rhapsody. Chapters 44 to 66 in Isaiah is a rhapsody of Zion redeemed.

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SPECIAL STUDY TWO INTERPRETING THE PROPHETS

Compiled and Edited by:
Paul T. Butler

Prophetic writings constitute a very unique and important type of literature. Included in the canon of the Old Testament are seventeen books of prophecy. Five major books are separated because of their greater length, Isaiah being first and foremost. The shorter books compose the Jewish "Book of the Twelve", or the minor prophets. Any thorough study of God's word must make room for an examination of these books.

INTERPRETING THE PROPHETS

The Old Testament prophets are dynamic figures who present colorful pictures and tremendous challenges. There has been a gross misunderstanding and misuse of this section of the Bible. An age of fear has produced a mass tension, which is easy prey for sensationalists who would warp the word to satisfy human curiosity. With reckless disregard of proper interpretation, men have made a tawdry display of determining "times and seasons".

A correct exegesis (or leading out) of the text of the prophets can be invaluable to the Christian. The New Testament writers quoted profusely from them for evidential purposes. They were also used to illustrate, emphasize and explain the nature and mission of both the kingdom and the messiah. Our understanding of this New Testament usage will deepen with our understanding of the prophets. "For what was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4) "And no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." (II Peter 1:21)

There is also a widening of our horizons, so to speak, as we grasp a great sweep of human history and understand God's eternal purposes through the ages. There is a devotional quality developed as we yield to the joy of the kingdom so beautifully expressed in these writings. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isaiah 26:3)

A prophet, says the dictionary, is one who speaks for another, especially for God. A secondary definition describes him as a seer who foretells future events. It is only within relatively recent times that Christians have realized that the major truth of the Old Testament prophecies is to be sought in the first rather than the second of these definitions. The prophets, however, become a perpetual storehouse of treasure as we see the certainty of judgment on sin, the holiness of God, and a history of His chosen people often left unlearned.

There are certain basic axioms of interpretation to follow when interpreting any literary work. The only reason for the existence of the office of prophet was that of *communicating* God's will to man in man's language. The act of communicating is dependent upon both the *scientific* recording of historical and didactical prose and the artistic creation of figurative and symbolical poetry. There are certain basic axioms which must be followed in all literature, whether prose or poetry or both, because all literature seeks, in one way or another, to communicate. There are at least ten basic axioms to interpreting the Bible.

MINOR PROPHETS

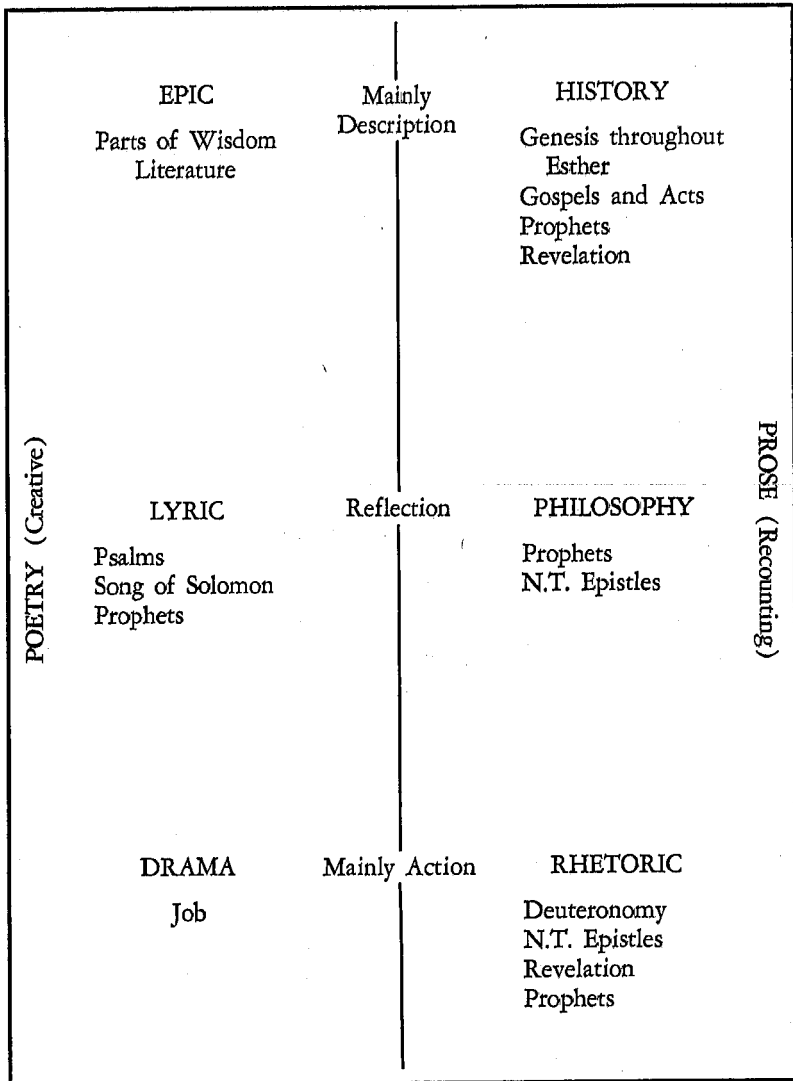
TEN BASIC AXIOMS TO INTERPRETATION

1. The true object of speech is the impartation of thought
2. Language is a reliable medium of communication
3. Usage determines the meaning of words
4. Two writers do not independently express thought alike
5. Every writer is influenced by his environment
6. An author's purpose determines the character of his production
7. We must use both reason and intelligence to understand what God said
8. The true interpretation is what the author intended to say; God's Word has *one intended meaning*, not many conflicting ones
9. The language of the Bible is the language of men, even when it is used to express divine truth, and is to be interpreted by the same methods and principles as are appropriate for any other message of similar literary nature.
10. When any Bible passage is used for any other meaning than what the author intended to express by it, it is not what the inspired writer had in mind; therefore, such meaning read into it does not have the authority of the scripture.
 1. There are four cardinal points of literature:
 - a. *Description*—the incident itself belongs to the past, the words describing it are throughout the words of the author himself (Homer & Milton)
 - b. *Presentation*—the author himself nowhere appears but he leaves the reader to hear words of those personages who actually took part in the incident—perhaps to see their doings (Shakespeare)
 - c. *Poetry*—"creative literature", the poet makes something, or he creates, or adds to the sum of existence, by figures, symbols, and other poetic vehicles
 - d. *Prose*—only discusses what already exists
 2. The most important distinguishing feature of Hebrew literature is its overlapping of prose with poetry.
 3. Prophecy in one of its aspects may be described as the philosophy of history erected into a drama. This is called a RHAPSODY.

INTERPRETING THE PROPHETS

DESCRIPTIVE

(Author's words throughout)



PRESENTATIVE

(Author nowhere appears)

MINOR PROPHETS

Hebrew prophecy is not poetic in the strictest sense. Yet, there is the artistic beauty and dramatic grandeur in it which is familiar to all poetic literature. The recognized canons of poetic art will be seen to apply to Hebrew prophecy. The first canon is: "The truth conveyed must contain a profound interpretation of life, and be vital and important." The second is: "The truth conveyed must be expressed in terms of artistic beauty".

It is to our advantage that prophecy was given by poetic revelation. Poetic revelation:

- a. Aids exegesis and gives opportunity to apply laws of harmony and opposition
- b. Makes memorization easier
- c. Gives literary charm
- d. Increases vividness and emotional impact

As it was the primary aim of the Hebrew religious teachers (prophets) to influence the heart and conscience, the poetic element, though never entirely suppressed, was held in restraint to further the ends of spiritual instruction.

LITERARY ASPECTS OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

Old Testament prophecy, as literature, fits the definition, contains the basic elements, consists of the various forms, fulfills the four-fold purpose, and produces the creative results of literature.

— DEFINITION —

"Literature" has been aptly defined as the best thoughts of a people, in the best forms, set down in writing. No one can argue but that the Old Testament prophets consistently voiced the best thoughts of the Jewish people. To read the prophets is to conclude that they are expressed in the best forms available—either then, or now. Every figure of speech common to man is to be found in Old Testament prophecy. Indeed, one might even say that the Old Testament is the text book and main source of example for any who could study figures of speech, persuasion, or rhetoric. Old Testament prophecy adequately fits the definition of "literature".

Going further, we find that the prophets not only meet the definition of, but set the standard for all that is to be included in the idea of classical literature. The words and phrases of the prophet-bards of old are packed with meaning and significance. Such words are. . . .

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"Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are in the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, 'Bring, that we may drink! . . .', not only stir the emotions, but present a picture so vivid as to startle the apathetic. Phrases such as . . . "prepare to meet your God, O Israel, For lo, he who forms the mountains and creates the winds, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth—the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name! . . .", appeals to the innate within every man. The prophets appeal to broad human values: to love, to hatred, to emotion, to righteousness, to sin, to motive; to conscience, to soul, to heart. They stir, they threaten, they mold, they use. They inquire, they demand, they entreat. They express universal feelings and emotions. They indeed determine the definition of what we call classical literature.

— ELEMENTS —

Literature must consist of four main elements. (1) Characters: the character must have a perfectly clear and reasonably logical motive. His locale must be understood. Was he speaking to rich, to poor; to stranger, to wife; to heathen, to priest; to man, to God? (2) Plot: The series of events must include a situation—characters in action. There must be suspense—that which holds the imagination as well as concentration. There should be high points, as well as lulls. And finally there should be results—that is, a real change, in character, in situation, in attitude, in something. (3) Theme: There must be an idea, a basic truth expressed, and presented in a way that it is understood, as well as appreciated. (4) Style: The use of certain words, or rather, the prevalent use of some words, the point of view, the location, the manner of speaking, and the personality of the author combine to reveal the author's style.

It will suffice to show how only one of the Old Testament prophets contains all the basic elements of literature to defend his literary aspects.

The shortest of the prophets, Obadiah, seems to adequately illustrate. We find the characters, Edomites and Israelites, real men, neighbors, blood brothers, yet engaged in conflict. Each has a motive: Edom—greed, avarice, thirst for wealth; Israel—anger, vengeance, pride. The locale is clear: Edom—"you who live in the clefts of the rock" . . . "your nest . . . set among the stars" . . . "Edom" . . . "Esau"; Israel—"Jerusalem" . . . "gates" . . . "my holy mountain" . . . "Mt. Zion". The plot begins with a call against the high hand of Edom, which has betrayed its brother. The situation is this: Israel was being bothered by

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warring armies. Edom stood off and laughed—yes, applauded. The Edomites not only refused to help, but aided the plunderers in the pillaging, killing the survivors, looting the goods. Suspense mounts as one wonders—What will happen to such a nation, for such an action? What will happen that Edom will be brought down? High points are the building up of the treachery of Edom and the building up of the Lord's prophecy against Edom. The results of the plot are clear. Edom is destroyed, and one gets the uncomfortable feeling that such will happen to anyone who betrays his brother. The theme, the basic idea, is that the Lord will avenge His elect against their attackers and "The Kingdom will be the Lord's." The style of Obadiah, his changing from present to future to past, all in one sentence; his parallelisms and metonymies, his joyful speech, his point of view, his location, combine to completely fulfill all the elements of literature.

— FORMS —

The forms of literature especially applicable to the Old Testament prophecy would be (1) history. With history, all the prophets are concerned, being basically, historical works. Aside from history we have (2) biography—as illustrated in parts of Isaiah, Jonah, Daniel, etc., (3) essays—as contained in Jeremiah and Lamentations; (4) drama—as represented in every prophet; (5) poetry—as exemplified in Zechariah, Nahum, Micah, Isaiah, (6) short story—as epitomized in Jonah and pictured in Amos.

Almost every form of literature can be shown in its best form in Old Testament prophecy.

— PURPOSE —

The purpose of good literature takes four forms. (1) The first of these is simply communication. Communication relates events and answers questions. It simply makes known many facts. (2) Next is argument. This is an attempt to persuade, to sway, to influence toward a particular attitude or position. (3) Description simply portrays a picture to the reader. (4) Narration is an account of action or events with no attempt to stir or motivate.

Old Testament prophecy answers nearly every question man had asked prior to the CROSS—and serves to answer many after. It communicates. Prophecy argues. It maintains the deity and foreknowledge of God. It sustains the pre-eminence of good and destruction of evil. It retains the dignity of man. Needless to say, prophecy describes and narrates.

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— RESULT —

Prophecy, as found in the Old Testament, best fits the description literature, when we consider its creative results. Prophecy is able to stimulate emotion and draw a definite response from the one who reads. He may dislike it, he may hate it, he may never touch it again, but he reacts. He may cherish it, he may grow fond of it, he may use it constantly, but he reacts.

It has been said before, and safely so, and here bears repeating— A man may not like the Old Testament prophets because they lay bare his heart, he may love them for their beauty and pristine sacredness, but once reading, he will never be the same. This is the mark of true literature.

The Bible is expressed in human language. If a person is to communicate meaning to another the writer must use words and figures which are familiar to the reader. First in order to interpret and understand the Bible the human side must be studied. The human figures, illustrations, and modes of expression, the thoughts and feelings the situations, scenes, and characters must be comprehended and understood. It is not a message until the words awaken the human mind and bring about a picture of scenes and situations.

In his study of the text and its meanings, one must understand the meanings of the words employed. Language's meaning is in the minds of the users, so the interpreter must discover the agreement that existed between the prophet and the people to whom he spoke before he can call up in his own mind the same concepts. Words lose their original meanings through the years; the interpreter must realize that the prophet spoke to the people of his day, not to those who would live thousands of years later. The interpreter should study the etymology of the word, its actual meaning in common usage, and its usage as a synonym. The fundamental principle in understanding the meaning of words in their context is that a word has only one meaning in one place.

Often the chief hindrance to interpretation of the Bible is felt to be the dignity of the message, the sublimity of the scenes and situations, the depth and spirituality of the truth and experiences. The Bible should be approached in the simplest possible attitude; there must be no false reverence; there must be nothing stilted; the reader must become a little child and accept in the simple wonder and express in the most human manner possible these exalted truths. Theories of interpretation are sometimes a hindrance. The interpreter must be both an artist and a scientist, one who identifies himself with the truth he

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portrays. A searching study of each passage is necessary. The artist must comprehend the problem from a different point of view than the exegete; he must not only understand, he must feel; he must not only understand the parts, he must create the whole into one picture; he must have a positive and complete unity, and must pass beyond the negative stage of examination and rejection of what does not belong to the passage. The artist must present the spirit of the passage, and not theories or opinions; it is not for him to give formulas of chemical analysis or theories of cookery but to furnish to hungry souls the bread of life.

If the Bible is written to human beings and by human beings then the interpretation of it must be governed basically by the laws of literature. Regarding the Bible as literature does not degrade it, but it is more exalted by it. The literary study of the Bible, to be of any advantage to interpretation, must be simple and profound study of its real spirit, a creation of the scenes by the imagination and the sympathetic assimilation of its experience. A true experimental interpretation is the real climax of true literary study. . . . True interpretation demands the ideas be grasped, and appreciated, that the scene be really created, and that the sympathy be genuine. Hence it is first necessary to come to some realization of the various literary forms which are found in the Bible, and to understand the vocal expression of the lyric, the dramatic, and the epic spirit, and how far each specific literary forms modifies vocal expression.

— THE FACTS —

To understand any literature one must be thoroughly familiar with it. This, of course, is the first prerequisite to interpreting the prophets. The wide extent of Biblical prophecy demands a very complete knowledge of Bible content to interpret any part in light of the whole. Individual prophecies are of a partial nature and must be supplemented by others, in order to envision the full scope.

To learn a grouping together of the prophets by content and chronology is conducive to a right interpretation.

PRE-ASSYRIAN (Times of Prosperity)

Obadiah—What God will do to the enemies of His elect

Joel—The Day of Jehovah manifested in judgment and redemption

Jonah—God's love for all who will repent

Amos—The sovereignty of God over all nations

Hosea—The love and longsuffering of God for a rebellious people

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ASSYRIAN (Decadence and impending destruction)

Isaiah—The glory of God in judgment and in redemption

Micah—Moral reformation by spiritual application of the law of God

Nahum—The vengeance of the Lord up His adversaries

CHALDEAN (Impending downfall of Judah and her utter degeneration)

Zephaniah—The day of the Lord's wrath followed by blessing

Habakkuk—In the face of God's use of the heathen to judge the elect,
the man of God must live by faith

Jeremiah—Lamentation, punishment, steadfastness, hope

EXILIC (Out of the chastizement of servitude comes hope)

Ezekiel—The scattered sheep to have a Good Shepherd in the future

Daniel—God's king and kingdom to destroy the sovereignty of the god
of this world in the times of the Gentiles

POST-EXILIC (Rebuilding and preparing for the coming of God's presence—Immanuel)

Haggai—Need to rebuild God's house instead of worrying about one's
own

Zechariah—The One to come will be a meek and lowly, persecuted and
pierced Saviour

Malachi—The One to come will be One who judges

Historical contemporaneity must be considered and careful attention should be given customs and geography. The Hebrew prophet was primarily a man who spoke the message of God to the people of the day. Usually this was a call for repentance and righteousness, with the present time his chief concern. The general background and, frequently, specific details given in the historical books serve as a key to the proper interpretation of the prophetic messages. Conversely, the utterances of the prophets contribute much to the understanding of Israel's history. They expounded the spiritual meaning of the law, using the past as their primary source of teaching material. Pleading for a heart-felt religion, they substantiated the Mosaic law as a valid covenant and rule of life for their day.

Problems which are still present must be examined with the best tools known to human interpretation. The study of the prophets is worthy of such exertion because of the historical and spiritual link which it forges between the Old and the New Covenants.

The prophet himself, the spokesman for God, must be studied because God at times left the prophet comparatively free to express His

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truths in the prophet's own style or in mannerisms of the prophet's own personality. A man is shaped by his education and his environment; this influence shows in his writings. Amos' profession of shepherding, Micah's simple country background, and Isaiah's intellectual and royal connections affected their messages. Another influence was the natural thought pattern of the Hebrews. This would affect the prophet's thinking and his expression to others for the sake of easy communication. The moral character of the prophet would also have a definite bearing on his expression. A prophet's moral character is captured in the reading of the entire book, but attention to the details shed added light also.

A prophet is influenced by the people to whom he speaks. His message must be made understandable and meaningful according to their manner of expression and frame of reference. In order that the prophet will be heard, he must arouse curiosity and attention in his audience through his manner of speaking. Thus, we must understand prophecy by taking into consideration the understanding of those with whom the prophet was primarily concerned, his contemporaries.

His physical surroundings affected the style of the prophet's message. The geography of his country would determine many of his illustrations and figures of speech; the interpreter must be familiar with geography. Both the prophet and his audience were affected in their thought patterns by the political life, history, climate, major occupations, and religious life with its sects and idolatries. One must "share with" the people of the time in order to understand prophecy.

The prophetic office is unique in the catalogue of human instruments to execute the will of God. Many were used spontaneously as prophets, but the prophetic office was reserved for a select few.

1. *The prophet of God was foremost a speaker for God to his fellows.* As the bold mouthpieces of the divine mind they became the conscience of the nation. Without respect of persons they spared not priests or kings, for all fell under their influence. Their primary function was accomplished in the present time. They were fearless preachers of sin, righteousness, and judgment to their contemporaries.

2. *Prophets were also predictors of events yet unborn.* The foretelling of fates hidden under the hand of the future was a tremendous element of ancient biblical prophecy. Chiefly the predictions were of impending wrath upon sin unrepented of and to comfort with precious promises of the redemption of Israel. As we from the pinnacle of another present time look back at predictive prophecy, it becomes evidential in value. It lays a foundation for faith. In the light of

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fulfilled prophecy we confirm the authentic voice of God. We find real strength in the understanding of the Messianic prophecies.

3. *The interpretation of History's lessons and expounding of the Mosaic law were included in the basic duties of the prophet.* The prophet's chief source of didactic and illustrative material was out of the past. This he used to inspire men to keep the Law in spirit as well as in letter. This enabled him to direct men's thoughts to the end of the Mosaic economy and to create a desire for the Messianic reign.

4. *The prophet is a historian.* In his productions we get a glimpse into the life of that colorful era; thus, the gap between the testaments is spanned. In the understanding of this history we are better equipped to grasp the intent and meaning of the new testament scriptures.

— THE FOCUS —

The repetitious, resounding theme of the prophets must be kept ever in mind: sin, judgment, and restoration (or hope). The prophets were concerned with more than just a land and a people. God's covenant to Abraham and the realization of that covenant in history—Christ incarnate—is the focal point.

Generally too much eschatological significance is read into the books of the prophets. Seldom is there a mention of Heaven. Instead, the prophecies point to primarily and almost exclusively Christ and complete fulfillment in Him, (cf. Rev. 19:10).

The basic doctrine of the Old Testament prophets is that God is King and Controller of the universe, all nations included. He has complete rule over history. There seems to be a general outline followed in each book:

Pronouncement of sin

Prediction of judgment

Plan for repentance

Promise of salvation (both temporal and spiritual at times)

As a result of the unity of theme, there is seldom a chronological system involved in prophecy. Widely separated events may seem closely related in a passage. The prophet sees together and at once upon the surface of the picture, things which are to be fulfilled only successively and gradually. Past or present tense may be used in referring to events of the future. Ref. Joel 2:27-28

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SOME COMMON CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE O.T. PROPHETS . . .

1. Language is highly figurative—excellent literature
2. Strong and impartial condemnation of sin (ruler and ruled alike are condemned)
3. Each prophet definitely claims to be inspired (however, their revelation is partial)
4. Proclaim comfort, hope and redemption through the Remnant and the Branch
5. Teach eventual salvation of the Gentiles
6. Basic doctrine is that God is King and Controller of the Universe, including all nations. God is always in control of history
7. They demand righteous living based on the righteous nature of their God
8. They plead for a "heart-felt religion" (yet one which obeys the Levitical law)
9. They substantiate the Mosaic law as a valid covenant and rule of life for their day
10. Most of them include the promise or hint of a new covenant
11. Heathen nations and peoples are responsible to God's will, as far as they know it, and will be so judged
12. Some prophecies are, in a sense, perpetual and/or have a double fulfillment
13. The prophets each used different methods of approach or appeal to their audiences or readers

— THE FORMS —

Recognize the forms of prophetic literature. Understand the text in the language of the day. It was truly the message of God to the people, but it was stated in the words of the man whom God honored with the responsibility of translating His teaching to human minds. This is illustrated in the classic poetic language of Isaiah and the blunt, prosaic sentences of Micah.

The form is conditioned by the views and ideas of the time of utterance. The prophets were compelled to speak so that their hearers could understand them. While some of it is strictly sermoniac in form, much of it is written dramatically. Ezekiel's dry bones, Daniel's image and Isaiah's vision of the Lord afford unique presentation of messages. Jeremiah's purchased property was a sign of the prophet, and thus he made his prophecy. Lyric prophecy had a certain rhythm and lent

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itself to singing. Micah set the scene for a drama, Nabum penned a funeral dirge, and Habakkuk's prophecy was a rhapsody of the Chaldeans. The type of language might be poetic, visional, apocalyptic, etc. Quoting from the I.S.B.E.:

"The prophets, as a rule, exhibited an elevated form of language and are more or less poetical. However, in modern times some scholars are inclined to go too far in claiming that these addresses are given in a careful freer form of expression than is Arabic or Sanskrit meter, and this is all the more the case with the discourses of the prophets, which were not intended for musical rendering, and which are expressed in a rhythmic constructed rhetoric, which appears now in one and then in another form of melody, and often changes into prose."

Poetry, whether found in the Bible or elsewhere, is granted a license of extravagance. Figurative language furnished gorgeous chariots for the conveyance of the rhythmic mind.

Many figures of speech were used. Inanimate objects acted or reacted . . . (personification) . . . as in Isaiah 55 where the mountains and hills sang and the trees clapped their hands.

Parallelism is an outstanding characteristic of Hebrew prophecy. Two synonymous statements might parallel each other, or perhaps the parallelism is a contrast. In other cases, a climax is reached by a redundant, ever intensifying attack.

Proverbs, parables, fables, hyperboles, and the like were all employed, combining with distinct forms to veil the meaning of the prophets. The veil was required because of their spiritual nearsightedness and immaturity.

Prophecy may be given in types or symbols which foreshadow a future event. These type-prophecies differ from poetry in their distinctness, veiling, and double sense.

The figurative language used in varying forms of prophecy affects one's understanding. The Hebrews not only had their own idioms, as any people do, but they were accustomed to using hyperboles for emphasis. These exaggerations were a part of the thought pattern and must be taken into consideration even in the writings of the inspired prophets. Communication in figures was common in that day and one must be careful not to break down the lines of communication to the present time by trying to make all the prophets literal.

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— SPECIFIC FORMS —

a. *Prophetic Discourse*—"Where the sermon and political harangue became one and the same . . . rhetorical."

b. *Lyric Prophecy*—"Its structure is antistrophic stanzas of recitative and rhythm . . . an opening couplet, a closing refrain, etc."

c. *Symbolic Prophecy*—"Discourses with object-texts, i.e., external things treated symbolically, cf. Jeremiah and his linen girdle, Jeremiah 13; 18:1-17; and 24.

d. *Sign of the Prophet*—"When a prophecy had reference to future time, and was illustrated with some symbol that was not transitory but durable, the emblem would remain to be confronted with the fulfilled prophecy, and so would vindicate the authority of the prophet. Such an emblem would then become a "sign of the prophet."

e. *The Vision*—"The emblem texts are merely presented in supernatural vision instead of being seen by the ordinary eyesight. cf. Amos and Ezekiel.

f. *The Vision Emblem and Revelation*—(a) Revelation of the future; (b) Revelation of Law and Ideal.

g. *The Parable*—A sermon with a symbolic text.

h. *Prophetic Intercourse*—(a) with God (vision of their call); (b) with inquirers; (c) dialectic prophecy where there is no actual interview between the prophet and another interlocutor, but the discourse takes the form of a reply to an imaginary objection or interruption (all of Malachi seems dialectic); (d) with the world.

i. *Dramatic Prophecy*—A scene or situation is created by dialogue entirely. No comment comes from the prophet; no description, except so far as he may be a party to the scene, cf. Micah 6:1-8 "The Lord's controversy before the mountains."

j. *The Doom Song*—"A prophetic utterance directed against some particular city, nation or country . . . fluctuations of power and mutual relations between Israel and her heathen neighbors imposed a continual foreign policy on the kingdoms of Israel and Judah . . . there was also the perpetual function of Israel as a nation to uphold the worship of the true God amidst nations of idolaters; and the constant witnesses to this were the prophets . . . one product of such a ministry was the Doom Song (cf. Isaiah 21; 22:14; Ezekiel 26; 28).

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k. *The Rhapsody*—"To harmonize the idea of judgment with the working of events through realistic clearness of drama." (cf. the Rhapsody of the Chaldeans of Habakkuk—If the Chaldeans, cruel, godless embodiment of might without right were to be God's instrument of judgment would not the instrument be far worse than that against which it is used?" The disproving of this is the burden of Habakkuk's Rhapsody).

The best way to be sure that one has interpreted the prophets correctly is to accept divine interpretation. Parallel passages, inspired words, and fulfillment often clear up one's problems in understanding the prophets.

Parallel passages make clear obscure words and ideas. The various ways a word is used in other books of the Bible may give a clue to its meaning in a vague passage. This is especially useful in lines of Hebrew poetry when the same idea is repeated in every second line, with the words slightly changed. Ideas, as well as words, may be made clear through discovery of synonyms used in parallel passages.

— THE FIGURES —

It's been said, "when the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense." However, a literal fulfillment of all predictions must never be assumed. The prophets contain the loftiest of Oriental figurative language. It is wise to be acquainted with basic principles governing this kind of speech.

It isn't always an easy matter to determine between the figurative and the literal. The sense of the context may give some indication, and there may even be an explicit claim for a literal meaning. When the definite is put for the indefinite (especially in expressions of number and time) or when a literal interpretation involves an impossibility, it is figurative. Also, a passage which mocks or which seems to condemn good action and demand bad action is figurative. Consider the general content of Biblical truth, for if a literal interpretation would create contradictions, understand it in a figurative sense.

SOME RULES FOR INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY ARE:

- (1) "Determine the historical background of the prophet and the prophecy. This establishes the frame of reference in which the prophet writes, and so gives interpretive light to his expressions." Whether the prophecy is didactic or predictive the study of history is the absolute first starting point.

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- (2) "Determine the full meaning and significance of all proper names, events, geographical references, references to customs or material culture.
- (3) "Determine if the passage is predictive or didactic". Not all prophecy foretells the future, and whether it predicts or not is important.
- (4) "If predictive, determine if fulfilled, unfulfilled, or conditional. If the passage is quoted as fulfilled in the New Testament, then compare the Old Testament statement with the New Testament statement for interpretation of the Old Testament statement. Passages may be used as follows: literally; to prove a point; to explain a point; and to illustrate. If the passage is fulfilled in history, then let history interpret the passage. If the prophecy is conditional, then it may or may not be fulfilled. If the prophecy is unfulfilled the problem is acute. We may be guided by how other prophecy is fulfilled, although this varies immensely.
- (5) Determine if the same theme or concept is also treated elsewhere.
- (6) As a reminder, keep vividly in mind the flow of the passage, that is, pay attention to context.
- (7) Notice that element of prophecy that is purely local or temporal.
- (8) "Recognize that God's special preparatory providences as recorded in the Old Testament were often themselves predictive or prophetic.
- (9) Recognize the particular character of the language used.
- (10) Recognize the possibility of further reference or larger significance.
- (11) Recognize that the language often becomes figurative and allegorical in its wider prophetic application.
- (12) Recognize that God has made self-imposed limits of revelation.
- (13) Recognize the possibility of varying and mistaken interpretations.
- (14) Recognize that the primary purpose of prophecy and of its interpretation is to reveal Christ, and to enable us to learn of Him.
- (15) Remember always the practical moral purpose of the Word of revelation.
- (16) Sometimes prophecy was, like history, written beforehand.
- (17) Many times the thoughts respecting the future are presented in highly figurative language, so that it is difficult to get the meaning.

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- (18) "The peculiarities of the prophets are maintained in their writings". The Lord, in most instances, must have supplied the necessary intelligence by inspiration, but then allowed each man to tell this message to the people in his own way, or manner. If the Hebrew prophet could not get the thought God gave him words. The prophets presented their message with clearness and force even though the time of fulfillment was unknown to them.
- (19) The prophecy was written for the people of that day, and should be interpreted within the covenant background—God's redemptive purpose in history which is fulfilled in Christ and the Church. The incarnation of Christ is the dividing line between the Old and New Testaments, because of the incarnation of Jesus the Old Testament became preliminary or temporary. The coming of Christ and the redemption of Christ is the goal of prophecy. The focal point of prophecy is the future hope. There is a double emphasis in prophecy, that is, two chief points: (a) The goal of God's covenant, and (b) The way to that goal. God moves toward his goal through two means: (1) Judgment, a call for repentance; and (2) Redemption, the act of deliverance. The *final* covenant goal was *universal redemption*. In interpreting we must keep our eyes on the goal. The prophets remind us of where we should put our trust, that is, in God and in God's redemptive promises for they are real promises. God is moving toward the goal of His promise through judgment and redemption.
- (20) The prophecy should be interpreted in the light of the New Testament too, considering the harmonizing of it with its New Testament fulfillment. Often things prophesied were for our use today but this was not the primary purpose.
- (21) In both literal and figurative language, some things prophesied were widely separated in time.
- (22) Prophets were expounders of what the law really meant spiritually. The chief aim was to keep the spirit as well as the letter of the law.
- (23) Some of the language of the prophets is very literal, especially concerning sins of that hour.

The prophets were able to keep their consciousness and self-control while receiving and delivering their revelations. God's message was in the language of the people and the prophet himself, but the prophet never surrendered his personality to the point that he became

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merely a dictation machine. Every prophet claims to be inspired, and the New Testament agrees that the prophets were inspired. The New Testament constantly uses the Old Testament prophets and prophecies for examples and instruction.

In interpreting the prophets there are many rules to follow and many characteristics to consider, but it cannot be stressed too much that we must always keep in mind the purpose of prophecy, that, is the ultimate goal, which was Christ and His Kingdom, the Church.

The inspired words of Christ or the apostles in commenting on prophecy are sure guides to interpretation. Jesus lived that "all things might be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44). Often he explained how he was fulfilling the law and the prophets, as in the Nazarene synagogue (Luke 4) where he read from Isaiah 61 and told the people that the scripture was fulfilled before their eyes. Some had said that the Isaiah passages referred to the nation of Israel while others pointed out that it could only be spoken of an individual; Christ's words confirmed and completed the correct interpretation. Jesus also showed the fulfillment of Old Testament scriptures not usually regarded as prophecy. For instance, Christ speaks of the stone rejected by the builders (Psalms 118) as being himself, rejected by the Jewish rulers. Yet in the Psalm, the stone is a part of the joy of the Jews in their return. Many of Christ's uses of prophecy were for the purposes of building up the faith of his disciples. Therefore, he quoted the prophecies of the suffering of God's servant and explained the typology of Jonah so that they might believe after those things came to pass. Thus Christ gives us a perfect interpretation of many Messianic prophecies. (Ezekiel 34, Zechariah 11, cf. with John 10).

The interpretation of the Apostles in their early ministry and in the epistles gives us another divine clue to prophecy, (See esp. Acts 3:11-26). Peter showed the fulfillment of Psalms 104 in the upper room; of Psalms 16 in Acts 2 concerning the resurrection of Christ; of Psalms 110 in the exaltation; of Joel 2:28-32 in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost; and Psalms 118 in Acts 4. Paul shows how the principles in prophecy find a deeper meaning in Christ. For instance, in Romans 9:33 he speaks of the stone laid in Zion as Christ even though "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone" as written in Isaiah 28:16 had a different and apparently complete meaning to the people of his day. (cf. also Acts 13:29-37) Within their writings, many of the apostles included clarifications of prophecy. Paul used it in Hebrews not just to prove the Messiahship of Christ, but to bring out the fulfillment in Christ and His Church of the Old Testament Law and Prophets.

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SOME PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
WHICH HELP US TO INTERPRET
OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>Acts</i>	<i>Romans</i>	<i>Hebrews</i>
2:15	1:68-75	2:16-17	1:1-3	1:1-4
3:1-3	4:17-21	21:29-36	2:28-29	8:7-13
4:13-17	24:25-27	2:34-35	3:21-22	12:18-29
11:4-5		3:11-26	4:16-17	
12:15-21		4:24-30	9:2-8	
15:7-9		8:30-35	9:25-26	
21:4-5		13:23	9:27-33	
		13:29-37	11:7-10	
		13:46-57	11:26-27	
		15:13-18	15:8, 12,	
			20-21, 27	
			16:25-27	

A. *New Testament references to the inspiration of the O.T. Prophets:*

1. Matthew 1:22-23; 24:43 (Psalms)
2. Mark 12:10-11; 12:35-36
3. Luke 15:16; 24:25, 27, 44-48
4. John 10:35; 12:37-41
5. Acts 13:17-46, 47; 15:15-18; 26:22; 28:23-28
6. Romans 1:17; 9:22-26
7. II Corinthians 6:16-18
8. II Timothy 3:16
9. I Peter 1:10-12
10. II Peter 1:19-21

B. *Uses made in the New Testament of the Old Testament Prophets:
(the N.T. Church)*

1. Predict the replacement of Judas, Acts 1:20
2. To substantiate the phenomena of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost as having been planned by God, Acts 2:16
3. To show the predictive nature of the Psalms as to the resurrection of the Messiah, Acts 2:24-25
4. To prove the exaltation to heavenly reign of the Messiah, Acts 2:34-35

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5. To show that all the promises of blessing from the prophets (including Moses) were realized in Jesus, Acts 3:22-26
6. To show the historical reason for the captivity of the Israelites and to teach lessons in N.T. times, Acts 7:42-43
7. To show that the prophets taught that God dwells not in houses made with hands, Acts 7:48-50
8. To illustrate the murderous rebellion of the ancestors of the Jews in killing the prophets who spoke of the coming of the Messiah, Acts 7:52
9. Philip used the prophetic writings to teach concerning Jesus in personal evangelism, Acts 8:32-35
10. To prove that Jesus was the one through whom would come remission of sins, Acts 10:43
11. To establish Christ's death as within the will of God and as the fulfillment of prophecy, Acts 13:27
12. To warn the Jews of rejecting the works of God, Acts 13:40-41
13. To show the Jews that God intended the gospel be taken to the Gentiles, Acts 13:47
14. To prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Messiah, Acts 18:28
15. To testify of prophetic evidence for the Way, and for the resurrection and judgment, Acts 24:14-15
16. To show that apostolic preaching of the death and resurrection of the Messiah and the reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God was prophesied, Acts 26:19-23
17. Belief in the prophets is appealed to as reason for believing in Christ, Acts 26:27-29
18. To convince people of the kingdom and of the Messianic office of Jesus, Acts 28:23
19. To convict the rebellious Jews that the hardness of their hearts was prophesied which would result in their rejection by God, Acts 28-25-26
20. To preach that God has always justified man by faith, Rom. 1:17
21. To preach the doctrine that *all* have sinned and are in need of justification, Romans 3:10-18
22. To show the call of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God, Romans 9:25-29; 10:20; 15:12, 21
23. To show the rejection of the rebellious Jews, Romans 9:33; 11:7-8
24. To show the eventual salvation of all *true* Israel, Rom. 11:26
25. To express high feelings of emotion and worship toward God, Romans 11:34

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26. To emphasize and strengthen exhortations, Romans 14:11
27. To emphasize the wisdom of God's revelation contrasted with man's wisdom, I Corinthians 1:19; 2:9
28. To illustrate the victory over death that Christ accomplished, I Corinthians 15:53-54
29. To emphasize exhortations to holiness, II Corinthians 6:16-18
30. To illustrate that Christians are the recipients of the promises made to Abraham and the patriarchs, Galatians 4:27
31. To show the foreknowledge and eternal purpose of God in the New Covenant, Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17
32. To exhort to faith and courage, Hebrews 10:37-38
33. To exemplify faith, Hebrews 11:32-34
34. To show the eternal nature of the regenerate, I Peter 1:24-25
35. To show the nature and mission of the Messiah, I Peter 2:6-8
36. To show the blessedness of the New Covenant, I Peter 1:10-12
37. To show the finality and certainty of the New Covenant, II Peter 1:19-21

Another divine interpretation is the fulfillment of prophecy. Prophecy is fully understood only after its fulfillment. Even the words of Christ were not enough to make the apostles understand his death; they had to see the fulfillment before they comprehended.

If a prophecy remains a puzzle because one cannot find a divine interpretation, then he must employ all devices possible to arrive at the best understanding. He must begin by realizing his own weaknesses and limitations, by praying, and by preparing for a life-long study.

As one strives to understand prophecy, he should use the aids available to him. First, he should study the whole Bible. As a help to this, he should consider the Septuagint, Vulgate, Peshito Syriac, and other early versions for shades of meaning. Paraphrases, grammars, lexicons, and commentaries are of use to the seeker. A study of any connected field such as archaeology and philosophical methods and criticism are also of value.

The Prophet, as preacher, views the present in the light of the future; as foreteller, the future in the light of the present. He points out present sin, duty, danger, or need, but all under the strong light of the Divine future. He speaks of the present in the name of God, and by His direct commission; of a present, however, which, in the Divine view, is evolving into a future, as the blossom is opening into the fruit. And when he foretells the future, he sees it in the light of the present; the present lends its colors, scenery, the very historic basis for the picture.

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This, as we have seen, will help to explain alike the substance and the form of the prophetic message. To the prophetic vision the present is ever enlarging, widening, extending. These hills are growing, the valley is spreading, the light is gilding the mountain tops. And presently the hills are clothed with green, the valleys peopled with voices; the present is merging into the future, although exhibited in the form of the present. The prophet is speaking of Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Assyria; and these are gradually growing into the shapes of future foes, or future similar relations. And in the midst of such references here and there appears what applies exclusively to that Messianic Kingdom which is the goal and final meaning of all, and of all prophecy. It is an entire misunderstanding to regard such prophecies as not applying to the Messianic future, because they occur in the midst of references to contemporary events. As the rapt prophet gazes upon those hills and valleys around him, they seem to grow into gigantic mountains and wide tracts, watered by many a river and peopled with many and strange forms, while here and there the golden light lies on some special height whence its rays slope down into valleys and glens; or else, the brightness shines out in contrasted glory against dark forest, or shadowy outline in the background. And the Prophet could not have spoken otherwise than in the forms of the present. For, had he spoken in language, and introduced scenery entirely of the future, not only would his own individuality have been entirely effaced, but he would have been wholly unintelligible to his contemporaries, or, to use the language of Paul, he would have been like those who spoke always in another tongue.

To make ourselves more clear on these points, let us try to transport ourselves into the times and circumstances of the prophets. Assume that the problem was to announce and describe the Messianic Kingdom to the men of that generation, in a manner applicable and intelligible to them, and also progressively applicable to all succeeding generations, up to the fulfillment in the time of Christ, and beyond it, to all ages and to the furthest development of civilization. The prophet must speak prophetically yet intelligible to his own contemporaries. But, on the other hand, he must also speak intelligibly, yet prophetically to the men of every future generation—even to us. We can readily understand how in such case many traits and details cannot have been fully understood by the prophets themselves. But we are prepared to affirm that all these conditions are best fulfilled in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and that, if the problem be to announce the Messianic Kingdom in a manner consistent with the dogmatic standpoint then reached, the cycle of ideas and historical actualities and possibilities, and yet suitable also to all generations, it could not have been better or equally well

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done in any other manner than that actually before us in the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, the present generation, and, as a matter of history, all past generations—admittedly the whole Jewish Church and the whole Christian Church—have read in these prophecies the Messianic future, and yet every successive generation has understood them, more or less clearly, and in a sense newly. If I might venture on an illustration: the reading of prophecy seems like gazing through a telescope, which is successively drawn out in such manner as to adapt the focus to the varying vision.

And yet the telescope is the same to all generations. We do not propose the clumsy device of a twofold application of prophecy, to the present and to the future, but, taking the prophetic standpoint, we regard the present as containing in germ the future, and the future as the child of the present, so that it can be presented in the forms of the present; or, to revert to a statement in a previous lesson, it is not a progression, or even a development, but an unfolding of the present. Viewed in relation to the Messianic Kingdom, it is one and the same thing, which to the eye of the prophet now is, and ever shall be. We might almost apply to prophetism this statement in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Canaan is a prophetic land, and Israel a prophetic people, of whom God says to the world: "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm." And *their* whole history is prophetic. It is not merely one or another special prediction that is Messianic; everything—every event and institution—is prophetic and Messianico-prophetic, and what we one-sidedly call special predictions are only special points on which the golden light rests, and from which it is reflected. And it is in this sense that we understand and adopt the fundamental principle that every event in Israel's history, and every prophecy pointed forward to the Messiah, and that every trait and fact of the past, whether of history or miracle, would be reenacted more fully, nay, in complete fulness, in the times of the Messiah.

SPECIAL STUDY THREE

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION OF O.T. PROPHECY

Abridged from *Prophecy Interpreted* by John P. Milton

I. Times Coloring, or, Historical Contemporaneity

The First significance of prophecy is as a message for the prophets own day.

- A. The function of the prophet was first of all that of a preacher and teacher of the will of God.
- B. The message of the prophet reflects and reveals something of the historical situation to which it is directed. It clothes itself, as Riehm has so well said, in "local color" or "times-coloring."

It may have a significance that goes far beyond the immediate situation; but our first task in interpretation is to ascertain what it meant for the faith and hope and religious life of those who lived within that historical situation, and to whom the prophet was sent as a spokesman of God.

- C. Even the predictive element must be interpreted from within this framework or a religious message relevant for the day and situation.

Under no circumstances have we the right to treat O.T. prophecies as disjointed parts of an eschatological picture puzzle to be assembled later without regard to historical origin.

II. Covenant Background

- A. The covenant is a major theological idea in Biblical religion. The covenant has to do with God's redemptive activity in history.
- B. The covenant not only presupposes that God is active in human history, but also that there is a purpose with and a goal to His activity. From a study of the covenant making by God from Abraham to Christ we can see that God's purpose from the beginning was a redemptive one, and that it is operative both in judgment and in salvation.

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- C. A right understanding of the covenant will help us in rightly interpreting prophecy, for every prophecy must be seen within the setting of the covenant promise and hope, it should be studied against the background of the covenant of blessing with Abraham, which through Moses became the national covenant with God's people Israel and through Jesus Christ found fulfillment in a universal covenant. This covenant is more than a mere material blessing.

The prophets were concerned with more than a nation and a land. They were concerned with spiritual things. They were not religious innovators. They believed in the covenant which God had made with their fathers, and they interpreted the present as well as the future in the light of this covenant from the past. But their understanding of the true nature of the covenant, and their interpretation of the situation that confronted them, was primarily religious rather than political.

III. Eschatological Significance

Because the covenant presupposes a divine activity in history which looks forward to a goal, there is a forward-looking or eschatological aspect also to all prophecy (a perspective)

- A. It is to the divine purpose revealed in the covenant that the predictive aspect of prophecy attaches itself.

The prophets were not predictive sharpshooters who sought merely to satisfy human curiosity with respect to the future. They were preachers who sought to renew faith in the ultimate fulfillment of the promises stated and implied in the very making of the covenant with Abraham and with Israel.

- B. Since predictive prophecy is rooted in the covenant it may be wider in scope than specific prediction. There is a distinction, for instance, between the Messianic hope and the Messianic promise expressed in the form of a definite prediction, but both look to the future.

There is a difference between the enunciation of a divine principle of judgment, which may find repeated expression in history, and the prediction of a specific judgment in time; yet both are forward-looking and both belong to prophecy.

The very faith in the God of covenant who is actively engaged in judgment and redemption, and who can always be counted on to act "in character" reacting in similar situations in the same divine way, is predictive. The theology of

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the prophets is pregnant with what may be called "the future hope."

C. Specific prediction may be classified in a two-fold way.

They may be predictions of events which are quite near, even imminent. (judgment usually)

They may be predictions of events which are still in the remote, even indefinite, future. (hope usually)

Biblical eschatology cannot be divorced from the covenant nor the Biblical covenant from eschatology: the one illumines the other.

D. It is equally true that we cannot divorce predictive prophecy from historical contemporaneity.

No O.T. prophecy completely rids itself of the local "times-coloring".

But the "times-coloring" does not belong to the essence of a prophecy. It is rather the historical form in which the abiding truth of the prophecy is temporarily clothed.

IV. The Shortened Perspective

A. In the prophetic message the eschatological goal of the covenant is often seen as coming soon. It seems to be expected right after and in direct relation to the historical situation of the moment to which the message of the prophet is directed.

There is a sequence of purpose which may easily be confused with a calendar of times and seasons.

The prophet is concerned with the present unfaithfulness of God's people, which contradicts the purpose of the covenant and makes the experience of a genuine covenant relationship impossible; and as the messenger of God he pronounces judgment, often in concrete historical terms, upon the present evil situation.

The prophets were men of faith in the living God, who is the faithful God of covenant promise; because they believed that God is faithful they hoped for a glorious experiential fulfillment of the covenant, and they declared this hope as if it were on the horizon just beyond the present judgment.

V. The Fulfillment Greater Than the Prediction

A. It is wrong to assume that if we are to claim fulfillment of a prophecy there must be a literal correspondence between the prediction and the fulfillment. There is within each prophecy

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a central idea, and when this has been fulfilled, we may claim fulfillment for the prophecy as a whole.

- B. The chief concern of prophecy is not to prove that God can predict events with meticulous exactness before they happen; nor to construct a calendar of events which with divine precision charts the course of history beforehand, so as to make unnecessary the walk by faith and not by sight. A prophecy may be a sign: but if so, the thing signified will be what we have called its central religious idea.
- C. In saying that the fulfillment is greater than the prediction, we mean that it is clearer, that it is more specific in reference, that it has a more definite spiritual emphasis.

There is predictive prophecy in the O.T.; but we need the commentary of redemptive history, or of the New Testament gospel; *to declare all that was really essential in the prophecy.*

VI. The Double Emphasis in Prophecy

Our interpretation of prophecy must be guided by a clear recognition of the two chief points of emphasis in O.T. Prophecy: Judgment and Redemption.

- A. There is a goal indicated in the very covenant of blessing with Abraham (Gen. 12:3). Ever since the creation and the fall of man it has been God's active desire to bless all men "in Christ with every spiritual blessing." Gen. 12:3 and Eph. 1:3-14 are like the two ends of a string.

There is a goal indicated in the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the new covenant which God will make (31:31-34). We see a consummation of the old in the new: a spiritually responsive people at last; the law of God finally written upon their hearts; a realization at last of the perfect fellowship between God and men envisioned by the covenant words "their God" and "my people"; a universal knowledge of God, in the deep inner and experiential sense which the prophets always had in mind when they spoke of "knowing the Lord;" a complete and permanent experience of the forgiveness of sin, that sin which had stood hindering in the way of true covenant fellowship with God.

There is a goal indicated in Isa. 40-66.

1. 40-48 Cyprus, or the redemption of the Jews from Babylon, as a prophetic shadow (or silhouette) of the redemption of humanity from bondage of sin.

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2. 49-57 Christ, or the redemption of humanity from sin through the servant of the Lord .
3. 58-66 The new world, or the redemption of the world as a result of the redemption from sin.

There is a goal indicated in Rev. 21:3-4. The fundamental covenant idea of the gracious presence of God with His people gives rise to the hope of victory over death and of eternal joy.

The goal that is set before us in both the O.T. and the N.T. is pictured in bright and variegated colors; but it is always the goal of hope for the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. In one form or another this is the closing note of almost every prophetic book in the O.T. (c.f. Obad. 21; Joel 3:21; Amos 9:15; Micah 7:20; Hab. 3:18; Zeph. 3:17; Hag. 3:19; Ezek. 48:35; Zech. 14:20-21.)

The composite picture given by such passages as these is that of the victory of God and His kingdom over every foe, of unbroken fellowship between a people holy to the Lord and their everpresent faithful God, of a new Covenant which does not supplant but fulfills the old. It is in a setting such as this that we must read the words of Jesus in Mt. 5:17 "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them."

SUCH IS THE GOAL OF HISTORY THAT IS INDICATED BY PROPHECY.

How then does the God who according to prophecy acts in history move towards the fulfillment of this goal? He does so in two ways.

B. He does so in Judgment and in Redemption.

1. Judgment: Much of prophecy is devoted to preaching judgment. The law presents the commandments and claims of Jehovah to man; prophecy passes judgment on conduct in the light of God's revealed will and explains the object of God's dealings with men.

The conduct on which this judgment is passed is that of Israel as a covenant nation, the people of God.

Also upon the individual Israelite.

Also upon the people of God in the N.T. dispensation.

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Also upon the nations who in their conduct show themselves to be enemies of Israel and of Israel's God;

The reason for prophetic preaching of judgment is the presence of sin.

The sin of unfaithfulness to the covenant; for it is in this basic sin of faithlessness that the prophets see the root of every sin.

The primary purpose of the prophetic preaching of judgment was repentance; but often there was no repentance . . . but God is not mocked. When men do not repent at the preaching of the prophets, He acts. The very events of history are made to speak his will . . . judgment, captivity, catastrophe.

The divine purpose of the judgment is chastisement rather than destruction, and the divine goal is still a penitent people that will truly seek the Lord. It is only in persistent impenitence that the judgments of God become destruction upon His enemies . . . and even then the destruction becomes a testimony of the victory of God over all who oppose His holy will and His kingly power.

In judgment there is a prophetic reminder that God is not mocked . . . each judgment act becomes a peak in a mountain range that rises ever higher and higher, until it seems to point forward to a greater and a final judgment to come. Of that final judgment the O.T. seldom, IF EVER, speaks in direct terms; but it is foreshadowed by the judgments in time.

It is the prophetic phrase "the day of the Lord" that in a special way embodies this judgment motif, wherein judgment is seen as near, as repeated, as having a covenant-related purpose, as having also a final eschatological quality and effect.

2. Redemption: Parallel to and projecting beyond the motif of judgment is that of redemption. God moves forward towards the goal of His covenant with men by redemptive acts, or act, of deliverance.

VII. The Unifying Focal Point

All prophecy has one central focus . . . God's redemptive purpose and activity in history which heads up in Christ.

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- A. The incarnation is the dividing line between the Old and the New. In terms of Biblical interpretation it is the dividing-line between prophecy and fulfillment. We would include in the Incarnation also a life and ministry of Christ as well as the vital relationship of the Church to Christ as His body through which He still works in the world. If the Incarnation is a fact of history, then it follows inexorably that all O.T. teaching must be re-examined in its light and all interpretation of O.T. prophecy must be related to this new event which has the effect of making all things new.
- B. The Incarnation puts O.T. history very clearly and definitely into the place of the preliminary and temporary, whose real meaning and purpose cannot be fully seen apart from its fulfillment in Christ. From the biblical point of view there is nothing strange in speaking of a fulfillment of history. The covenant concept involves just this faith in a living God whose redemptive activity in history is an activity with a goal. The Incarnation is that goal. The coming of Christ ushered in the new age; it was the beginning of the "latter days;" it spelled Fulfillment with a capital "F".
- C. The Incarnation is specifically significant for an understanding of O.T. predictive prophecy. There are comparatively few direct predictions of the coming of a personal Messiah. The FUTURE HOPE that looks for the day of the "great Restoration," or for the day of covenant fulfillment, or for the day of the redemption of God's afflicted people, or for the day when men shall really know the Lord, or for the day when God's kingdom shall have come in all its universal scope and eternal glory—this is the FUTURE HOPE that is prominent . . . and because it is a future hope wrought by the Spirit of God, it is prophetic.
- D. There is the danger of misinterpretation of prophecy if we remove texts from their historical context and refer them to some historically unrelated situation in the remote future, perhaps in the time of the end. If Christ be indeed the *real goal* then His person, His life, His mission, His teaching, is like the funnel in the hourglass; in order to be valid and relevant in the new age every prophecy must funnel through the illuminating and transforming reality of the Incarnation and of Pentecost.

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This means that prophecy is significant only in relation to God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. The enmity of and the judgment upon the nations, for example, has no religious relevance apart from its relation to the kingdom of God. The nations upon whom the prophets pronounced judgment were nations who in their own day had shown hostility to Israel as the people of God. Israel as a political entity is not the significant thing in prophecy; the focus is on Israel as a religious community, which God has chosen to call "my people." As such Israel is representative of the people of God in the new age, even as her ancient enemies are representatives of the enemies of God and His kingdom in the new age .

SPECIAL STUDY FOUR

Note: The material printed below is a printed expose of the lack of scriptural evidence to support the premillennial theories. It is copied from articles in *THE VOICE OF EVANGELISM*, by Burton W. Barber, Spring of 1957. All scripture references are to be read and compared—**THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT!**

CHRIST IS NOW SITTING UPON DAVID'S THRONE

by Burton W. Barber

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES PREDICTED IT

Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, the premillennialists, and the Seventh Day bodies occupy a like position in reference to Christ's kingship; namely, that Christ came to earth to establish an earthly kingdom and to sit upon the literal throne upon which David sat. But, because the Jews as a whole rejected Him, Christ temporarily abandoned the idea and returned to heaven until the Jews would become kindly disposed toward Him, thus permitting Him to return to earth for a second try. In the meantime, as an emergency measure, the church, which, in

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prophecy was not predicted, was *inserted*. This is known as the premillennial view of the kingdom. This theory of Christ's literal, earthly reign is, for the most part a denominational doctrine. With all respect to the convictions of sectarian churches, the majority of them attach little importance to the preaching of the gospel as far as winning souls is concerned. They believe the gospel ought to be preached, but they also believe it is impossible for a sinner to hear, believe, and obey. It is taught among them that the Holy Spirit must be prayed down directly upon the sinner, that the Holy Spirit upon the naked soul of man is the converting power regardless of the gospel. It can be seen immediately that the gospel is NOT the "power of God unto salvation" if such a doctrine be true. With this in mind, we shall state the theory as correctly as has been possible for us to determine and from it find an answer to the question at hand.

The most common premillennial theory is as follows: (1) Christ came to establish His kingdom. (2) He was rejected by the Jews; consequently, He was unable to establish it at that time. (3) After Christ made atonement for our sins, He went back to heaven and is to remain there until the Jews are brought back to Jerusalem and until they are willing to accept the "Messiah." (4) The church is a temporary institution which Christ left here in the place of the kingdom, and it will remain until He comes to take it away and to establish His kingdom. (5) The gospel will do much good, but is not capable of converting the Jews. Jesus will come back to do this personally.

These are by no means our views. Neither are they the views of a vast number of premillennialists. They are only the key points of the most outstanding leaders. We can examine no more at the present, for the various theories are almost as numerous as are the advocates of premillennialism. These few remarks, however, tell WHY they believe Christ *must* come to rule on earth for a thousand years. According to their teaching, both the church and the gospel are *temporary*. The position which they hold is that Christ originally planned to establish the kingdom, but when Satan defeated Him on that point and foiled His plans, He substituted the church as the next best thing. It is to remain until He is able to wrest the minds of the Jews from the devil sufficiently so that when He comes again, He can successfully persuade them to accept Him as the "Christ." Likewise, according to their theory, the gospel is a mighty weak tool with which to work on the hearts of sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles. We have been persuaded to believe that the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16,

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17). It puts "zip" into our "timbers" to think of the power stored up in the gospel. Now if it be contended that the gospel is God's power for salvation to the Gentiles but not to the Jews, and that Christ must come personally in order to convert them, we call attention to the complete text of Rom. 1:16! The gospel was given to the Jews first. They were given the first opportunity to accept or reject it (Rom. 2:9-10).

The main purpose for Christ's coming to rule on earth for a thousand years, then, according to this theory, is to do what the *gospel has failed to do*. This theory minimizes the power of the gospel. To us, this utterly contradicts some of the main teachings of the Bible. (1) The Old Testament prophesied concerning the church. The New Testament speaks of the church as the fulfillment of these prophecies. (2) The church and kingdom are the same institutions (Matt. 16:16-19). Men are born into the kingdom (Jn. 3:5). The saved are added to the church by the Lord through baptism (Acts 2:47; I Cor. 12:13). (3) The gospel both saves and judges men and women (I Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 2:16; Jn. 12:48; Rev. 20:12-13): If Christ comes and sets the saving power of the gospel aside, He automatically sets aside the judging power also. When Christ comes again, He will not come to save men *without* the gospel, but will come to judge men *by the gospel*.

I. PROOF NUMBER ONE: GOD'S PROMISE THAT CHRIST WOULD SIT UPON DAVID'S THRONE WAS FULFILLED IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST'S FIRST COMING.

1. The Promise (II Sam. 7:12-14)

2. The Fulfillment

- (1) Heb. 1:5: Paul referred to this as having been fulfilled in connection with Christ's first coming. Note: this is a quotation taken from the original promise.
- (2) Acts 13:23: Paul affirmed that this promise was fulfilled in connection with Christ's first coming. "Hath" denotes accomplishment; hence, Christ's Kingship and Saviorhood were assumed together.
- (3) Acts 2:29-31: Peter affirmed that this promise was fulfilled in connection with Christ's first coming. This cannot be misunderstood. Peter interprets the promise for us, saying that Christ sat on David's throne following His resurrection.

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II. PROOF NUMBER TWO: EVERYTHING THAT THIS PROMISE EMBRACED WAS FULFILLED IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST'S FIRST COMING.

1. The Promised "Sure Mercies of David" Were Fulfilled In Connection With Christ's First Coming.
 - (1) The Promise (Isa. 55:3)
 - (2) The Fulfillment (Acts 13:32-38). Note: Premillennial people commonly quote Isa. 55:3 as being fulfilled in Christ's second coming, but Paul affirms it was fulfilled in His first coming. Paul shows the "sure mercies of David" to be forgiveness of sins—not a literal, earthly role.
2. The Promised Restoration Of The Tabernacle Of David Was Fulfilled In Connection With Christ's First Coming.
 - (1) The Promise (Isa. 16:5; Amos 9:11-12)
 - (2) The Fulfillment (Acts 15:14-18; Heb. 8:1-2). Note: In the passage in Hebrews, Paul affirms that Christ is *now* our High Priest in the true tabernacle. The passage in Acts relates the conversion of the Gentiles to the prophecy in Amos. Obviously, the "tabernacle" refers to the church which was set up on Pentecost. This setting up of the tabernacle was necessary if the Gentiles were to be converted. Is my opponent a Gentile? If so, the fact that he has the privilege of being converted *now* is living proof that the tabernacle of David is built.
3. The Promised "Key of David" Was Fulfilled In Connection With Christ's First Coming.
 - (1) The Promise (Isa. 22:22)
 - (2) The Fulfillment (Rev. 3:7). Note: Peter was given the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:19), and they were the same as the "key of David" mentioned by Isaiah and quoted by Christ Himself to the church in Philadelphia.
4. The Kingdom Over Which Christ Was To Rule Was A Realization In Connection With Christ's First Coming.
 - (1) The Promise (Isa. 9:6-7) (cf. Isa. 22:22 for "upon shoulder").
 - (2) The Fulfillment (Luke 1:32-33). Note: This was said in reference to Christ's first coming—not His second coming.

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III. PROOF NUMBER THREE: CHRIST SAT UPON DAVID'S THRONE WHEN HE SAT UPON THE FATHER'S THRONE. Premillennial advocates say that Christ is now sitting only on the "right hand" of the throne of "God"—not on the throne of *David*. The folly of this shallow theory is offset by a careful study of the Bible.

1. The Promise (Zech. 6:12-13). Note: It was prophesied that Christ would sit on Jehovah's throne, as well as David's.
2. The Fulfillment. Carefully follow the analysis of this prophecy.
 - (1) The "branch" is Christ (Isa. 11:1). Jesse was David's father. This is quoted, as fulfilled in Christ, by Paul (Rom. 15:12). Note: Christ is beyond dispute the one said to be sitting on God's throne.
 - (2) Christ sat on David's throne when He sat on His Father's throne. The only throne that David had was God's throne. David, Solomon, and Christ sat upon it (I Kings 2:12; I Chron. 29:23). Note: Premillennial devotees claim that Christ returned to heaven and sat down on the right hand of God's throne which, they say, was not David's throne. Actually, David sat on God's throne, for Solomon sat on God's throne, which was David's throne. So, when Christ sat on God's throne, He sat on David's throne. If my opponent objects that Christ is to sit on David's throne on earth in Jerusalem, I call upon him to prove it.

He assumes two errors: First, that Christ is not on God's throne, but beside it. Second, that David's throne will be on earth. These are easily exposed: First, Christ is seated on the throne of God, beside God—not merely beside the throne (Rev. 3:21). Second, this throne is in heaven—not on earth—and since David's throne was God's throne, Christ now sits on David's throne in heaven (a) Isa. 66:1 (b) Psa. 11:4 (c) Acts 7:49. *My respondent would remove Christ from His throne and place Him upon His footstool!*

- (3) Christ is a king and priest upon David's throne. The prophecy said, "The *branch* . . . shall sit upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne." In the New Testament, Christ is pictured as king and priest on the throne *now!*

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First, in Peter's sermon on Pentecost, Christ was presented as priest and king (Acts 2:29-36).

Second, Peter is showing that the promise made to David has been fulfilled already, in Christ, and in heaven. He reasons that while the promise was made to David, yet since David was on earth—not in heaven—and since Christ was in heaven—not on earth—the promise was fulfilled following Christ's ascension. This proves: (a) that Christ now sits on David's throne, according to the promise, (2) that David's throne is God's throne, and (c) that David's throne is in heaven. (cf. Heb. 1:3).

Third, Heb. 12:2.

Fourth, Melchisedek was a type of Christ (Heb. 7:1-10), who was both a priest and king. "Malachi" means "king," "Zedek" means "righteousness," "Salem" means "peace." Christ as a King on God's throne rules in *righteousness* and *peace*. Consider these prophecies with this in mind: (Jer. 33:15; Isa. 16:5; Isa. 9:6-7).

Fifth, (Jer. 33:17-18) . . . Why? The word "want" means "lack." Neither David nor the Levites would lack one to fill their offices. Christ would perpetually fill both at *once!*

Sixth, (Heb. 8:1).

Seventh, Christ is king and priest now. Christ's occupation of this dual office is in heaven—not on earth (Heb. 8:4; 10:12-13).

CHRIST IS NOW SITTING UPON DAVID'S THRONE

NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES CONFIRM IT

- I. The New Testament Affirms Christ To Be King Now.
 1. Christ Acknowledged This To Pilate, (Luke 23:3). By consulting any reliable Greek grammarian, such as Thayer, we learn that "Thou sayest it" is stronger in the Greek than in the English. Christ told Pilate, "Surely! You have spoken truth." Note: Premillennial people tell us that because Jews rejected Christ, He abandoned the idea of setting up His kingdom in connection with His first coming. But, a king implies a kingdom, and a kingdom implies a king. After the time when premillennialists tell us that Christ gave up hopes of establishing

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His kingdom, we hear Christ acknowledge that He is king; hence, that He has a kingdom to reign over.

2. Christ Claimed To Have The Authority Of A King (Matt. 28: 18). Note: Christ has possessed "all authority" in excess of 1900 years. Since it is "all" authority that He possesses, it is all that He as king could ever expect. And since He possesses this authority "in heaven and in earth," it is a simple matter for Him to sit on David's throne in heaven and rule His kingdom on earth. We are told that Christ is only a "crown prince" now—not a king in possession of authority. But, contrariwise, Christ claims kingly authority now, for He has "all authority."
3. First Century People Heard The Apostles Claim Christ To Be King In Their Times (Acts 17:7). Note: On the strength of Christ's acknowledgment to Pilate that He was king, the ruler caused to be inscribed over His head, "This is the King of the Jews" (Lk. 23:38). Pilate asked this question because the Jews had charged Jesus with making that claim (Lk. 23:2). This report was acknowledged by Christ to be true. We can know, therefore, that a similar report of the Jews later would be true also. If Christ acknowledged the truth of this report in Jerusalem, why would not the same report be true in Thessalonica?

II. Christ Is Reigning Now, And Will Continue To Reign Until The End Of Time.

The reign of Christ is carefully placed between two monumental events—*The Resurrection of Christ* and *The Resurrection of the Human Race* (I Cor. 15:20-28). Note: (a) We are introduced to two resurrections: that of Christ and that of mankind. (b) The resurrection of mankind will occur at Christ's second coming. (c) Christ is to reign until He has put all enemies under His feet, the last of which is death, which will be destroyed at the resurrection. This means that Christ will reign *until* His second coming, which will be at the resurrection when death is destroyed—not *after*, His second coming. (d) The kingdom is a present institution, for at His second coming, Christ will return it to the Father rather than receive it as premillennialists teach!

1. The Beginning Of Christ's Reign Is Connected With His Resurrection. This is confirmed by Peter (Acts 2:29-34). Note: God raised up Christ to sit on David's throne, Peter says that the beginning point of that reign was Christ's resurrection.
2. The End Of Christ's Reign Is Connected With His Second Coming And The Resurrection Of Mankind. This is confirmed

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by other passages than the I Cor. 15:20-28 passage. (cf. Heb. 1:13; Heb. 10:12-13). Note: Christ is pictured in Hebrews as having the "sceptre of righteousness" in His hand, which is the "sceptre of thy (Christ's) kingdom." He sits on the "right hand of God" until his enemies will all be put under him—the last being death. Christ began reigning when He began sitting on the throne. When He quits sitting and reigning on His throne, He will come again; hence, when He comes again, He will have quit reigning—not just having begun! If not, why not?

III. According To Prophecy, Christ Is Reigning On David's Throne In Heaven—Not on Earth.

1. God Predicted The End Of Earthly Reigning Upon David's Throne: (cf. II Chron. 26:8; II Chron. 36:9-16). Coniah (abbreviation for Jeconiah or Jehoiakin) was the last earthly ruler upon David's throne (cf. II Kings 24:14-15; Jer. 22:28-30). Note: Christ was of the descendants of Coniah, (Matt. 1:11-14; Lk. 3:27). Coniah was not childless in a physical sense, else he would not have had "seed" (Jer. 22:28-30) nor would he have been in the ancestry of Christ. Coniah was the last of the house of David to rule as a Jewish king in Judah. However, Christ was his seed, and he was to sit on David's throne. The only way this Scripture could be fulfilled is for Christ not to sit on David's throne in *Judah!* This conclusion is fool-proof and overwhelming. For the prophecy declared, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord . . . No man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David and ruling anymore in Judah." Coniah had seed, and Christ was of that seed, and Christ according to other prophecies was to sit on David's throne, but according to this prophecy could not prosper on that throne "*in Judah.*" The only way premillennialists could both permit this prophecy to be fulfilled and allow Christ to prosper on David's throne would be to acknowledge that David's throne is in heaven—not in Judah (the province of Jerusalem)!
2. Christ Will Remain In Heaven On David's Throne Until The Fulfillment Of All That The Prophets Have Foretold, (Acts 3:19-21). Note: *He shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until . . .* Until what? "Until the times of restitution of all things" spoken by the prophets.
 - (2) Christ's sitting upon David's throne was one of these (II Sam. 7:12-14); Lk. 1:32-33).

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- (2) The abolition of death is one of these (Heb. 1:3,13); 19:12-13; I Cor. 15:20-28).
- (3) The second coming of Christ is one of these (Jude 14,15).
- (4) The resurrection is one of these things. (I Cor. 15:53-54 are quotations from the prophets (cf. Isa. 25:8; Hos. 13:14). Note: All four of these are referred to in the passage in I Cor. 15:20-28. Bound on the one side by Christ's resurrection and on the other by man's insurrection, the kingdom of Christ is ruled over by Christ, who sits in heaven on David's throne. He will remain there until all things spoken by the prophets are fulfilled except the last two, which Paul in I Cor. 15 shows will be fulfilled by His second coming and *at* His second coming.

CHRIST, AS KING, NOW REIGNS OVER HIS KINGDOM

- I. It Was Predicted That Christ Would Receive A Kingdom.
 1. It was predicted that Christ would His kingdom at His ascension.
 - (1) Prediction (Dan. 7:13-14).
 - (2) Fulfillment (Acts 1:8-9; Lk. 24:26; I Tim. 3:16).
Christ's glory and His kingdom denote the same thing (cf. Matt. 20:21; Mk. 20:34, both scriptures refer to the same event). When Christ entered His glory, He entered His kingdom. After the Jews' rejection of Christ, after His death and resurrection, at the time premillennialists tell us that Christ had abandoned all thought of establishing His kingdom, Christ Himself charged His disciples with being fools and of having slow hearts to believe that what all the prophets had predicted concerning Christ as king and His kingdom was coming to pass. Note that much later Paul affirms that Christ entered His glory at His ascension. Thus, He entered His kingdom at His ascension, premillennialists notwithstanding! Christ went to heaven for His kingdom—He did not come to earth for it (cf. Lk. 19:11-28). Upon His return, he sits in judgment, as the parable shows.
 2. It was predicted that the kingdom would be established in the days with Christ's first coming.
 - (1) Prediction (Dan. 2:44).

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- (2) Fulfillment (Mk. 1:14-15). Premillennialists unblushingly acknowledge that Christ here referred to Daniel's prophecy (2:44). This being so, they place themselves in an embarrassing position, as the following questions will show:
- (a) Could the "time" be fulfilled and the prophecy not? A *time* prophecy must be fulfilled on schedule, or it becomes defaulted.
 - (b) Did God know whether or not that prophecy would be fulfilled when Christ affirmed that it was to be? If He did, then God cannot be trusted, because He would have announced a time-fact that miscarried. If He did not, then He is not the omniscient God that we believe Him to be.
3. It was predicted that the kingdom would be established while the apostles lived.
- (1) Prediction (Mark 9:1).
 - (2) Fulfillment (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:7, 8; I Cor. 4:19-20).
Note: The kingdom and the power were to come together. The power and the Spirit were to come together. Therefore, since the Spirit came upon Pentecost, the power and the kingdom also came on Pentecost!
 - (a) The apostles were to sit upon twelve thrones of authority in the kingdom (Matt. 19:28). The apostles were "ambassadors of Christ" (II Cor. 5:20) who, under the direction of Christ, set up the kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:18-19); 18:18).
 - (b) God's people, in the present dispensation, have received the kingdom (Heb. 12:28).
 - (c) We gained admittance by the new birth (Jn. 3:5).
 - (d) It was typically predicted that Christians would be in kingdom.
TYPE: Ex. 19:6; ANTI-TYPE (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).
4. It was predicted that Christ would share His kingdom with His subjects, who are alive during the present dispensation.
- (1) Prediction (Luke 22:29).
 - (2) Fulfillment.
Since Matt. 19:28 refers to a period of time, it must of necessity represent this present dispensation which began the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection—in other words, the period of time wherein men and women are *regenerated*, begotten

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anew. To connect, as some do, "Ye which have followed me," with "in the regeneration" is erroneous. The words, "Ye which have followed me," only serve to identify those to whom Christ was speaking.

As has already been said, the word "regeneration" refers to a period of time, which is the period wherein sinners are regenerated. Christ, in the passage under consideration, names four distinct phases of the same period, namely: (a) regeneration, (b) Christ sitting on His throne, (c) the apostles sitting on thrones, and (d) judging by the apostles. These all are parts of the same period and are functioning simultaneously. When, therefore, we discover commencing and ceasing, we shall also have located the beginning and the ending of the other three.

- (1) When did God begin regenerating men through His Spirit, His ministers and His word? The word of God shows this work was started on Pentecost and will not cease until Christ comes for His church and judgment. Surely this is beyond all dispute. This present dispensation—the Christian era—is, then, the period referred to by Christ as the regeneration.
- (2) When did Christ sit on His throne in glory? Christ entered into glory when He ascended to heaven following His resurrection (Lk. 24:16, I Tim. 3:16). (cf. Acts 2:36; 17:7; I Tim. 5:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16; I Cor. 15:20-28; I Pet. 3:22; Psa. 110:1; Acts 2:29-36). Thus Christ took His seat on His throne in glory at His ascension into heaven and will remain there until He comes again at the resurrection (I Cor. 15:20-28). The period of Christ's reigning is identical with the period of regeneration.
- (3) When did the apostles sit on their thrones of judgment? Christ has already answered this question: "When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones." The word "throne" represents authority; consequently, Christ meant authority for judgment when He spoke of the apostles sitting on thrones of judgment. They did not take seats upon literal thrones of rare wood and gold, but were rather given authority for judgment.

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- (4) When were the apostles given authority for judgment? The purpose of their being elevated to thrones was for judgment, for pronouncing decisions on questions of faith and practice. From this fact, we draw the simple conclusion that they began their judging immediately upon being enthroned, which was on the day of Pentecost when they received the promised power, the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:48-49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).
- (5) What is the "judging" which the apostles are doing? Christ placed in their power the authority to "bind" and "loose", to "remit" and "retain" laws governing admission into the kingdom (church) (cf. Matt. 16:19; 18:18; Jn. 20:22-23).
- (6) The word of Christ is judging now. (Jn. 12:48; Rom. 2:2, 16; Rev. 20:11-12). Judgment is being passed daily by the word of the apostles. Men need not wait for the day of judgment to come to know their fate—the sinner is "condemned already" (Jn. 3:18; cf. also Jn. 3:30).

It is evident that fleshly Israel was not meant, but the true, spiritual Israel of which Paul speaks in the Roman letter (Rom. 2:28-29). The twelve tribes of Israel are unidentified today.

II. The Kingdom was A Reality In The Apostolic Days.

1. Eighty-four preachers announced its approach: John (Matt. 3:2); Jesus (Mk. 1:15); The Twelve (Matt. 10:7; The Seventy (Luke 10:9). Note the kingdom was at hand, but the second coming was not at hand.
2. Christ and His Apostles Preached It. (Jn. 3:5; Matt. 19:28; Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).
3. The early Christians were in the kingdom (Col. 1:13; I Thess. 2:12; Rev. 1:9; 12:10; Matt. 26:29; I Cor. 11:26).

THE LAND PROMISE MADE WITH ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED HAS BEEN FULFILLED

Four questions, when properly answered, will show that the promise which God made with Abraham and his seed has been fulfilled. It follows, then, that if it has been fulfilled, it will not be fulfilled sometime in the future.

I. QUESTION ONE

"What is the land promise that God made to Abraham that I hear so much about?"

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God made four distinct covenants with Abraham:

- (1) The NATION covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) in which He promised to make of Abraham a great nation.
- (2) The SEED covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) in which He promised Christ to all nations (Gal. 3:16, 17).
- (3) The CIRCUMCISION covenant (Gen. 17:9-13) in which He promised the blessings of the NATION covenant.
- (4) The LAND covenant in which He promised to Abraham and his seed the land that we know as Palestine (Gen. 15:18-21). In each covenant, God promised some one thing. In the land covenant, God's promise was the possession of it as long as Israel did His will.

II. QUESTION TWO

"Is the 'Larger Land of Canaan' promise the same as the promise of land to Israel?"

Certainly! There are those who do not believe that God kept His promise with Abraham, so they say that God kept part of it, but not the promise of the "larger land of Canaan". Actually, they were the same promise. No distinction should be made where there is no difference. Here are the Scriptures: When Abraham arrived in what was called Canaan, the Lord appeared to Him and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7). God had him look "northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gen. 13:14, 15). (Gen. 15:18) This latter boundary is what is called "the larger land of Canaan". But, notice that it was referred to as the covenant given to Abraham.

III. QUESTION THREE

"Did God intend Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to inherit that land personally?"

Probably not, for God made no attempt to give it to them. God keeps His promises, and He would have given it to them personally had He so intended. They did not resist the idea, so God's action settles the question. But, notice that the promise was made to Abraham and his seed: "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever" (Gen. 13:15). Again, (Gen. 17:8). In verse seven, it was called a covenant, and in verse eight God recognized that while he had been given it, yet Abraham was a stranger in it. So, Abraham had the covenant, but not the land.

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IV. QUESTION FOUR

"Was the land promise fulfilled?"

Yes, indeed! Just before they entered the land, God said, "Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them" (Deut. 1:8). It was the "larger land" (verse 7). It was the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was fulfilled. Again: "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Josh. 21:43-45). Further: (Josh. 23:14). Again, after identifying the borders of this land, Nehemiah quotes God thus: (Neh. 9:7, 8). It was fulfilled, for "David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates" (II Sam. 8:3). (I Kings 4:21). So, this "larger land of Canaan" reaching from "the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18), was given to Israel, and they possessed it. It is not yet to be fulfilled, for it has been fulfilled, certain religious beliefs notwithstanding!

PROMISES AND PROPHECIES CONCERNING ISRAEL AND THE LAND OF PALESTINE

The land covenant which God made with Abraham, and subsequently to all Israel, like all covenants was made between two parties and would be fulfilled only if both parties kept the conditions specified in the covenant. God always kept His commitments, but Israel usually failed to meet the conditions which God placed her under.

In respect to the land covenant, God promised a land-home for Israel, to be retained as long as she obeyed the law of Moses, but to be forfeited when she rebelled against Him. However, God made provision for a return from the captivity into which she would be carried, due to her disobedience, at such a time as she would repent of her evil.

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Every "proof-text" which is submitted by the premillennialists is an attempt to prove that Christ will yet establish a Jewish kingdom in Palestine relates to God's original promise to give Israel a land to live in—Palestine—or to His promise to return her to that land from her captivity in Babylon.

It can be shown that there remains not a single unfulfilled prophecy or promise wherein the Jews are promised a home in Judea.

Every "proof-text" was either not fulfilled because Israel defaulted the covenant by her disobedience, or the promise or prophecy has been fulfilled either in her first occupation of that land or in her second occupation following the Babylonian captivity.

The main "proof-texts" will be classified by the common Biblical periods.

I. Moses Wrote Approximately 900 Years Before The Babylonian Captivity.

1. Deut. 4:27 was fulfilled in the captivity (Deut. 6:10-15).

Note: This does not teach a return to Palestine in the future yet to come.

2. Deut. 28 through 30 was fulfilled in Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity.

- (1) The promise was conditional.

- (Deut. 28:1, 2).

- (2) But, Israel failed to keep the conditions, so the promise was not kept. (Deut. 28:62, 63).

- Note: "Destroy you," "Bring you to naught," "Ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest."

- (3) God warned Israel that she would not be spared.

- (Deut. 28:29).

- (4) A parallel was the case of Solomon (I Chron. 28:6-9).

- Note: Yet, because Solomon failed to meet the conditions, Israel was divided into two nations and eventually carried captivity from the land-home.

- (5) The only fulfillment these passages were to realize was in the Babylonian captivity. Nehemiah cited this passage and claimed its fulfillment in his time. He was then in that captivity.

3. Lev. 26:40-45 was fulfilled in Israel's return from captivity.

Note: This is referring to the Babylonian Captivity. That it has been fulfilled is evident from the following Scripture: (Jer. 29:10-17).

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II. Samuel Prophesied Approximately 400 Years Before The Babylonian Captivity.

1. II Sam. 7:12-16 is fulfilled, as Heb. 1:5 shows
2. I Chron. 17:11 is fulfilled, as Acts 2:29 shows

Note: It is claimed that these are yet to be fulfilled, but an inspired statement that it HAS BEEN fulfilled is to be preferred above premillennial guesses.

III. David Prophesied Approximately 400 Years Before the Last Captivity.

1. Psa. 2 is fulfilled, as Acts 4:24-26; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; and Heb. 5:5 show.
 - (1) Vs. 1, 2 are quoted in Acts 4:24-26 in reference to Christ's first coming, crucifixion, and kingship.
 - (2) V. 7 is quoted in Acts 13:33 in reference to Christ's resurrection.
 - (3) V. 7 is quoted in Heb. 1:5 and 5:5 in reference to Christ's priesthood.
2. Psa. 72, similar to Zech. 9:9, 10, is obviously fulfilled, because the latter is quoted in Matt. 21:9 as fulfilled.
3. Psa. 110 is fulfilled, as Heb. 5:6-10; 6:20; and 7:17 show.

IV. Isaiah Prophesied More Than 100 Years Before The Babylonian Captivity.

1. Isa. 2 was fulfilled beginning on Pentecost.

Prophecy (Isa. 2:1-5)
Fulfillment (Luke 24:46-49)

Note: Mic. 4:1-7 is a prophecy identical with Isa. 2:1-5. Either one, or both, was cited by Christ as referring to the Christian era—not a premillennial age!
2. Isa. 11:1-10 is fulfilled as Acts 13:22-24 and Rom. 12-12 show.

Prophecy (Isa. 2:1-5)

Note: This is identical to parts of Mic. 4:1-7. Premillennialists insist on taking most prophecies literally, when in reality they are intended figuratively as in Isa. 11. If the animals mentioned are to be taken literally, then the "Branch" in verse 10 and the "holy mountain" of verse 9 are also to be taken literally. If not, why not? If not, what shall we take literally? Verse 9 does not teach universal peace, but universal knowledge. Reference is made to the church (Isa. 1-4; Heb. 12:22, 23; Col. 1:23; Rom. 10:18) and is fulfilled in the Gentiles seeking Christ.

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Fulfillment

- (1) Verse 1 is cited in Acts 13:22-24 as having been fulfilled in the Christian era—not a premillennial time.
- (2) Verse 10 is cited in Rom. 12:1, 2 as having been fulfilled in the Christian era—not a premillennial theory.

3. Isa. 18 is fulfilled as the context shows. Note the series of chapters in which this prophecy is set:

- (1) ch. 13—destruction of Babylon
- (2) ch. 14—destruction of Philistia
- (3) ch. 15—destruction of Moab
- (4) ch. 17—destruction of Damascus
- (5) ch. 18—destruction of Ethiopia
- (6) ch. 19—destruction of Egypt

Note: All of these are future or all are history. They were future when prophesied, but history now when fulfilled.

4. Isa. 28:14-16 is fulfilled as Rom. 9:33, I Pet. 2:6, and Eph. 2:20 show.

5. Isa. 31:1-5 is fulfilled as is evidenced by its message. It is merely a warning against Israel making an alliance with Egypt.

6. Isa. 55:3 is fulfilled as Acts 13:33, 34 shows.

7. Isa. 65:17-20 is fulfilled, as parallel passages show.

V. Jeremiah Prophesied During The Jerusalem Siege, Just Prior To The Babylonian Captivity, And His Prophecies Were Fulfilled In Israel's Return From Captivity.

1. Jer. 23:5-8 is fulfilled in Christ as comparative passages show.

Prophecy (Jer. 23:5-8)

Fulfillment

- (1) Zech. 6:13 is a comparative passage, and it has been fulfilled as a reference to earlier messages will show. (Zech. 6:13).

- (2) Isa. 11:1 is a comparative passage, and it has been fulfilled, as the same reference will show. (Isa. 11:1).

2. Jer. 25:11-13 is fulfilled as II Chron. 30:20-23 and Ezra. 1:1-4 show.

VI. Ezekiel Prophesied During Israel's Exile in Babylon.

Prophecy (Ezek. 36:16-28)

Fulfillment

- (1) Ezekiel's prophecies referred to the Babylonian captivity. (Ezek. 3:11; Ezek. 12:13; Ezek. 19:9).

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- (2) The law was then in force and was involved in Ezekiel's prophecies. (Ezek. 36:25; Ezek. 36:38).
- (3) Ezekiel, chapters 34, 36, and 37, commonly referred to by premillennialists, is fulfilled in the return of Israel from Babylon.

VII. Daniel Prophesied During Israel's Exile.

Prophecies (Dan. 2:44) (Dan. 7:13, 14)

Fulfillment (Mark 1:14, 15) (Heb. 12:28)

Note: Christ declared that the time of these time-prophecies was filled to the full, and Paul affirmed that the kingdom had arrived!

VIII. Numerous Minor Prophets Prophesied Just Prior to, During, And Immediately Following the Babylonian Captivity.

Their prophecies are either fulfilled in the captivity or are given in figurative language and refer to the church and heaven.

1. Joel 3:9-14 refers to the end of Israel's captivity.

Prophecy (Joel 3:9-14)

Fulfillment (Joel 3:1, 2)

Note: if this refers to other than the Babylonian captivity, no one knows it.

2. Amos 9:13-15 is fulfilled as Acts 15:13-17 shows.

Prophecy (Amos 9:13-15)

Fulfillment (Acts 15:13-17)

Note: We being Gentiles could not be saved if this were not fulfilled.

3. Nah. 2:3, 4, refers to ancient Ninevah.

Prophecy (Nah. 2:3, 4)

Fulfillment (Nah. 1:1)

Note: A similar reference was made to Tyre and Judah, and it is evident that they are fulfilled.

4. Zech. 1:14-18 is fulfilled as a careful reading will show.

5. Zeph. 3:8 refers to the punishment to be visited upon Jerusalem following the last captivity.

Fulfillment (Zeph. 3:20)

6. Zech. 8:10 refers to the rebuilding of the temple of Zerubbabel.

Prophecy (Hag. 2:13, 14)

Fulfillment: The following are comparative passages (Ezra 5:1) (Ezra. 6:14) (II Chron. 15:3-6)

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ANTI-SCRIPTURAL ASPECTS OF
PREMILLENNIALISM'S THEORY OF THE
RESTORATION OF THE JEWISH NATION

1. This Premillennial Theory Would Make the Restored Nation keep the Law of Moses.

The promise of Israel's restoration was based upon their keeping the law of Moses, which law has been abolished.

- (1) The only promise of a restoration of the nation shows this. (Deut. 30:1-10).
- (2) The only restoration that can be expected shows this. (Neh. 1:7-9).

Note: The promise in Deuteronomy, chapters 28-30, demands Israel FIRST to be converted before they will return. Premillennialism says they will first RETURN and THEN be converted. Don't forget that what a FEW Jews may do or even MANY Jews may do is NOT WHAT A NATION MAY DO. And what a nation MAY do may or may not be God's doings. If the Jews should return as a PEOPLE (not a NATION), it does not necessary follow that such a return is the fulfillment of BIBLE!

2. This Premillennial Theory Ignores the Plain Teaching That the NATION Will Not Be Restored.

The following passages teach the utter dissolving of the nation so that it would never again be intact nor inhabit the land of promise:

- (1) Hos. 1:4-6
- (2) Isa. 5:1-6
- (3) Jer. 19:1-11
- (4) Jer. 23:39, 40
- (5) Matt. 21:33-45

Note: That Christ teaches He will grind to powder those of whom He spoke, and the Jews "perceived that he spake of them."

- (6) Matt. 23:37, 38

3. This Premillennial Theory Overlooks The Impossibility of Re-allotment of the Land To A Nation.

Land inheritance was given and retained solely through family estates, which has been lost.

- (1) Josh. 24:28

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- (2) Lev. 25:23-28

Note: But, Herod the Great destroyed all Jewish genealogies and God forbids them in the gospel dispensation. Hence, note I Tim. 1:4; Tit. 3:9.

This Premillennial Theory Minimizes The Importance Of The Christian Dispensation:

This is the age of the gospel-conversion. There will be no "second chance" for the Jew as the Premillennialists teach.

- (1) The conversion of Israel must come with the Christian dispensation, because these are the "last days."

First: This age is called the "last days": (a) the "fulness of time" (Gal. 4:4). (b) "The dispensation of the fulness of time". (c) "Last days" (Acts 2:16, 17, Heb. 1:1, 2).

Second: Peter wrote to the scattered Jews: (I Pet. 1:19, 20). Note, that these are the last times for Jews as well as the Gentiles.

- (2) The conversion of Israel must come within the scope of the Great Commission.

First: The Great Commission is for ALL nations (Matt. 28:19).

Second: In the matter of salvation God has put no difference between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 15:9; Acts 10:34, 35).

Third: The Great Commission extends to the "end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

- (3) The conversion of Israel must come within the existence of the church, for it will exist to the end of time. (Eph. 3:21).

- (4) The conversion of Israel must come within the confines of the New Covenant. (Rom. 10:4-12).

Note: Premillennialists claim that the gospel and the church fail to convert the Jews; therefore, Christ will come in Person to do what these have failed to do. This will be their "second chance". Paul taught us that we walk by "faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7). But, these theorists want to "bring Christ down from above" that the Jews may see and believe. Paul was not a premillennialist and denied its theory.

- (5) The conversion of Israel must come before Christ comes again, because at that time, there will be neither a place for conversion nor an opportunity for conversion.

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First: The world will be consumed when Christ comes: (II Pet. 3:10, 11).

Second: There will be no longer an opportunity: (II Pet. 3:9, 15).

5. This Premillennial Theory Makes A Distinction Where There Is No Difference:

The Bible teaches that there is no difference between the Jews and Gentiles now.

(a) Acts 10:34, 35. (b) Rom. 10:12, 13. (c) I Cor. 12:13.

(d) Gal. 3:26-28. (e) Rom. 2,28, 29. (f) Acts 15:9. (g) Eph. 2:11-19.

Note: Thus, God will not save one nation by the preached gospel and another nation through personal persuasions.

6. This Premillennial Theory Corrupts The True Israel of God. New Testament Israel is not the old fleshly Israel, but Spiritual Israel, the Church.

First: (Gal. 6:15, 16)

Second: (I Pet. 2:9)

Third: Old Testament Israel, as a NATION and as having any STANDING WITH GOD, has been destroyed. (Matt. 21:33-43). Note, that the kingdom has been taken away from Israel, and given to others, for as the next two verses show, Christ came to "grind to powder" the nation of Israel.

Fourth: The only hope of Israel is salvation in heaven — not a home in Jerusalem. (Acts 26:6, 7) (Acts 28:20).

Note: The ancients had a much better place than this earth to which to look forward: (Heb. 10:34) (Heb. 11:16).

Fifth: Circumcision (God's sign of fleshly Israel) no longer accounts with God. (Gal. 5:6, 6:13-16).

Sixth: Paul had no confidence in the flesh; he counted the fleshly advantages of the Jews in him a loss for Christ (Phil. 2:2-8).

Seventh: Conversion of the Jew makes him identical with the Gentiles (Col. 3:10, 11). See also Eph. 2:14-16; John 4:20-24.

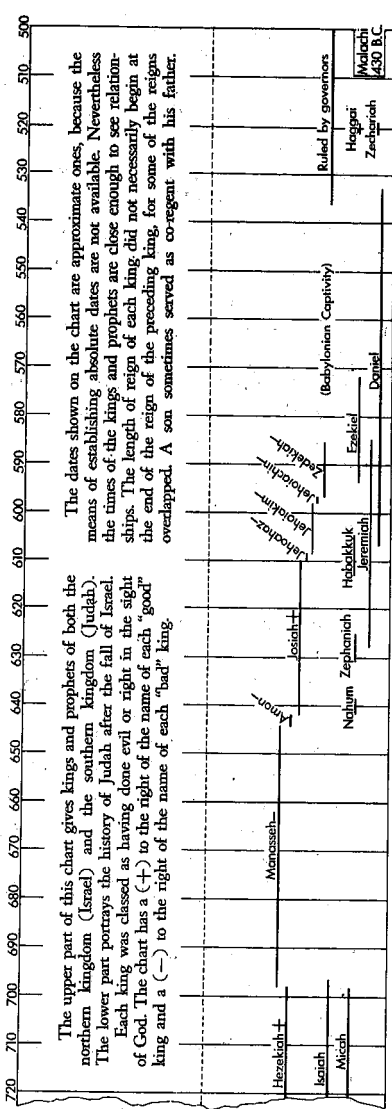
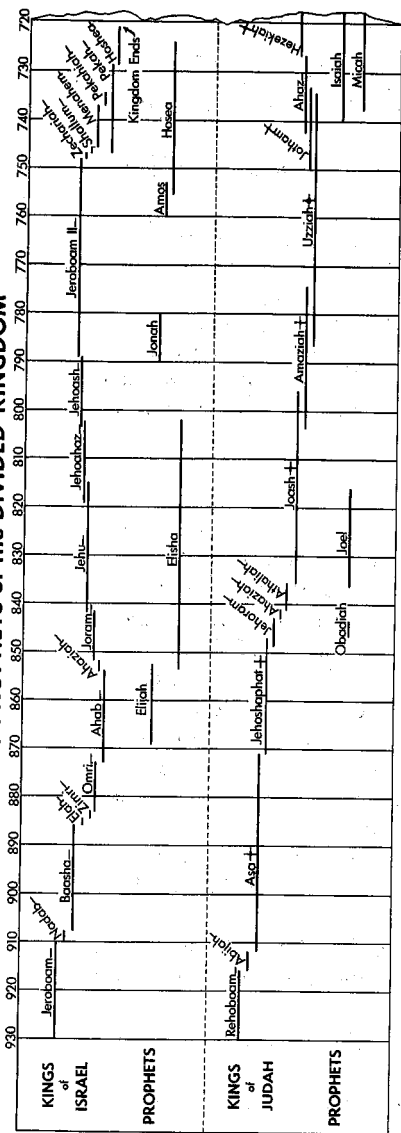
7. This Premillennial Theory Changes Paul's Allegory of Gal. 4:21-31:

(1) The two women represent the two covenants—Old and New.

(2) The two sons represent the two nations—fleshly and spiritual.

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KINGS and PROPHETS of the DIVIDED KINGDOM



The dates shown on the chart are approximate ones, because the means of establishing absolute dates are not available. Nevertheless the times of the kings and prophets are close enough to see relationships. The length of reign of each king did not necessarily begin at the end of the reign of the preceding king, for some of the reigns overlapped. A son sometimes served as coregent with his father.

The upper part of this chart gives kings and prophets of both the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah). The lower part portrays the history of Judah after the fall of Israel. Each king was classed as having done evil or right in the sight of God. The chart has a (+) to the right of the name of each "good" king and a (-) to the right of the name of each "bad" king.

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SPECIAL STUDY FIVE

POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

by LeRoy Riley

Solomon's death (930 B.C.) brought the collapse of David's empire, and was followed by the disruption of the United Kingdom of Israel and Judah. The long separation of Judah from the northern tribes made them think of Judah as almost a separate territory.

Delegates from all the tribes came together at Shechem to elect Solomon's successor. Despite their differences the Northern tribes were prepared to accept Solomon's son Rehoboam as king. That is, if he would agree to return to the terms of the ancient covenant which his father's oppressive measures had violated. These requests would have to be granted if unity was to be preserved. But Rehoboam refused to give in to their request and did not promise to alleviate any of the burdens that Solomon had placed upon them.

With this the northern tribes withdrew their support from Rehoboam and placed it in one of their own leaders, Jeroboam. Jeroboam was one of the leaders in stating terms of *allegiance* to Rehoboam. The delegates from the northern tribes proclaimed him king and he set up his capital there at Shechem.

Rehoboam tried to exercise authority over the rebellious tribes by sending the officer in charge of the delegates to them. They showed their rebellion further by stoning the officer to death.

Rehoboam was left with a tiny kingdom consisting of the small tribe of Benjamin on the north where Jerusalem was located and the tribe of Judah. He would have sent an army to try to regain the northern territory but the prophets of Judah would not let him. The division between the two parts of the nation had come to stay.

At the time of the division of the kingdom Shishak (Sheshonk) was king of Egypt. In the fifth year of the divided kingdom (925) Shishak mounted an invasion of Palestine. We have accounts of this invasion in I Kings 14-25, II Chron. 12:1ff and an Egyptian account preserved on a pylon of the temple of Omun at Karnak. The Biblical account concentrates on Shishak's appropriating the gold shields of the

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royal bodyguard. The Egyptian account gives a list of cities conquered in Asia of which about 120 are legible. A number of these are Israelite cities. The invasion covered both Judah and Israel, for the list included cities as far north as Megiddo and the Plains of Jezreel, and eastward across the Jordan. Both kingdoms suffered greatly because of the invasion.

In her weakened condition Judah could not think seriously of reconquering the northern tribes. But this did not lead her to make peace with Israel either. Instead it caused her to seek allies. She found allies in the kings of Damascus (Syria), the successors of Rezin who founded a dynasty there during the reign of Solomon. The son of Rehoboam, Abijah became king of Judah in 913 and reigned until 911. During his short reign he enlisted the support of Tabrimmon, king of Damascus, from about 911 to 890. The same agreement was renewed between their sons; Asa who reigned in Judah, from 911 to 870, and Benhadad I who reigned in Damascus from 890 to 841.

As a result of these alliances Israel had to watch both her northern and southern borders. If she tried to attack Judah she could expect an invasion from the north.

During the period of time in Israel, Jeroboam I died (910) and was followed by his son Nadab. Nadab's wicked reign lasted only one year. He was assassinated by Baasha who made himself king (909).

Baasha fortified the frontier town of Ramah as an outpost against Judah. Asa sent a message to Benhadad I, who responded by attacking Israel from the north. While Baasha was in the north fighting, Asa sent work parties to demolish the fortification of Ramah. They carried the material back to Benjamin where they built two fortifications for Asa.

Asa was also victorious in battle against an Egyptian named Zerah. It was not the strength of Judah that won the battle, but it was the Lord's might.

At the death of Baasha in Israel, civil war broke out. His son Elath ascended to the throne only to be killed by a captain in his army, Zimri. Zimri reigned for only seven days when he himself was besieged by Omri who was commander and chief of the army. Zimri committed suicide by burning the king's house over him. Omri reigned only eight years after his victory over Zimri, but during this time he was able to make Israel a stable country politically. His reign brought consolidation from within, victory over the other nations and

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alliances. These factors held true during the reign of the rest of his dynasty. One other outstanding achievement of his reign was the moving of the capital from Shechem to Samaria. Samaria could be more easily fortified than Shechem and was therefore a much better place for the capital to be located.

Omri's son Ahab followed his father as king of Israel. He proved to be one of the strongest kings politically that Israel was to have. He also proved to be one of the most wicked.

There was a friendship between Ahab and the new king of Judah, Jehoshaphat the son of Asa. This friendship caused a period of peace between Israel and Judah.

In order to cement an alliance with the king of Phoenicia, Ahab married his daughter, the wicked and idolatrous Jezebel. It was primarily her influence that caused the nation to fall into idolatry to the great extent that it did during this period.

Ahab was strong politically because of the army which he commanded. He is credited with a fighting force of 2,000 chariots and 10,000 men. The number of chariots was greater than any other king at this time. He went to battle on three different occasions with Benhadad, king of Syria from 890 to 841. He was successful in the first two, but lost his life in the third.

During his reign Moab was forced to pay tribute to Ahab.

In a complete contrast to Israel, Judah was experiencing a return to the Lord. Jehoshaphat, who reigned from 873 to 848, was noted for his godliness. He tried to get the people to know the law of the Lord on an individual basis and not just as a nation. As a result of his respect for God, the surrounding nations including the Philistines and the Arabians paid tribute to Judah. Obadiah the prophet was probably a young man during the reign of Jehoshaphat.

His friendship with Ahab of Israel proved to be his biggest mistake. On one occasion it almost proved fatal. Ahab made a great show of hospitality to Jehoshaphat during a visit to Samaria and then asked him to be his ally in a campaign to recover Ramoth-Gilead. Jehoshaphat suggested that God's will should be determined before a decision was made. Ahab agreed and asked his prophets for their advice. They prophesied success for the venture. But this did not satisfy Jehoshaphat, and he asked if there were not a real prophet of God there. Micaiah, a man of God, was sent for. He explained that God had put a spirit of delusion in the minds of all the prophets so

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that Ahab might be doomed. Ahab went ahead with the plan without the aid of Jehoshaphat and was killed.

The most lasting and probably the worst result of their friendship was that Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, married the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, Athaliah. She proved to be almost as wicked as her mother.

At the death of Ahab his son Ahaziah became king. The good feeling still held through his short reign.

During the reign of Ahaziah (853-852) the Moabites, who had been paying a tribute of 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams, revolted. Ahaziah would have put down the revolt but he was severely injured when he fell through the lattice in his palace in Samaria. He sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub, god of Ekron, whether he would live or not. Elijah intercepted them and prophesied that he would die. In his anger the king sent 50 men to capture Elijah, but they were consumed by fire.

When Ahaziah died (852) his younger brother Jehoram became king in Israel (he had the same name as the son of Jehoshaphat as a result of the friendship that existed between Jehoshaphat and Ahab). Before Jehoshaphat died his son, Jehoram, began to reign (853), taking over full control at the death of his father in 848. This resulted in a man named Jehoram reigning in both Judah and Israel.

Jehoram of Israel made war against Moab during the time when Jehoshaphat and his son were reigning together. Jehoram invited Jehoshaphat to join him in the war. Jehoshaphat accepted. They, with the help of Edom, went up through Edom to fight Moab. When the water failed Elisha told them to dig ditches and they did. Water came and the Moabites, at sunrise, seeing the reflection of the water, thought it was blood and rushed in for the kill, but were badly defeated in the ensuing battle.

Before Jehoshaphat died he gave his six younger sons gifts so that there would be no fighting among them over the throne. Despite this when Jehoshaphat died Jehoram had his six brothers killed.

The wickedness that came with his reign can be attributed to his wife's counsel. The decline that came with the idolatrous practices resulted in the revolt of Edom and the Levitical city of Libnah. *Obadiah* prophesied against Edom about this time.

Elijah denounced him for his wickedness, and God sent a plague upon Judah—especially upon the house of Jehoram. All but his youngest son Ahaziah (named after the oldest son of Ahab) were slain by the Arabians. Jehoram died a horrible death as a result of disease,

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but no one wept for him in Judah. *Obadiah*, a prophet of the Southern Kingdom, foretold Edom's downfall because of her war against God's people and the account may be read in II Chron. 27.

Ahaziah succeeded his father as king. He aligned himself with Jehoram of Israel. This proved to be a mistake. God commanded Elijah to anoint Jehu king over Israel. This commandment was fulfilled by Elisha, who sent a young prophet to Ramoth-Gilead, where Jehu was with his army, to carry out the command. The army proclaimed him king when they heard the news. Jehu slew Jehoram the king in Jezreel where he had gone after being wounded in a battle with Hazael of Syria. Ahaziah, king of Judah, had come up to see his wounded ally. He tried to escape from Jehu but was killed by one of Jehu's archers in the attempt. This action made Jehu king of Israel and left Judah without a king.

The death of Ahaziah (841) gave his mother Athaliah a chance at the throne. To become the ruler of Judah she killed all the rest of the royal family except the 6 month old son of Ahaziah who was protected by Jehoida, the priest, in the temple. Athaliah reigned only 6 years. In the 7th year there came a popular uprising led by Jehoida. He succeeded in putting the royal prince Joash on the throne.

During his reign (841-814) in Israel Jehu put down the worship of the idols brought in by Ahab and Jezebel. He also executed the judgment of God against the house of Ahab. For this God promised that his descendants would be on the throne to the 4th generation.

Despite the favor of God and his righteous actions he worshiped the calves set up by Jeroboam I.

Jehu was followed by his son Jehoaz who maintained the calf worship of Jehu his father. As a result of this apostasy God permitted the Syrians (probably during the last of Hazael's reign) to inflict heavy defeats upon Jehoahaz's army. This continued until he had almost none left. God answered his prayer, but not during his life time. The answer came through the reigns of his son Jehoash and grandson Jeroboam II.

During the last part of the reign of Jehu (835-841) and during all of the reign of Jehoaz (841-798) Joash reigned in Judah. His reign was under the leadership of the godly high priest Jehoiada. But after the death of Jehoiada, Joash led the country into idolatry. When Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, denounced his apostasy Joash had him murdered. After a long illness he was slain in his bed by his servants for the murder of Zechariah. *Joel* prophesied during this time.

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Amaziah succeeded his father as king of Judah (796). He was an idolator and worshiped in the high places of Judah. His first act as king was to put to death his father's murderers.

He hired 100,000 men of Israel to fight in his army for 100 talents of silver. A man of God warned him not to do this and he sent them home losing the 100 talents. The angered Israelites sacked cities of Judah as they went.

Amaziah took his army down to rebellious Edom and captured Selah. (This might be the stone city of Petra). He killed the inhabitants by throwing them from the cliffs. He brought back their gods and worshiped them.

He thought he was strong enough to take on Israel and challenged Jehoash, who became king at the death of his father in 798, to a fight. Jehoash accepted his challenge and came down and defeated Amaziah, destroying some of the fortifications of Jerusalem. (790)

With this defeat Amaziah went into hiding and his son Uzziah became king by appointment of the people.

Upon the death of Jehoash in 782 his son Jeroboam II began to reign in Israel. Both he and Uzziah in Judah experienced long reigns at this time. Jeroboam II reigned from 782 to 753, and Uzziah from 790 to 739. This was due to the decline of Assyria after the death of Adadnirari III, and the weakened condition of Damascus. *Jonah* prophesied against Ninevah at this time and their repentance probably caused them to restrain their actions against Israel.

Jeroboam II brought to a successful conclusion the wars which his father had carried on with Benhadad II of Damascus. He also restored territory east of the Jordan and as far south as the Dead Sea.

This success brought prosperity to the rich nobles of the land. This increase in wealth enabled the rich to have both summer and winter houses. Some of their houses were paneled with ivory, others were made of hewn stone. Drunkenness, licentiousness, and oppression went unrebuked by the religious hierarchy. *Amos* and *Hosea* were the only ones who could see and dared tell the need for repentance in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II.

Uzziah also had a successful reign politically and economically. He recovered and fortified Elath on the Gulf of Akabah. He reasserted Judean supremacy over Philistine cities of the Mediterranean coast.

In Israel about the year 753 Jeroboam II died and his son Zechariah inherited the great kingdom of his father. But with everything going his way he had two strikes against him which he may not have known. The Lord had promised his great-great-grandfather Jehu that his sons

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would set on the throne to the 4th generation. His was the 4th generation. *Amos* had prophesied during the reign of his father Jeroboam II that the Lord would come against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. His third strike came when the second prophecy was fulfilled. It was fulfilled one year after Zechariah became king, when he was murdered by Shallum.

Shallum took the throne but reigned only one month when he too was killed. His murderer was Menahem. Menahem was able to stay on the throne 10 years by bribing Tiglathpileser III with money he took from the people.

He died a natural death and his son Pekahiah succeeded him in 742. Pekahiah reigned only two years when he was killed by Pekah.

Pekah began to reign in the last year of Uzziah's reign in Judah. Uzziah's son Jotham had reigned with his father during the last 11 years of his reign, and succeeded him.

Pekah was angered by the weakened condition of the country because of internal strife and the high tribute that was paid to Tiglathpileser III, king of Assyria. He made an alliance with the Gileadites to stop the encroachment of Assyria. To further accomplish his purposes he aligned himself with Rezin of Damascus against Jotham. The godly life of Jotham probably delayed the realization of this plot until Jotham's son Ahaz (who began his reign in 735 during the reign of his father) was on the throne. Pekah came and besieged Ahaz, killing many of his soldiers and taking many captives up to Damascus. They were unable to take Ahaz himself. Ahaz sent a message to Tiglathpileser III asking for help. The Assyrian king responded by sending an army, which destroyed Damascus and took many captive. The army also afflicted both Israel and Judah, even though they had come to defend Judah.

After the Assyrian army left Pekah was still on the throne in Israel, but not for long. Hoshea led a conspiracy against Pekah and killed him.

During the reign of Hoshea (732-722) Tiglathpileser III died. His death was the signal for Hoshea to make his move for independence from Assyria. Help was promised from Egypt, but it did not come. Shalmaneser IV succeeded Tiglathpilezer as king of Assyria and came against Samaria. He either died or abdicated the throne before the city fell. Sargon II took his place and in the third year of the siege he took the city. He took Hoshea prisoner and many of the people captive. They were deported to Assyria. Some remained and intermarried with the surrounding nations.

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With this captivity the nation of Israel came to an end. Judah would remain until 586 when they too would be captive of the Babylonians. Through the lives and deeds of the kings of both Judah and Israel we can see the political conditions under which the prophets of this time prophesied. This may help us to study their prophecies with better understanding.

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

by Karen Riley

When God gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai He clearly commanded in the second commandment "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." God knew that the land into which the children of Israel were going was a land given to image worship. Archaeologists have found many figures of gods on stone monuments, small images in bronze, and clay plaques or figurines.

In Moses' second address to the people just preceding their entry into the promised land he made it plain that Israel was not to compromise with the natives of Canaan, but should drive them out or destroy them:

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Gergashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them, thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take, unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

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Why was God so insistent that the Canaanites be utterly destroyed? According to what has been found by archaeologists, the Canaanites sacrificed their children to idols, their temples were places of vice, and their morals were so low that they would inevitably corrupt God's people.

Joshua led the children of Israel in the conquest of the land. But there seemed to be a weakening of zeal for the battle, after the immediate danger of the Canaanites was removed. They left the work of conquest unfinished, failed to carry out God's commission to utterly destroy the Canaanites, and began to make themselves at home in the land before it was really won.

They began to adopt the sanctuaries of the country as their own, instead of destroying them. They took part in the festivals of their neighbors and adopted their customs of worship. In many places Israelites could be found worshiping the local Baals, in whose honor harvest and autumn festivals were celebrated as thanksgiving for the crops.

By their altars to Jehovah the Israelites placed Asherah, the sacred tree, actually as a symbol of the goddess of this name. The stone pillars which the Canaanites had set up near their sanctuaries were also held in honor by the Israelites, and gradually the heathen ideas associated with these objects of worship found their way into the religious consciousness of the people. Sorcery, necromancy, and similar superstitions crept in.

During the time of the judges God let the surrounding nations oppress His people in hopes of returning them to Himself. The JUDGES and the prophets were the voices of God to call His people to repentance. The popular religion of this time was tinged by a pronounced heathenism, and had but little in common with the teaching of the law of God. But they claimed to worship Jehovah God, while in their hearts they had utterly disregarded all his commands.

The failure of Israel and their spiritual and moral decline was the direct result of their failure to obey God in these three ways:

- (1) Their failure to drive out the heathen (Judges 1:21,27,29,33).
- (2) Their idolatry (Judges 2:12,13).
- (3) Their intermarriage with the heathen (Judges 3:5,6).

Samuel, the last of the judges, was also a great prophet and a reformer. He brought the people together and tried to free them from the contamination of heathenism. But the people asked for a king, like the nations. God through Samuel warned them of what a king would do to them, but they refused to listen. God had Samuel to anoint Saul and then later David as kings of Israel.

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During the reign of David and his son Solomon the nation reached its highest peak, not only politically, but by bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Mt. Zion, and beginning the plans for the temple. The temple, as the dwelling place of God, was made the center of worship for the entire nation.

Solomon asked God for wisdom in ruling the people and was a wise and just ruler for many years. But his marriage to foreign women turned his heart away after their gods. He built a high place of worship for the pagan god Chemosh on the "hill that is before Jerusalem" (1 Kings 11:17), probably the Mount of Olives.

Upon the death of Solomon his son Reoboam was proclaimed king of Judah, but it was necessary for him to go to Shechem to receive the allegiance of the ten northern tribes. Because he failed to reduce the oppression of his father, the ten northern tribes rejected him and set up Jeroboam as their king.

Reoboam would have gone to war to bring the northern tribes back into subjection, but a prophet of God met him in the way and told him that this was of the Lord (1 Kings 12:24) and that he should not interfere. The division was beneficial in that the idolatry of the North did not so easily penetrate the Southern Kingdom of Judah and spared it from destruction for a time.

Jeroboam, fearing that if his people continued to go to Jerusalem to the temple to worship they might also return their allegiance to the ruler of Jerusalem, set up two national shrines in Israel. He had golden calves made and set up at Dan in the north and Bethel in the south. Dan was already a center of idol worship from the time of the Judges (see Judges 18). Bethel was considered a sacred spot because of the associations it had with Abraham and Jacob. Jeroboam violated the second commandment in setting up these golden calves, and this is continually referred to in further history of Israel as "The sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin."

Jeroboam was probably acquainted with calf-worship during his stay in Egypt for archaeological discoveries show the presence of bovine worship in Egypt. The sacred bull was an object of worship, and also the sacred cow as a symbol of the goddess Hathor.

The setting up of the images encouraged the syncretism of heathenism and the worship of Jehovah God which had already gotten a good start. The leaders of Israel oppressed independent prophets but still the prophets continued to be a potent spiritual factor which the kings could not afford to ignore. Every one of the 19 kings of the northern kingdom followed the worship of the golden calf. Some also served Baal. *But no one ever attempted to bring the people back to God.*

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The reigns of Reoboam and Abijah, his son, in the southern kingdom of Judah were mostly bad years, as both kings and the majority of the people continued to worship idols. But with the coming of Asa to the throne about 912 B.C. a clean sweep was made of the Canaanite cults, and of the heathenism included in the worship of Jehovah at local shrines. The queen mother was deposed from her dignity because she maintained a shrine of her own with an image representing the Canaanite goddess Asherah. This reform continued through his reign of 41 years, and through the reign of Jehoshaphat, 25 years. Jehoshaphat inaugurated a system of public instruction sending the priest and levites out to teach the people the "book of the law."

In Israel things went from bad to worse with the coming to power of the dynasty of Omri. Politically Omri was a good king, strengthening Israel both internally and with other nations. He renewed Solomon's policy of alliance with Phoenicia, confirming it by the marriage of his son, Ahab, to the daughter of the Phoenician priest-king, Jezebel. The religious consequences of this alliance were such that Omri is looked upon as a greater offender against Jehovah than any of his predecessors, surpassed only by his son Ahab.

It was common practice that a foreign princess who married the ruler of a neighboring state should have facilities for practicing her native religion in her new home. So as Solomon's many foreign wives had shrines provided for their native cults so also did Jezebel. But while the religious practices of Solomon's wives seem to have made little impact on the life of his subjects, Jezebel was plainly not content with maintaining a private shrine where she herself might practice her own religion. She appears to have organized the worship of Melquart on a fairly large scale and maintained a large staff of cultic officials, who enjoyed positions of influence at court.

Worship of Melquart is essentially Canaanite in character and its introduction into Israel led to a great revival of the old Canaanite worship of Baal and Asherah. Melquart was from one point of view the Tyrian counterpart of Baal and is called Baal throughout the Biblical narrative. There was a large amount of syncretism between the Tyro-Canaanite cult and Israel's religion, and a popular landslide away from the purest form of Jehovah worship. The prophets of God protested against this apostasy, but their protests were regarded as treasonable, because this apostasy enjoyed court patronage and at Jezebel's instigation many of these prophets were put to death.

Elijah was the leader of these protesting prophets. He appeared in court with his exceptionally powerful personality and proclaimed in the name of God that there would be a severe drought on the land. He

MINOR PROPHETS

then fled from the wrath of Jezebel, first to Transjordan and later to Phoenicia. At the end of three years he reappeared and led the people back to the worship of Jehovah, by the spectacular event on Mt. Carmel. Many prophets of Baal were put to death. Rain came to end the drought. Jezebel then threatened to serve Elijah as he had served the prophets of Baal and he fled to Arabia, where he talked to God and received fresh courage. He then returned to his homeland and continued to preach against the dynasty of Omri and Baalism.

Ahab made alliance with King Jehoshaphat of Judah and cemented the alliance matrimonially by giving his daughter Athaliah as wife to Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son. This resulted in the introduction of Baalism to the southern kingdom. For at the death of good king Jehoshaphat, Jehoram became king of Judah. He and his son who followed him proved to be very wicked kings, probably due to the influence of Athaliah, at least in part. All this was taking place while *Obadiah* was God's prophet in Judah.

Elisha, the successor to Elijah, anointed Jehu to become the next king of Israel and to put an end to the house of Ahab. The army acknowledged Jehu as king, and helped him to slay both Jehoram, king of Israel (son of Ahab), and Ahaziah, king of Judah (son of Jehoram of Judah and Athaliah), who was visiting Jehoram at Jezreel. Jezebel was thrown from an upper window and killed. The sons of Ahab were put to death, and through Jehu's trickery all the followers of Baal were gathered and slain. The images of Baal were burned and the house of Baal destroyed. But Jehu allowed the calf worship to continue, and only slightly checked the idolatry of Israel.

Jehu had carried out Elisha's commission, but the manner in which he did it—wholesale massacres, and the treachery of the suppression of Baal-worship—was unpardonable, and a century later *Hosea* announced that retribution would fall upon the house of Jehu for the blood shed at Jezreel.

When King Ahaziah of Judah died as the result of the wound inflicted by one of Jehu's archers, his mother, Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, decided that the moment had come for her to seize power in Jerusalem. She was able to secure the support of the royal bodyguard and had all the royal family massacred. Only Ahaziah's six-month-old son Joash escaped her notice. He and his nurses were smuggled out of her way and the infant prince was brought up in the temple precincts.

The worship of Baal appears to have flourished in Jerusalem during Athaliah's six-year reign. In his 7th year Jehoida the priest led

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS OF KINGDOM

in a popular uprising, and succeeded in getting the royal bodyguard to transfer their allegiance from Athaliah to the young prince Joash. They guarded the temple as Joash was brought forth and proclaimed king of Judah. When Athaliah heard of the plot she came running into the temple crying "treason," but it was too late. She was taken outside the temple and immediately put to death.

The installation of Joash as king was marked by a return to God and a covenant between God and the king and the people. Since Joash was but 7 years old and had been raised by Jehoida the high priest, Jehoida remained a strong influence on his reign as long as Jehoida lived. He was able to break down the house of Baal and make repairs on the temple.

During this time the priests were held in high esteem. Temple services were regularly maintained and regarded as of great importance. About this time the prophet *Joel* came on the scene and from his book we gain further insight into the religious conditions of the nation. The locust plague which he describes had laid the land in devastation. The daily meal-offerings and drink-offerings had ceased because there was nothing to give for an offering. This seems to be regarded as the culminating point of the calamity—the rupture of fellowship between Jehovah and his people. But Joel's message is that formalism is not enough. It is not their abundance of offerings that God wants, but their hearts. They need to come to repentance. "Therefore also now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." (Joel 2:12,13).

About this time or a little later *Amos* was sent to preach to the northern kingdom of Israel. Two kings had come to the throne since Jehu and now a third, Jeroboam II, was on the throne. He brought the kingdom of Israel to its greatest extent and apparently prosperous conditions existed. But this superficial prosperity was gained by depressing the status of the small independent peasants. The rich lived in ease and luxury on the wealth they had extorted from the poor, with no thought to what their present luxury would bring to pass. *Amos* rebuked them for their beds of ivory, summer and winter houses. Excavations of Samaria in 1931 uncovered numerous fragments of ivory inlay. Subjects portrayed in the reliefs included lilies, papyrus, lions, bulls, deer, winged figures in human form, sphinxes, and figures of Egyptian gods. Records also found show the payment of taxes in wine and oil. These are apparently the source of the wine which the ease-loving people of Samaria were drinking and the oil with which they anointed themselves.

Kirkpatrick says of this time:

Public and private virtues alike had decayed. The venality of the judges—that perpetual curse of Oriental countries—was notorious. The poor man need not look for redress in the courts where justice was openly bought and sold. Licentiousness of the grossest kind was unblushingly practiced. Tradesmen made no secret of their covetousness and dishonesty. Humane laws were openly ignored.

Yet the people were punctilious in their religious observances. But not only had Israel's religion become an external form of worship without those inward and practical virtues, but even the external forms themselves were corrupted by imitation of the old fertility cults of Canaan with its blunting of their ethical perception. Ritual prostitution was practiced at the solemn festivals. No reproof was tolerated. There was callous indifference to the moral ruin of their country.

In the midst of all their moral depravity and failure to recognize Jehovah's character, they still claimed to be his people, and imagined themselves entitled to his favor. It must have been a rude shock to them to learn that because they were God's people he was going to punish them. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). Judah and Israel were condemned "because they have rejected the law of Jehovah, and have not kept His statutes and their lies (the false gods which they have chosen) have caused them to err."

Hosea began to prophesy toward the end of Jeroboam's reign. The nation was still outwardly prosperous, but it had been practically deserted by Jehovah. It ascribed its blessings to the false gods it worshiped. It was ripe for punishment.

The kings and princes amused themselves with the peoples' misdoings instead of restraining them. The king was the intimate companion of 'scorners' who prided themselves on their cynical contempt for virtue and religion. There seemed to be nominal regard among the people for Jehovah, but in reality they had forgotten Him and abandoned themselves to licentious and degrading superstitions. When danger threatened they looked to Assyria or Egypt for help instead of turning to God in repentance. They persecuted and despised the prophets which were sent unto them.

Following the death of Jeroboam II, the nation of Israel fell into a state of anarchy. They were continually in a state of civil war, and had to pay tribute to Assyria.

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Pekah decided that he would throw off the reign of the Assyrians and tried to get Syria and Judah to go along with him. When Ahaz, king of Judah, refused, Syria and Israel came to war against Judah. Although the prophet Isaiah warned him not to, Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pilezer for aid. This resulted in Judah being brought under the yoke to Assyria and not only having to pay tribute, but having to set up the altar of Ashur in the temple of God. Ahaz was a wicked king, accepting the religion of the Assyrians and even sacrificing his son to the pagan gods (II Kings 16:3).

Tiglath-Pilezer also crushed Israel, although they tried to appease him by assassinating Pekah and setting Hoshea on the throne. By continuing to pay tribute Israel gained a few more years, but it was only a matter of time until Hoshea too tried a bid at independence and was utterly crushed. After a siege of three years Samaria fell and all the principal citizens of Israel were carried away into captivity. The nations brought in to populate Israel also brought their own religions, but were also taught "the law of the God of the land" (II Kings 17:26). They intermarried with the people remaining and became known as the Samaritans after the name of the land (called Samaria by the Assyrians).

The self-chosen kings of Israel had led them astray. Their failure to let the Lord be the King had started them on the path away from God. Idolatry had been the direct result of the divided kingdom. Moral corruption was universal in the nation. The prophets had come and they had plead for the people to repent. God had sent nations, and plagues, to cause His people to repent. But they would not. The kingdom must be destroyed. There was not other choice. But God does not leave it at that. If the nation must die, it will rise again is the thought that he leaves with His people through the prophet *Hosea*:

I will go, says Jehovah, and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face. In their affliction they will seek Me earnestly, saying, Come and let us return unto Jehovah: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; hath smitten and will bind us up . . . And let us press on to know Jehovah: His going forth is sure as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth (5:15- 6:3).

It took the severe punishment of the captivity to purge Israel from her idolatrous ways. But God did not forget His people in their captivity and does even today seek that all men might come to repentance and seek His face.

SPECIAL STUDY SIX
 OUTLINE OF O.T. HISTORY

by Seth Wilson and Paul T. Butler

	TIME	PLACE	PERSON	O.T. BOOK
I. Antediluvian Period A. Creation B. The Fall C. The Families D. The Flood	8000? BC (4004)	Eden Tigris & Euphrates	Adam & Eve Cain & Abel, Seth Enoch, Methuselah Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth	Genesis 1-7
II. Postdiluvian Period A. The Second Beginning B. Origin of Languages & Nations C. The Chosen People	2400; BC	Ararat Nineveh Babel—or Shinar Ur-Chaldea	Noah & Family Nimrod Terah, Abraham	Genesis 8-11

OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

<p>III. Patriarchal Period</p> <p>A. Life of Abraham</p> <p>B. Life of Isaac</p> <p>C. Life of Jacob</p> <p>D. Life of Joseph</p>	<p>2000 BC</p>	<p>Ur, Haran, Hebron Beersheba</p> <p>Bethlehem Bethel Haran</p> <p>Dothan Egypt</p>	<p>Sarah, Lot, Melchizedek Hagar, Ishmael</p> <p>Rebecca Abimelech</p> <p>Essu, Laban Rachael, Leah</p> <p>Judah, Benjamin Potiphar, Pharoah</p>	<p>Genesis 12-50</p> <p>Job 1-42</p>
<p>IV. Bondage Period</p> <p>A. The Oppression</p> <p>B. Birth and training of Moses</p> <p>C. The Contest with Egypt</p> <p>D. Passover and Departure</p>	<p>1800 BC</p> <p>1600 BC</p>	<p>Egypt</p> <p>Horeb Midian</p> <p>Goshen to Red Sea</p>	<p>Jochebed Amran Miriam Hatshepsut Thothes III Zipporah</p> <p>Jethro Aaron</p>	<p>Exodus 1-12</p>

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<p>V. Wandering Period</p> <p>A. Red Sea to Sinai</p> <p>B. Year at Sinai (Law, Tabernacle, Census)</p> <p>C. Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea (Defeat)</p> <p>D. Kadesh-Barnea to Jordan (Conquest East of Jordan)</p> <p>E. Moses' last works & words (Conquest of Midian) (Completion of the law)</p>	<p>1450 BC</p>	<p>Sinai Peninsula</p> <p>South border of Canaan</p> <p>Around Edom</p> <p>Amorites, Bashan</p> <p>Plain of Moab</p> <p>Gilead</p> <p>Nebo</p>	<p>Moses, Aaron</p> <p>Miriam, Jethro</p> <p>Joshua</p> <p>Nadab, Abihu</p> <p>Korah</p> <p>Caleb</p> <p>Og, Sihon</p> <p>Balak, Balaam</p>	<p>Exodus 13-40</p> <p>Leviticus</p> <p>Numbers</p> <p>Deuteronomy</p>
<p>VI. Conquest Period</p> <p>A. Crossing the Jordan</p> <p>B. Capture of Jericho</p> <p>C. Confederacy and conquest of South</p> <p>D. Confederacy and conquest of North</p> <p>E. Partition of Land</p> <p>F. Farewell and death of Joshua</p>	<p>1400 BC</p>	<p>Plain of Moab</p> <p>Gilgal, Ai</p> <p>Mt. Ebal</p>	<p>Joshua</p> <p>Rahab</p> <p>Achan</p> <p>Gibeonites</p> <p>Jabin</p> <p>Eleazer</p> <p>Paternal heads of 12 tribes</p>	<p>Joshua</p>

OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

<p>VII. Judges Period</p> <p>A. Condition of nation after Joshua</p> <p>B. Nations left in Canaan</p> <p>C. Six Principal Invasions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mesopotamian 2. Moabite 3. Canaanite 4. Midianite 5. Ammonite 6. Philistine <p>D. Story of Ruth</p> <p>E. Samuel, last "Judge", first "prophet", substitute priest.</p>	<p>1350 BC</p>	<p>Palestine</p> <p>Esdraelon</p> <p>Mt. Gilboa</p> <p>Gilead & Ammon</p> <p>Gath, Gaza</p> <p>Moab, Bethlehem</p> <p>Ramah</p>	<p>"Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."</p> <p>Othniel</p> <p>Eglon, Shud Shamgar</p> <p>Deborah & Barak</p> <p>Gideon</p> <p>Abimelech</p> <p>Tola, Jair</p> <p>Jephthah</p> <p>Ibzan, Elon, Abdon</p> <p>Sanson</p> <p>Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, Orpah</p> <p>Eli</p> <p>Hannah & Elkanah</p>	<p>Judges</p> <p>Ruth</p> <p>I Samuel 1-10</p>
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VIII. The United Kingdom A. The reign of Saul B. David E. Solomon	1050 BC	Gibeath, Michmash	Michael, Jonathan Wirch of Endor Goliath, Joab, Abigail Abner, Nathan Bathsheba, Hiram Queen of Sheba	I Samuel 11-31 Psalms II Samuel I Chronicles Proverbs, Eccl. Song of Solomon I Kings 1-11 II Chron. 1-9
	1010 BC	Gilgal, Mt. Gilboa Hebron Jerusalem Jerusalem		
	970 BC			
IX. The Divided Kingdom A. Origin of the Schism	930 BC	Jerusalem	Jeroboam Rehoboam Abijah	I Kings 1 II Chron. 10

OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

<p><i>Northern</i> (Israel)</p> <p><i>Southern</i> (Judah)</p> <p>931 BC</p> <p>840? BC</p> <p>1. <i>Idolatry taking root</i> Jeroboam 22 Nadab 2 Baasha 24 Elah 2</p> <p>1. <i>Decline</i> Rehoboam 17 Abijah 3</p> <p>2. <i>Idolatry Triumphant</i> Zimri 7 Omri 11 da Ahab 22 Ahaziah 2 Joram 11</p> <p>2. <i>First Revival</i> Asa 41 Jehoshaphat 25</p> <p>3. <i>2nd Decline</i> Jehoram 8 Ahaziah 1 Athaliah 8 Josiah 40 Amaziah 29 Uzziah 52</p> <p>3. <i>Idolatry Checked</i> Jehu 28 Jehozahaz 17 Jehosh 16 Jeroboam 41 Zechariah 6 mo.</p>	<p>Ramoth-Gilead</p>	<p>Ahab, Jezebel Elijah</p> <p>Elisha, Naaman</p> <p>Obadiah Joel Jonah Amos, Hosea Isaiah, Micah</p>	<p>I Kings 12-22 II Chron 10-21</p> <p>II Kings</p> <p>II Chron 22-28</p> <p>Obadiah Joel Jonah Amos Hosea</p>
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<p>4. <i>Idolatry ending in ruin</i> Shallum 1 mo. Menahem 10 Pekahiah 2 Pekah 20 Hoshea 9</p> <p>4. <i>2nd Revival</i> Hezekiah 29</p> <p>5. <i>3rd Decline</i> Manasseh 55 Amon 2</p> <p>6. <i>3rd Revival</i> Josiah 31</p> <p>7. <i>4th Decline & Captivity</i> Jehoahaz 3 mo. Jehoakim 11 Jehoiachin 3 mo. Zedekiah 11</p>	<p>722 BC</p>	<p>Assyria</p>	<p>Shalmaneser Sargon Sennacherib</p> <p>Nahum</p> <p>Zephaniah Habakkuk Jeremiah</p>	<p>Micah Isaiah</p> <p>II Chron 29-36</p> <p>Nahum</p> <p>Zephaniah Habakkuk Jeremiah Lamentations</p>
	<p>609 to 586 BC</p>			

OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

X. Exile Period	606 BC	Babylon	Nebuchadnezzar Shadrach, Meshach Abednego	Daniel
A. Daniel & the First Captivity	597 BC	Chebar		Ezekiel
B. Ezekiel & 2nd Captivity	586 BC	Babylon Egypt	Gedaliah	
C. Jeremiah and exile to Egypt				
XI. Postexilic Period	536 BC	to Jerusalem	Belshazzar Cyrus, Darius Haggai, Zechariah Ahasuerus (Xerxes) Vashti	II Chron. 36 Ezra Haggai Zechariah Esther
A. Return under Zerubbabel	475 BC	Shushan	Mordecai, Haman Artaxerxes	Nehemiah
B. Esther, Queen of Persia	458 BC	Jerusalem		
C. Return & Reform under Ezra	445 BC	Jerusalem		
D. Return & Rebuilding under Nehemiah	430? BC	Judah	Malachi	Malachi
E. Last Prophet and Close of O.T.				

3B1

MINOR PROPHETS
BIBLE KINGS MENTIONED ON
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSCRIPTIONS

KINGS OF EGYPT

Shishak—I Ki. 14:25; Temple of Karnak
So—II K. 17:4; Inscription of Sargon; Robinson, BAOT, 95
Tirkahah—II K. 19:9; Zinjirli stele; Caiger, *Bible and Spade*, 164
Necho—II Ch. 35:20; Babylonian Chronicle; UAOT, 282

KINGS OF ASSYRIA

Tiglath-pileser—II K. 15:29; Inscription of T. P. RBAOT, 94
Shalmaneser V—II K. 17:3; Cylinder in Brit. Mus. UAOT 259
Sargon II—Isa. 20:1; Palace at Khorsabad.
Sennacherib—II K. 18:13; Palace at Nineveh
Esarhaddon—II K. 19:37; Inscription of Es. R, BAOT, 103
Assurbanipal—Ezra 4:10 (Osnappar)—Library at Nineveh

KINGS OF BABYLON

Meridach-Baladan—Isa. 39:1; Inscription of Sennacherib; Robinson BAOT 98
Nebuchadnezzar—II K. 24:1; UAOT 296
Evil-merodach—II K. 25:27; Vase from Susa; UAOT 297
Belshazzar—Dan. 5:1; UAOT 298
Neriglissar—(Nergal-Sharezzer; Jer. 39:3-13); UAOT 297

KINGS OF PERSIA (Achaemenid)

Cyrus—II Ch. 36:22; Cylinder of Cyrus; UAOT 298ff
Darius—Ezra 5:3; Behistun inscription
Ahasuerus—(Xerxes); Ester 1:1; ISBE, 1346
Artaxerxes I—Ezra 7:1; Sachau papyri; R.D. Wilson SIOT, 69
Darius (Nothus)—Neh. 12:22; *Zondervan Bib. Dic.*

KINGS OF SYRIA

Tab-Rimmon—I Kings 15:18; Stele of Benhadad; UAOT 239
Benhadad I—I Kings 15:18; Stele of Benhadad; UAOT 239
Hazael—I K. 19:15; Obelisk of Shalmaneser; ISBE, 1346
Benhadad II—II K. 15:18; Monolith inscription of Shalmaneser; UAOT 244
Rezin—II K. 15:37; Annals of Tiglath-pileser; UAOT 254

KINGS OF ISRAEL

Omri—I K. 16:16—Moabite stone and elsewhere.
Ahab—I K. 16:28—Monolith inscription of Shalmaneser; UAOT 244
Jehu—I K. 19:16—Obelisk of Shalmaneser
Jeroboam II—Amos 1:1—Seal found at Megiddo—Wiseman, IBA
Menahem—II Kings 15:17—Inscription of Tiglath-pileser
Pekah—II K. 15:27—Inscription of Tiglath-pileser
Hosea—II K. 17:1—Inscription of Tiglath-pileser

KINGS OF JUDAH

Azariah—II K. 15:1—Annals of Tiglath-pileser—UAOT 255
Hezekiah—II K. 18:1—Taylor cylinder in Brit. Mus. UAOT 267
Ahaz—II K. 16:7—Annals of Tiglath-pileser
Manasseh—II K. 21:1—Inscription of Esarhaddon; Robinson BAOT 103
Jehoiachin—II K. 24:6—Tablets found near Ishtar Gate in Babylon; UAOT 296-297
Jotham—II K. 16:1—Owen, *Archaeology & Bible*, 268

NOTES ON ARCHAEOLOGY

KINGS OF TYRE

Hiram—I K. 5:1—Phoenician records; UAOT 196

Ethbaal—I K. 16:31—Wilson, SIOT, 70

Mesha, king of Moab—II K. 3:41—Moabite stone

Hadad-ezer, king of Zobah—II Sam. 8:3—Wilson, SIOT

Not only does the Bible correctly give the names of these more than 40 ancient kings (Could you GUESS the name of the king of Pango-Pango in 1200 A.D.?), but it places every one of them in its correct chronological position, and even spells the names correctly. For further details, see Wilson, Robert Dick. *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*, chapter 2.

EXPLANATION OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAOT

Robinson, George Livingston; *Bearing of Archaeology on the Old Testament*

UAOT

Unger, M. F.; *Archaeology and the Old Testament*

ISBE

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

SIOT

Wilson, Robert Dick; *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*

IBA

Wiseman, Donald; *Illustrations from Biblical Archaeology*

SPECIAL STUDY SEVEN

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The day of the Lord follows this general outline:

Judgments upon covenant people
Redemptions of covenant people
Judgments upon nations
Redemptions of nations

The day of the Lord is any great manifestation of God's power in judgment and redemption.

Joel 1:15
Mal. 3:1-6
Is. 2:2-5
Amos 9:11ff.

Each day of the Lord points to THE day of the Lord; when Christ makes His final return, and, it also means the reign of God. This meant a day when God would be exalted. The prophets applied the term to days of doom and days of deliverance.

In the carrying out of the day of the Lord, God made use of what we today term natural calamities, of captivity, and of oppressions. A few of the manifestations of the day of the Lord are the destruction of Edom, the locust plague of Joel, the destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of Babylon, and perhaps even more recent ones such as the defeat of Hitler, and other enemies of God.

The people of God in the Old Testament had a false concept of the day of the Lord. The rather complex and involved idea grew up in connection with the messianic hope of Israel and was later used in an eschatological sense. The fundamental idea seemed to be that the "day of Jehovah" was to be the time of God's manifestation as the Savior of Israel, actual of ideal. God's enemies, and enemies of his people, would be punished and His purposes for His people would be accomplished. Amos indicates that punishment will fall upon the unrepentant of Israel as well as upon Israel's enemies. The people talked glibly about the Day of Jehovah—the day when Jehovah would deal in judgment with His enemies. But they did not realize that iniquity would be punished in whomsoever it was found. And if it were found in Israel, it would be punished more severely there than in others, for other nations had not enjoyed the knowledge of Jehovah and His will as

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Israel had done. Israel had become morally and spiritually corrupt. If God's people remain impenitent, God sends His final effusion of physical wrath, Death, Death plunges the impenitent into the hands of an angry God.

Every department of the universe is used by God to carry out His judgments. For the faithful child of God who meets death during calamities, wars etc., it means deliverance, a ceasing from labor and a blessed state. For others it may only be a judgment of warning, a trumpet blast. And for still others it may be the final wrath of God on those who have had enough warnings. In each instance of God's judgment, people fall into one of these three categories. Example: Herod Agrippa, eaten of worms, served as a warning while it was his final. "The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousmen" (Acts 17 and Romans 1:8ff) and this wrath is revealed in nature says Paul.

The complete overthrow of all opposition and triumph of righteousness awaits only the consummation of all these Days of Jehovah at the Lord's second coming—THE GREAT DAY OF JEHOVAH. At that time, all those on the side of the Christ will enjoy a day of redemption and all those who are not on the side of Christ will suffer a day of judgment.

The following pages list the scripture passages which refer to the Day of the Lord, with explanations of the meanings of the O.T. prophets. Living under the New Dispensation we are presently in the day of Jesus Christ and do await The Great Day of the Lord.

This expression, "the day of the Lord," although frequently used in both the Old and New Testaments, is often misunderstood and limited. "The day of the Lord" or one of its equivalent phrases can refer to events or intervenings of God other than the Second Coming of Christ. The application of this phrase can refer to: the day that Jehovah would intervene to put Israel at the head of all the nations; the day of judgment for other nations or an individual nation (including Israel and Judah); the day Jehovah intervenes to punish sin. It could be said that any day of judgment or redemption is the day of the Lord, the culmination of which is in the return of our Lord Jesus.

For specific applications and examples of God's judgment and redemption, the day of the Lord in each of these references (Amos 5:18; Isaiah 2:12; Ezekiel 8:5; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11; Zephaniah 7:14; Zechariah 14:1) refers to judgment of Israel. Just as Israel and Judah are judged so are the nations—Babylon, (Isaiah 13:6, 9); Egypt, (Jeremiah 46:10); Edom, (Obadiah 15); many nations, (Joel 2:31, 3:14, and Obadiah 15). The day of the Lord is usually an occasion

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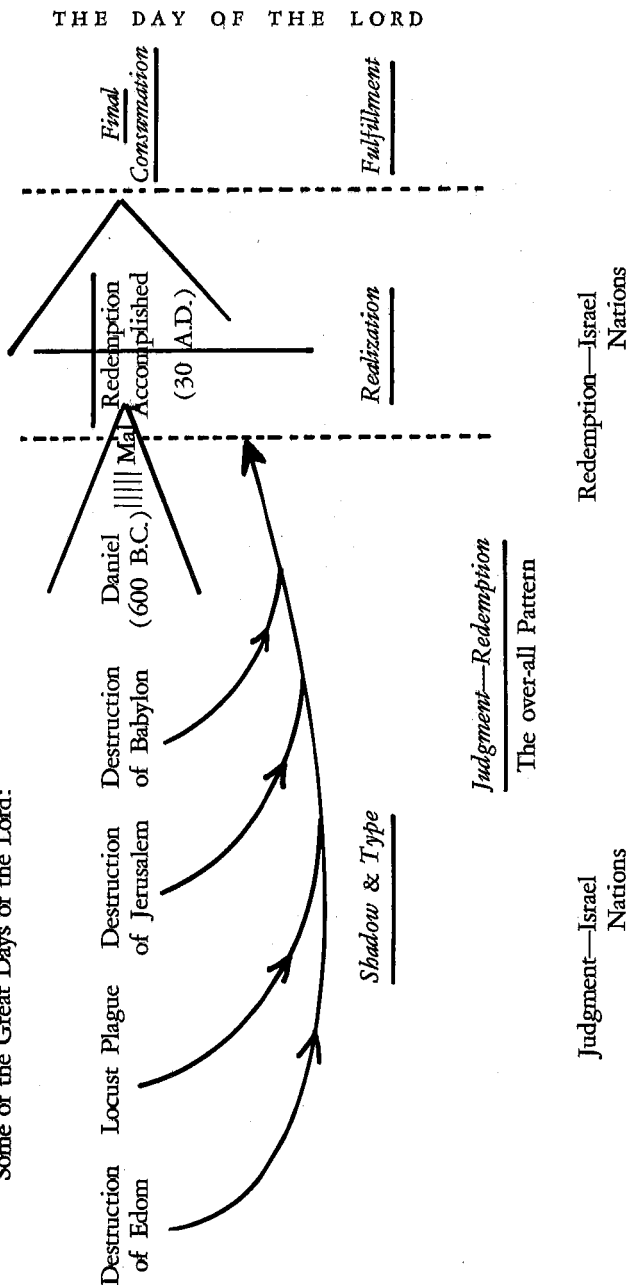
when God intervenes and uses an event to punish. The punishment may come by means of an invasion, (cf. Amos 5, 6; Isaiah 13; Ezekiel 8:5); or through a natural disaster such as the locust plague, Joel 1, 2. These days which the Lord has used have significance not only for the time in which they were written but also part of the Judgment and Redemption cycle of the Old Testament which points to fulfillment in the Coming of Christ as Messiah and His Return.

As the Old Testament is a type and a dark shadow of the brilliant reality set forth in the New, the contrast is seen too in the Old and New Testament perspectives of the "Day of the Lord." The darkness of the presentation of the day of wrath, or day of punishment in the Old Testament is foreboding. While the New Testament, for the most part, presents the Day of the Lord as a great day of joy, hope and victory through Jesus Christ. The Lord still does point out the Day of judgment, His Second Coming,—II Peter 3:7, 12; Matthew 7:22; I Thessalonians 5; 2ff.—as a day of wrath and judgment which will come as a thief in the night. To the unbeliever it is a day of terror, but to the believer it is a day of joy and victory. The entire conception of the day centers around Christ and points to the eternal establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

As Seen Throughout History

Day of the Lord—Any day of judgment or redemption used by the Lord, through any means.
 Some of the Great Days of the Lord:



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The following reference list of "the day of the Lord" or an equivalent phrase is mainly categorized into the four main divisions: judgment on Israel, redemption of Israel, judgment on the nations, and redemption of the nations. Specific application and Messianic Prophecies are also mentioned.

ISAIAH 2:11, 12, 17, 20	Judgment of Israel, with Messianic hope
3:18, 4:1	Judgment of Israel—Jewish Women's degradation
7:18	Judgment of Israel by Assyria and Egypt
7:20, 23	Judgment of Israel by King of Assyria, "God's Razor"
9:4	Day of Midian, past judgment on Midian
9:14	Judgment of Israel
10:3	Judgment of Israel
10:20, 27	Redemption of the remnant of Israel
11:10	Redemption of <i>all</i> nations, Messianic Prophecy
11:11, 16	Redemption of Israel, Messianic Prophecy
12:1	Redemption of Israel, Messianic Prophecy
12:4	Redemption of <i>all</i> nations
13:6, 9, 13	Judgment of Babylon
17:4, 7, 9, 11	Judgment of nations
19:16, 18, 19	Judgment of nations
19:21, 23, 24	Redemption of nations
23:15	Judgment of Tyre by the Chaldeans
29:18	Redemption, Messianic Prophecy
34:8	Judgment of nations, Redemption of Israel
39:6	Judgment of Israel
52:6	Redemption of Israel, Messianic Prophecy (?)
60:11, 19	Messianic Prophecy (?)
61:2	Redemption, Messianic Prophecy
63:4	Judgment
JEREMIAH 4:9	Judgment of Israel
7:22, 25	Redemption from Egypt
11:4, 5, 7	Redemption from Egypt
12:3	Judgment of Israel
16:19	Judgment, Individual's Refuge in the Lord
17:16	Judgment, Individual's Refuge in the Lord
18:17	Judgment of Israel
25:33	Judgment of All Nations
30:7, 8	Redemption of Israel, Messianic Prophecy
31:6	Redemption of Israel, Messianic Prophecy
31:31	Redemption, Messianic Prophecy

THE DAY OF THE LORD

	39:16	Judgment of Ethiopia, Egypt
	44:2, 22, 23	Judgment of Israel
	46:10, 21	Judgment of Egypt
	47:4	Judgment of Philistines
	48:41	Judgment of Moab
	49:22	Judgment of Edom
	49:26	Judgment of Damascus
	50:27, 30	Judgment on Babylon
	51:2	Judgment of Babylon
LAMENTATIONS	1:12	Judgment (?)
	1:21	Judgment on enemies—nations and Israel
	2:1	Judgment of Israel
	2:21, 22	Judgment of all
DANIEL	None?	
HOSEA	2:16	Redemption
	5:9	Judgment of Ephraim, Israel
JOEL	1:15	Judgment of Israel, as well as nations
	2:1, 2, 11	Judgment—Locust Plague
	2:31	Remnant saved in Day of Judgment
	3:14	Judgment of Nations
	3:18	Redemption, Messiani? or Heaven?
AMOS	1:14	Judgment on Ammonites
	2:16	Judgment of Israel—Nazarites
	3:14	Judgment of Israel
	5:18, 20	Judgment
	8:3, 9, 10, 13	Judgment of Israel
	9:11	Redemption of Remnant—Messianic Prophecy
OBADIAH	8, 11, 12, 13, 14	Judgment of Edom
	15	Judgment of all nations
JONAH	None?	
MICAH	4:6	Redemption
	5:10	Judgment
	7:11	Redemption—to include Gentiles, Messianic
NAHUM	1; 7	Redemption of His
HABAKKUK	3:16	Judgment of the nations
ZEPHANIAH	1:7, 8, 9	Judgment on all
	1:10	Judgment of Israel
	1:14, 15, 16, 18	Judgment
	2:2, 3, 4	Judgment of the Nations
	3:8, 11	Judgment of the Nations
	3:11, 16	Redemption of the Remnant, Messianic (?)

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HAGGAI None?

ZECHARIAH	2:11	Redemption, Messianic—All Nations
	9:16	Redemption of Israel
	12:3, 4, 6, 8, 9	Judgment of the nations
	13:1	Redemption, Messianic Prophecy
	13:2, 4	Judgment
	14:1, 3, 4	Judgment of all Nations, including Israel
	14:6, 8, 9	Redemption, Messianic Prophecy
MALACHI	3:2	Messianic Prophecy
	4:1, 3, 4	Judgment

SPECIAL STUDY EIGHT

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPHETS TO THE LAW OF MOSES

The prophets, without exception, took up their position on the basis of the law: they appeared as the vindicators of its authority, the expounders of its meaning, and in a sense also the avengers of its injured rights. When they warned the people to escape the impending judgment for their backsliding, they always advocated a return to the law . . . the spirit of the law. However, the prophets never attempted to go farther and improve upon the principles of the Theocracy, or to inculcate a morality that transcends the idea of the Decalogue. Their teachings did not transcend or remodel what had been previously revealed through the law.

The circumstances of the times were such as to call, in a very special manner, for the bold and explicit announcement of the vital truths and principles in question; only it must be remembered, they were not given for the purpose of initiating a higher form of morality and religion, but rather of staying a perilous degeneracy, and recovering a position that had been lost!

The truths and principles were in no respect new; they were interwoven with the writings and legislation of Moses; and only in the *mode and fulness* of the revelation, but not in the *things revealed*, does the teaching of the prophets differ from the handwriting of Moses.

Their aim was not at the introduction of anything new, in ceremony or ethics from the Old Covenant, but it was the object of their most earnest strivings to turn back the hearts of the children to the fathers, the disobedient to the wisdom of the just (cf. I Kings 18:37; Lk. 1:17).

The prophets showed at various times how they could appreciate the symbolical institutions of the law, and enforce their observance (cf. Isa. 42:23-24; 60:6, 13; Mal. 1:11; 3:9-10).

There is *no* ground for regarding the law of God in Israel as the product of a development-process among the people of Israel, who gradually arrived at the consciousness of what is good and right in the relation of man to man and man to God.

WHAT DO THE PROPHETS THEMSELVES SAY?

1. Isaiah says oblations and ceremonies are vain without obedient willingness to keep the spirit of the law . . . but he does not abrogate the ceremonies (Isa. 1)

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2. Isaiah says "woe to those who reject the law" (Isa. 5:24)
3. Isa. says disregard the false prophets; but hasten to the teaching and the torah (law), Isa. 8:20
4. Isa. says God's law was given to be obeyed; Isa. 42:24
5. Isa. was to inscribe on a book that a rebellious people rejected God's law, Isa. 30:8-11
6. Isa. encourages the people to put the law of God in their hearts, Isa. 51:7
7. Jeremiah said the people could not say "law is among us," Jer. 8:8-13
8. Jer. affirms that the law was valid for the people of his day, Jer. 44:23
9. Jer. rebukes the people for rejecting the law, Jer. 6:16-20; 9:13; 16:11-13; 44:10
10. Jer. says people must walk in the law, and that *the prophets taught the law*, Jer. 26:4-5
11. Hosea reminds the people that their destruction will come as a result of forgetting the law, Hos. 4:6; 8:1; 8:12
12. Joel says that the priests were still to minister at the altar—prophets did not supercede the priesthood or priestly administrations, Joel 1:13-14
13. Habakkuk contends that the law was to be kept in his day, Hab.1:4
14. Amos said "the people rejected the law." Amos 2:4
15. Zephaniah expected the law to be kept in his day, Zeph. 3:4
16. Haggai questions priests about interpretation of the law in his day, Hag. 2:10-14
17. Nahum exhorts to the keeping of feasts and vows, Nahum 1:15
18. Zechariah expected people to keep the law in his day, Zech. 6:8-14
19. Malachi showed that the priests had failed to fulfill their duties of expounding the law, Mal. 2:1-9
20. Malachi exhorts the people specifically to remember the law of Moses, Mal. 4:4
21. Jesus conjoined the "law and the prophets" as a dispensation that was beginning to be superceded at the coming of John the Baptist, Matt. 11:13; Lk. 16:16.

SPECIAL STUDY NINE

THEO-RAMIC PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Is there an end to temporal history? If so, of what would the climax consist? Plenty for everyone? Satisfaction or selfish desires? Security? Utopian society? Can man's intellect produce such a state? Is there a purpose for man being on earth? Is there any significance in suffering? If there is a righteous God, why do the just suffer and the wicked prosper? Is there a reason why wicked, despotic nations grow and conquer other governments?

The answers to these questions depend upon one's philosophy of history. One's concept concerning the governing force of past and present events directly influences and forms the solutions to these problems.

A growing interest in the nature and ultimate meaning of history among historians, philosophers and people in general has presented itself within the last few years. This subject promises to burst into prominence in the future. The two basic views upon this subject can be briefly summarized and labeled thusly: (1) Those who view history strictly as a product of man, and (2) Those who view history as the working of God in the created universe.

The last few decades have witnessed a renewal of interest in the nature and ultimate meaning of history which is almost unprecedented in modern historical scholarship. Not only historians and philosophers, but people in general, are applying themselves with a dedicated seriousness to the interpretation of history . . . Unfortunately, however, Christian scholarship has failed to give adequate attention to the problem of properly interpreting history from its own theological perspective. All too often it has virtually surrendered this important and strategic area of apologetics to secular scholarship . . . For the Christian, history has perspective only in the light of revealed theology . . . The proper understanding of history can come only from a biblical frame of reference . . . If man cannot know God with some degree of assurance, cannot have knowledge of Him, of His actions and of His will for man in the form of propositional truths, then man can know neither himself as an individual nor the meaning of his own experience in its historical form . . . A meaningful view of history,

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therefore, depends completely on the assurance that the Scriptures are God's trustworthy revelation to man. If he cannot know God with certainty, then man can never really penetrate the mystery of his own existence here on earth; life must, and will remain for him an unfathomable enigma, forever beyond his apprehension. The true meaning both of individual events and of the composite stream of human history is found only in God's interpretation thereof; clues to this meaning are found primarily in the Scriptures . . . Any theology which denies the infallibility of the Scriptures is hard pressed, therefore, to present a meaningful and consistent explanation of the historical process. Equally necessary for the Christian view of history is the biblical doctrine of the sovereignty of God. The Scriptures insist that God is sovereign over all His creatures and all their actions; they are equally clear in maintaining that God exercises this sovereignty to fulfill His own purposes and to manifest His own glory . . . God is the Lord of all, not only of some, history. He does not break into the stream of events merely at certain moments to accomplish certain limited purposes, nor is His effective will confined to one major current such as so-called "holy history" in the swirling tides of secular and seemingly uncontrolled events.¹

To lump all who advocate the first view of history and label them with a single name would be an egregious error demonstrating ignorance. There are many who adhere to the view. The Deist believes God to have created man, set him on earth, and then abandoned him and His creation, depending upon man's ingenuity to care for and preserve it. This makes history dependant upon man's intellect. This first view also presents itself in another more prominent form. The philosopher Hegel set forth a philosophy of history that was undeniably naturalistic. He held that every event in history was the synthesis of two opposing concepts. This became known as the dialectic process. His philosophy of history had neither a real beginning or ending, its only goal being the progressive continuance of events according to the dialectic process. Essentially his concept is an evolutionary system based upon his evolutionary concept that man is continually improving himself and society. In this view, once again man is enthroned as the cause of history. Events occur in a random, chaotic order depending upon the goodness or degeneracy of man. This view reached the peak of its popularity around the turn of the century, but began to lose some of its prominence

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in the early part of this century. Following the two world wars, the rosey, optimistic cries of the liberals concerning man's progressive nature lost their lustre and men began to once again search for the nature and ultimate goal of history.

Opposing these naturalistic philosophies of history in the Biblical view of history. Simply stated, it says that God created man with an ultimate goal in mind for him and that God is working in the universe to accomplish His plan for man. It is the opinion of this writer that the prophets of the Old Testament portray such a picture of history. Their writings disclose several beliefs harmonizing with this view of the nature of history.

Amidst the confusions and complexities of man's bewildered struggles down the ages, and his desperate efforts for solutions to the perplexities of life, there arises the strident voices of God's prophets of old, boldly proclaiming the sure word of the Lord. These men of God saw beyond the chaos and clamor to the blessed assurance of God's grace and guidance. With unhesitating zeal and confidence they dared to defy every adversary, and stand alone but secure on the Word of the Lord. They knew that their God had absolute authority. They knew He held the world's destiny in His hand. They knew He would triumph in the end.

But the prophets knew more than this. They knew that their message pointed primarily to the one supreme solution to all of man's perplexity—the coming King. They knew also that this glorious event would be the grand climax of the ages and the focal point for all of man's activity and endeavors down the ages. It may well be said that they knew that "all history is His story"—for so it is.

"The prophets showed the meaning of contemporary events and pointed the directions of history to the end of time. Detail by detail they built upon the Coming One who should redeem the world and bring the affairs of the world to consummation. One after another the Old Testament prophets called out warning and promise, terror and blessedness and the Day of the Lord."²

The *Prophets' philosophy of history* had as its focus one Person; one Force, which was behind all events. That Person was God who constantly moves and acts in history. Thus, history is not a detached succession of events; nor is it a deterministic, fatalistic, repetitive cycle of general principles which occur over and over again, impersonally and uncontrolled. The Bible reveals to us that behind every event is a mighty God who controls, acts, and directs history to its final consummation. We want to consider three aspects of God in history.

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In order to understand God's activity in history, we must first acquaint ourselves with God's concept of history. From the Prophets we get a glimpse of history from God's viewpoint and standpoint. To God, history is not a time-oriented succession of events, but rather time is absent from His view of history. He looks upon past, present, and future as blending and evolving into one. He views the present in the light of the future, and the future in the light of the present. Even so does the Prophet as God's spokesman.

The Prophet, as preacher, views the present in the light of the future; as foreteller, the future in the light of the present. He points out present sin, duty, danger, or need; but all under the strong light of the Divine future. He speaks of the present in the name of God, and by His direct commission; of a present, however, which, in the Divine view, is evolving into a future, as the blossom is opening into the fruit. And when he foretells the future, he sees it in the light of the present; the present lends its colors, scenery, the very historic basis for the picture.³

The prophet is the medium of Divine communication. When he preaches, he does not merely refer to the present; nor yet when he foretells does he refer exclusively to the future. He occupies, with reverence be it said, in a sense, the Divine standpoint, where there is neither past, present, nor future.⁴

Thus we have considered God's concept of history.

The next aspect we wish to consider under the heading, "*A Person Behind History*", is the sovereignty of this Person in history. The Prophets speak of God as being completely free in history to work His will. There is no realm in which God does not work. He is the Dynamic behind daily events as well as historic happenings of world-wide import. If the Prophets teach one thing, it is that God's sovereignty in history cannot be challenged. Though evil empires may rise, still God controls. Though world-shaking events transpire, still God controls. His ultimate victory is inevitable.

Parallel to God's sovereignty is man's responsibility. If God is sovereign in history, then man has a responsibility to carry out God's will. Man does not know unlimited freedom. He is only a creature of his Creator, subject to Him who made man in His own image. He owes his allegiance to the God of history because God is greater than he, and because God controls where man is powerless. From the very

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beginning, man has been responsible to God; and that is as it should be. It is laid upon man to accomplish God's will. This responsibility is not general, but specific. God not only deals with nations and peoples, He also deals with individuals. Thus we see God moving in history, His sovereignty unchallenged, accompanied by man's responsibility to Him.

Not only do the Prophets speak of a Person behind history, their philosophy betrays a *progression in history*. History is not a long line of chance events, but an orderly, systematic chain of events obviously progressing to an end. God is pushing history to fulfillment. His working in history is marked by an unmistakable unfolding of events, which progress, not digress; until they culminate in a full revelation of God's plan. From the prophets we see that the fundamental ideas are the same in every case, but God acts specifically in each event.

The fundamental idea does not change, but it unfolds, and applies itself under everchanging and enlarging circumstances, developing from particularism into universalism; from the more realistic preparatory presentation to the spiritual which underlay it, and to which it pointed; from Hebrewism to the world-kingdom of God. And lastly, this Messianic idea is the moving spring of the Old Testament.⁵

Throughout this progression of history, there is a recurring theme, a motif which runs parallel to events and action. That motif finds its expression in three ideas; Sin, Judgment, and Hope. Man invariably sins, which brings God's judgment down upon him. In the midst of all this, however, God has injected hope—hope that transcends current situations and temporary dilemmas—hope that detects the ultimate victory. Sin, Judgment, and Hope are the threads on which run all of history.

Perhaps the most significant concept observable in the prophetic philosophy of history is the *purpose in history*. History is not chance, but plan; not fate, but God. History is purposeful. There is a design and a Designer in the course of events. We wish to consider two main questions concerning the purpose in history. They are: What is the purpose in history?, and How is that purpose accomplished? First of all, what is the purpose in history? If there is a God active in history, there must be a purpose. If there is a logical progression in history, there is obviously a purpose in that progression. When one studies the Prophets, he cannot but help cry out with the hymn writer of old, "Faith is the Victory!" What is the goal of history? It is: Redemption! Man has sinned, but through history God is effecting redemption. With

every event, God is bringing history to a logical conclusion. His goal and His purpose is immutable. Though world powers come and go, they shall never deter God's purpose; that being to effect redemption, and to establish forever His supremacy. "Prophecy views also the detailed events in their relation to the Divine plan, and this latter has for its purpose, the absolute establishment of the supremacy of Jehovah in Israel and eventually on the entire earth."⁶ It is evident then, that each event is not a separate entity in itself, but is an integral part of the whole course of events. Prophecy views events in their relation to the total Divine purpose.

We have seen that history's purpose is the ultimate redemption of man. It remains for us to discover how that purpose is being accomplished. God utilizes two primary methods of accomplishing His purpose. They are: Judgment and Redemption. "These are the two motifs that run through all of Biblical prophecy as well as history."⁷

God accomplished His purpose through judgment. From the Prophets we see that the reason for the prophetic preaching of judgment is the presence of sin (Micah 3:8). The central purpose of the prophetic preaching of judgment was repentance. Tragically, in many instances, there was no repentance. "The prophetic preaching takes on the concrete form of prediction of what God who acts will do when His people refuse to hear and so despise His word to them. His judgments take on the external form of a national experience of calamity, of conquest, of captivity."⁸ The purpose with the judgment is chastisement, not destruction, and the divine goal is "still a penitent people that will truly seek the Lord."⁹ God's purpose accomplished through judgment may be summarized as follows:

There is a prophetic reminder that God is not mocked, that His kingdom will come; that the final victory in the conflict between good and evil will be His: Each judgment act becomes as it were a peak in a mountain range that rises even higher and higher, until it seems to point forward to a greater and a final judgment to come.¹⁰

Parallel to and projecting beyond the motif of judgment is the motif of redemption.

God moves towards the goal of history, the redemption of man; by redemptive acts, or acts of deliverance.

"From one point of view, of course, redemption may be regarded as the very goal of history; but from the prophetic viewpoint it is also a divine activity that is always present in history, and which leads to the goal."¹¹ Two of the most significant redemptive experiences in

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the Old Testament are the Exodus and the return from the Babylonian Captivity. These external redemptive experiences were types of the spiritual redemption which is through Jesus Christ. The whole Old Testament, especially the Prophets, points to the Messianic age when *Christ shall come as the Redeemer of man; the means by which God's purpose will be fulfilled.*

This supreme revelation is the keynote of prophecy as John Milton has written: "All prophecy has one central focus . . . God's redemptive purpose and activity in history which heads up in Christ."¹² It is by no means surprising that it should be so, for this is the most stupendous event of all time. Naturally all else that men might do must pale before this great fact, and the prophets be compelled to center all in Christ. Indeed, whatever else they prophesied, all would culminate in this, and thus it is that: "A study of the gradual unfolding of the plan of God will lead us directly to Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy."¹³

G. Campbell Morgan, in his "Unfolding Message of the Bible" lays much emphasis on the Old Testament as preparatory to God's answer to the world's needs. Sin demanded a Savior, anarchy—an authority, and ignorance—an interpretation to life's quest. Christ came as priest, king and prophet to meet these very needs. No wonder the prophets seem so unimpressed with other matters when compared with their expectation of the coming Christ.

Furthermore, the prophets are not nearly as concerned with the political problems and progress of their nation and the surrounding world, as they are with their religious development and their direct relationship to God's plan and purpose. "Israel as a political entity is not the significant thing in prophecy: the focus is on Israel as a religious community, which God has chosen to call 'my people.'"¹⁴

Unless we accept this view of the Old Testament, and primarily the prophetic revelations, we shall naturally be disappointed in their historic worth.

Kirkpatrick explains it thus:

The Old Testament viewed as a history of the nation of Israel, tantalises by its disappointing fragmentariness. It gives little or no account of many of the most important periods of national development. It affords little or no insight into many of the most instructive features of national life . . . But when it is viewed as the record of the divine training of the nation which was chosen to be the recipient of a special revelation, its peculiar characteristics receive their expla-

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nation. When it is viewed as the record of the revelation made to Israel and through Israel, in itself preparatory and imperfect, but ever looking forward to some future fuller manifestation of God to men, ever yearning for a real 'fulfillment,' its many voices are found to combine in a true harmony."¹⁵

We need to regard the message of the prophets therefore not from the standpoint of men—confined to our proud and selfish involvement in our own development, but rather from the standpoint of God who sees from eternity to eternity and views all things in the light of man's ultimate destiny. The prophets are thus the agents of God to express this purpose of God to mankind, and impress upon men the necessity for effective action to meet God's expectation. "The prophet's work concerned the past, the present and the future. The prophets were the historians of Israel. They regarded the history of the nation from a religious standpoint. They traced the direct control of Jehovah over the fortunes of His people, in mercy and in judgment. It was their function to record and interpret the lessons of the past and the future."¹⁶ What God had done in times past thus bore directly on what He yet would do.

As a result, it was not so much the events themselves that mattered most, but the underlying principles and lessons to be learned through these events. The prophets often called attention to the past failures and sins of the people and the resultant judgments of God—that they might know God meant what He said and would deal similarly with them for future sins. Nevertheless they also offered the hope of redemption for repentance and obedience. These themes of Judgment and Redemption recur throughout Biblical prophecy and history, and are the real basis for its structure. History itself is woven around them.

"The battle lines in human history are drawn now as they always have been in accordance with the simple preview given in the Protevangelium, when God said, 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel' (Gen. 3:15)."¹⁷

This conflict of the ages persists yet today, and, hence the message of the prophets is invariably as applicable to us also. To all people in all times, therefore, the prophets have a vital message from the Lord.

"They throw light upon our own day and our own situation by announcing the eternal principles of divine providence which will always operate whenever similar conditions are present. It is a truism to say that in God's plan the same things are true today that were true

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in the Old Testament age. If we are guilty of the same sins we can be sure of reaping the same punishment. It is indeed easy for us to get the Word of God for our day if, capable of analyzing our own situation, we go to the prophets to find their statement of God's prescription for a similar condition."¹⁸

The biggest step, after admitting the existence of God, is the admission of a sovereign God. An omnipotent God would surely be able to control His creation. Jeremiah seems to assume that God has control over everything. After being ignored, plotted against, and persecuted, Jeremiah asks God to manifest His omnipotence against his enemies. Jeremiah 18:19-23 (Revised Standard Version)

The prophet in no way doubts God's power. The prophets depict God as omnipotent, Ruler and Governor of His creation. They recognize no limit to His power. In other words, GOD IS ABLE TO CONTROL HISTORY! The power of God in executing His plan can only be limited by the restrictions He imposes upon Himself. Thus, God is unable to overwhelm man's will and force him to perform as the proverbial puppet: reacting only when motivated by some external stimulus. This is not because God lacks the power, but because He has endowed man with the privilege to choose and to direct his own life. Hence, God has restricted His own power by His own limitation.

A second basic belief inherent within the doctrine of the prophets is that God is working in the world. The prophet Daniel declares the fact of God working in the world when interpreting a dream for King Nebuchadnezzar. The king dreamed of a tree that was seen all over the earth. Its leaves were fair, its fruit abundant, the birds dwelt in its branches, the animals found shade under it and all flesh ate from the tree. Then a heavenly being came and cried that the tree should be cut down, and the leaves and fruit should be stripped from the branches and the beasts and birds should flee from the tree. The stump was to be left amid the grass of the field bound with a band of iron and brass. Then the angel stated that his lot would be with the beasts of the field, he would eat grass, and his mind would be changed from that of a man to that of a beast. Daniel's interpretation of the prophecy indicated that Nebuchadnezzar was the tree. He grew and became strong and his greatness grew even to heaven and he had dominion over all the earth. The decree of the heavenly being meant:

this is the interpretation, O king; It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; you shall be made to eat grass like an

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or, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will. And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be sure for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. Daniel 4:24-26.

History records that the prophecy of God came to pass even as it was spoken by the prophet Daniel.

The book of Jeremiah is full of predictions of coming events which are ascribed to the hand of God. One of the most emphatic and lucid statements is Jer. 25:5—"They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever." Such phrases as the following indicate that God is working in history: Jeremiah 22:6-7; 25:33; 27:5-7; 30:10-11; 46:8b; 49:2; Isaiah 10:5-16; II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; Ezek. 28:6-7; 30:10; Daniel 2:37; 44; 5:17-31, etc.).

The entire book of Daniel shouts with certainty the fact that God is working in history. Practically every prophetic breath of this courageous man exudes this humbling and reassuring concept.

Third, "Does God Control History Now?" This is perhaps the most controversial and the most unconsidered area of God's dealings with men. Some make a great play out of interpreting all present events and attempting to predict the future in the light of Bible prophecy. Others, of course, do not even recognize that God has any control over any present events.

We have seen the amazing and intricate working of God in the days preceding Christ, and we know of the culminative day of the return of Christ. But what about the present? We understand that the processes of nature are upheld and controlled by His power. ". . . upholding all things by the word of His power . . ." (Hebrews 1:2). ". . . He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:45)

Jesus himself said that His Father was still working (John 5:17). Whether Jesus was referring specifically to history is a little difficult to determine. But, yet, this meaning cannot be discarded because the Old Testament definitely declares that God is working in history. ". . . He gives to all life, and breath, and all things . . ." and "He made from one every nation, etc." Acts 17:25-27. Is this the only area of God's control? Or is He at present shaping the events of history toward

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the end and Christ's return? Have the principles of justice by which He acted in the past been reserved until the final judgment? Or does God judge and control nations now? Did it make a difference in God's dealings after Christ came and ushered in a completely unworldly, spiritual kingdom? What would be the results if God were to let go of the world and suspend it only by the thread of his control through the voluntary actions of His followers?

Romans 13:1 seems to be one of the clearest scriptures about God's present control over the whole of men's affairs. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." So God, by permissive and purposed events, is in actual control of the present. The principles by which God operated in the past are still in operation. God is still concerned about carrying out his plan, and the recognition of his authority in the world. History since the days of God's dealing with nations through prophets has shown that God controls nations on the same principles now. Justice is not always immediately rendered, but neither was it in the Old Testament days. Judgment, however, is inevitable, and none can hope to escape. The nation which exalts Christ as Lord and follows His teachings is the nation which is upheld.

Not only are the principles of prophecy thus widely applicable, but even predictive prophecy need not necessarily be confined to just one fulfillment. As in the case of the prophecy of Jer. 31:15—not only was this fulfilled in Jeremiah's day, but it was again distinctly fulfilled in Matt.2:17-18. (An interesting sidelight here is the significant prophetic element in the very history of the Israelite nation—as in this reference to Rachel, and most strikingly in comparing the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan with the conflicts and blessings of the Christian life. Again the power of God's revealed principles is manifestly evident).

The relation of prophecy to fulfillment is thus as a seed to the flower: the basic, inner idea is essential, rather than the resultant form displayed which stems from it. The form may vary, but the vital principle must be present and constant.¹⁹

Primarily this "form" is found in the immediate application of the prophecy, and we should not become so involved in the extensive ramifications of applications that we fail to regard the initial direct fulfillment. John Milton appropriates the term "times—coloring" for this immediate context, and regard it as the husk to the wheat—not essential to the real value, but yet a temporary, necessary adjunct.²⁰ For this reason he advocates a keen awareness of those circumstances.

MINOR PROPHETS

"The function of the prophet was first of all that of a preacher and teacher of the will of God . . . The message of the prophet reflects and reveals something of the historical situation to which it is directed. It clothes itself, as Ed. Riehm has so well said, in 'local color' or 'times coloring' . . . It may have a significance that goes far beyond the immediate situation; but our first task in interpretation is to ascertain what it meant for the faith and hope and religious life of those who lived within that historical situation, and to whom the prophet was sent as a spokesman of God. Even the predictive element must be interpreted from within this framework of a religious message relevant for the day and the situation."²¹

Beyond this, however, and relevant to the total plan and purpose of God, is the prophets' obsession with the covenant God had made with Israel, and its anticipated fulfillment. Thus they interpreted the present and future in the light of this covenant from the past. Constantly they sought to impress upon the people that their God was not some fickle, capricious, vacillating deity who fluctuated in his attitude and actions towards them according to every personal whim and fancy—but their God was a true and faithful God who kept His Word despite all their own frailty and failings. They revealed God's constancy throughout their history in spite of all their evident sins, and they challenged their people to turn to Him afresh that their future might become a history of conquest and success.

Thus their prophetic utterances for the future were more than haphazard predictions to amaze the multitudes with their powers: the prophets were intent on conveying a vital realization of God and His purposes.

"The prophets were not predictive sharpshooters, who sought merely to satisfy human curiosity with respect to the future. They were preachers, who sought to renew faith in the ultimate fulfillment of the promises stated and implied in the very making of the covenant with Abraham and with Israel."²²

Nor did these predictions refer only to God's provision and blessing in the land of Canaan and this life, but rather they looked forward—for the faithful—to the new heavens and the new earth when God's ultimate glories would be made manifest and the true Israel of God would rejoice for evermore. Then, and only then, would the covenant of God come to final fruition and the climax of the ages be attained.

As the prophets sought to see ahead into this unfolding purpose of God, they saw indeed the unmistakable realities of His promises, but they often failed to see the relationship between these. Each revela-

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tion appeared as it were a mountain-peak, and range after range of these seemed to merge with each other. What immense valleys might lie between, they could not tell, but they knew that God who commanded history and could control the very destinies of men would bring all things to their fulfillment in His own time. "The ideas in the prophecy are definite, but the time element is not: the near and the distant, and the constantly recurring events are all blended in one picture, after the manner of mountain peaks and ranges when seen from a distance. The sequence of purpose alone is clear."²³

This purpose of God is specifically concerning His chosen nation of Israel. This is not to imply that the prophets were oblivious or unmindful of the developments and destructions of other nations. "They saw the judgments about to fall upon the surrounding nations, but these GENTILE JUDGMENTS ARE IN VIEW ONLY AS THEY ARE RELATED TO ISRAEL."²⁴ Thus the prophets referred Israel to God's dealings with others that they might learn not to transgress themselves but to trust and follow God.

In all this it can indeed be recognized that in the eyes of the prophets there was and is a vital interrelation and interaction between prophecy and history, each dependant on the other, but both under the direct dominance of God, and geared to the fulfillment of His will.

Inextricably linked to the biblical insistence on the total sovereignty of God is the doctrine of creation . . . In the act of creation, therefore, God brought both man and history into being. This fact is of tremendous importance for any view of history which seeks to be truly Christian; the doctrine of creation is no peripheral adjunct to the scriptural concept of history, but rather its very center. The God of Christianity does not deal with a world that evolved by chance nor does He assume sovereignty over creatures who came into being by some mysterious process over which He had no control . . . To posit man as the product of evolutionary forces may seem, at first glance, to make him a noble creature and possessed of endless possibilities for a glorious future. Actually, however, it destroys his true role in the historical process and reduces him to a passive recipient of the effects of natural and environmental forces . . . It is well known that the dominant force of the evolutionary philosophy in the political and social sciences has engendered increasing uncertainty among historians and the social scientists about the meaning of the human

past and the promise of the future. In fact, some of these men question whether the study of history can any longer be justified as a meaningful intellectual activity . . . A sinful humanity could in no way thwart the realization of the decrees of a sovereign God who makes even the wrath of man to praise Him and the processes of history to glorify Him . . . By the operations of common grace evil rulers and nations, even in the heat of their own sinful rebellion, actually carried out the will of God in regard to the elect and His visible Church. Empires and kingdoms rise and fall according to God's plan; through them He brings judgment upon nations who have forsaken righteousness and through them He brings judgment to bear even on the Church. History is replete with examples of this truth. The Lord used Babylon to execute judgment upon the Children of Israel; Rome was used to judge those ancient empires which had trampled under foot the law of a sovereign God.

His incarnation was the great demarcation, the great watershed between what we call ancient history and all that has since transpired . . . All of ancient history, therefore, must be interpreted in the light of the Incarnation. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, the Alexandrian Empire and Rome are viewed historically as instruments of a sovereign God to bring about the "fulness of time" into which Jesus Christ was born. Unknowingly and unwillingly, and yet freely, they accomplished His purpose both of judgment and of redemption.²⁵

"Prophecy, therefore, being from the very first inseparably linked with the plan of grace unfolded in Scripture, is, at the same time, the necessary concomitant of sacred history. The two mutually act and react on each other. Prophecy gives birth to the history; the history, in turn, as it moves onward to its destined completion, at once fulfills prophecies already given, and calls forth further revelations. And so far from possessing the character of an excrescence, or existing merely as an anomaly in the procedure of God toward men, prophecy cannot even be rightly understood, unless viewed in relation to the order of the divine dispensations, and its actual place in history."²⁶

Nevertheless, since the view of the prophets is largely the viewpoint of God we need to recognize the limitless scope that is manifest through prophecy, in which history becomes merely a vehicle for expression.

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"History is the *occasion* of prophecy, but not its measure; for prophecy rises above history, borne aloft by wings which carry it far beyond the present, and which it derives, not from the past occurrences of which history takes cognizance, but from Him to whom the future and the past are alike known. It is the communication of so much of his own supernatural light as he sees fit to let down upon the dark movements of history, to show whither they are conducting. For the most part, the persons who live in the midst of events are the least capable of understanding aright the character of their age. But God is elevated above it, and, by the word of prophecy, he so informs the minds of his people in respect to the end that they come also to know better than they could otherwise have done the beginning and the middle."²⁷

We may indeed learn much from history; but we will even learn more from prophecy, for it is prophecy that makes history meaningful for eternity, and it is prophecy that points us to the keynote and climax of the conflict of the ages: the redemption of lost humanity through the Lord Jesus Christ.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."—Rev. 19:10

It is necessary today to stress the importance of history. Remove from it its historical basis and there is no true Christianity. For the Christian religion is founded squarely upon certain things which God did in history. Remove from it its historical basis and there can be no true study of Old Testament theology. When, however, proper regard is given to the historical basis of special revelation, how rewarding is the study of Old Testament theology! How wondrous were those dealings of God with His ancient people! How gracious were His overtures unto them! Step by step He brought them on their way, ever revealing unto them more about the One who was to come, until, in the fullness of time, God entered the realm of human history in a unique way. He sent forth His Son, and the second Person of the Trinity became man. To Him the kings, and priests, and prophets of the Old Testament dispensation pointed. And in Him was the fulfillment, for He was the true Prophet, the true Priest and the true King, and it was He who by a definite act in history, namely His atoning death and resurrection, healed the breach between man and God and brought salvation to His People.²⁸

THE SOVEREIGN GOD SEEKING FOR HIS OWN

God acts in what He permits. Whatever God permits, He permits for His own purposes in redeeming man. In II Sam 24:1 we are told that God "incited David to number Israel." In I Chron. 21:1ff we are told that Satan "incited David to number Israel." These two are not contradictory but supplementary—for in allowing Satan to incite David, God acted. By way of further illustration, Joseph was able to say to his brethren who had sold him into slavery, "As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive; as they are today" (Gen. 50:20). Whatever evil God permits even Satan to bring about is a part of God's redemptive, disciplinary providence.

It is a fact that the Scripture writers speak of God as doing things which He permits, without distinguishing verbally between His direct action and His permissive action.

One writer has stated, "Unless we wish to reduce the love of God to the frozen wastes of pure speculative abstraction, we should shake off the static ideology which has come into Christian theology from non-Biblical sources, and insist upon preaching the living God of intimate actual relationships with His people. God's immutability is the absolutely perfect consistency of His character in His actual relationships, throughout history, with His finite creation." God is immutable in His purposes and His knowledge. He is not a man that He should repent (I Sam. 15:29; Num. 23:19; Jer. 4:28; Ezek. 24:14; Mal. 3:6; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17) When the word *repent* is used in regard to God it is in a figure of speech, which speaks of him almost as if human; and since his actions toward man vary *according to man's response*, the feeling, which in a man actually causes change (repentance), is attributed to God (anthropomorphically). God does not change (Jas. 1:17); man changes!

If God is immutable, why pray? If we but remembered that God is omniscient and that He has known our prayers and petitions from eternity past, and that His immutability is dynamic, not static, the problem would vanish. God does invite us to petition Him (Phil. 4:6; Ezek. 36:37; I Pet. 5:7; I Jn. 5:13-14; etc.). Parents know how to answer the petitions of our children *in anticipation*. With our limited knowledge we can know something of the future. Take the instance of a mother caring for the fevered little body of a sick child. Before the sun goes down the mother provides the medicine, the drink of water,

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sun goes down the father provides the medicine, the drink of water, and other comforts, knowing that there will be a cry in the night. When the little one cries, the mother does not change her mind. She has already planned the answer. Similarly God has anticipated our prayers before the foundation of the world. He has built the answer to our needs into the very structure of the universe. He knows we need to be answered with discipline and trial and test at times; He knows that at other times we need deliverance. He knows that we will pray and that we will pray in a spontaneous manner as a child cries to his father. God has put the universe together on a principle of personal relationships in which He answers prayer, and we can, in a measure, understand His loving provision only on the basis of His omniscience.

God is immutable, but God acts. God does not change, but He acts. His immutability makes Him act always the same, consistently and constantly. The reason He acts in different manners at different times is because man has changed one way or another.

But what about evil? If God is all-powerful and all-holy, why is there evil? Why doesn't God do away with evil? Or, perhaps God can't do away with it—then He is not all-powerful! But if evil is to be explained by the assumption that God cannot prevent it, then we are led to a hopeless pessimistic view of God and the universe. If the present situation is the best He can do in infinite time, then evil must be more powerful than good and there is no hope for the future. Evil has come about through the voluntary self-corruption of the creature; but in order to bring into actuality His power, His name, His wrath against sin, His ability to save, His glory in the salvation of His people, God chose to endure with much long suffering the sin and corruption of man. To show that the fact of evil existing is inconsistent with the omnipotence of God one would have to show that a world in which evil could not come into actuality would be richer in moral and spiritual values than a world in which moral freedom may be actually exercised and the exceeding sinfulness of sin may be known in the concrete.

We quote here from Charles Hodge: "The decrees of God are free in the sense of being absolute or sovereign. The meaning of this proposition is expressed negatively by saying that the decrees of God are in no case conditional. The event decreed is suspended on a condition, but the purpose of God is not! It is inconsistent with the nature of God to assume suspense of indecision on his part . . . whatever God foreordains must certainly come to pass. The distinction between the efficient (efficacious) and the permissive decrees of God, although important, has no relation to the certainty of the event. All events embraced in the purpose of God are equally certain, whether He has

determined to bring them to pass by his own power, or simply to permit their occurrence through the agency of His creatures . . . some things He purposes to do, others He decrees to permit to be done. He effects good, He permits evil. In a context of God's revelation of His using Cyrus, Persian emperor, to be His "servant," Isaiah also writes, "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I gird you, though you do not know me . . . I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am the Lord, who does all these things" (Isa. 45:5-7). Whatever God does, He certainly purposed to do. Whatever He permits to occur, He certainly purposed to permit. Nothing can occur that was not foreseen, and if foreseen it must have been purposed. The Scriptures teach that the providential control of God extends to all events, even the most minute, and thus they teach that His decrees are equally comprehensive. God is not only the Creator of all things, but He continuously sustains, rules and preserves all His creation (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17; Neh. 9:6-7; Job 12:7-10; Psa. 104:27-32). Preservation is that omnipotent energy of God by which all created things animate and inanimate, are upheld in existence, with all the properties and powers with which He has endowed them. The external world, rational and irrational creatures, things great and small, ordinary and extraordinary, are equally and always under the control of God.

The story of Job and the references we have cited throughout this article are sufficient to show that God has not abdicated His sovereignty to anyone—including Satan or any world emperor. The book of Daniel plainly shows that God foreknows, purposes, permits and acts in history constantly. God uses the evil, rebellious schemes of great world rulers and empires to serve His purposes—at the same time permitting these rulers to make their own choices! Read in this connection, Isaiah 10:5ff! The first chapter of Ezekiel is a vision given to the prophet to assure him (that he may assure the chosen people in captivity) that God still rules in all the events of history and mankind to carry out His purposes. The cloud out of the north represents the judgment of God upon the chosen people through Babylon. But the cloud is fringed by dazzling brightness which represents the "silver lining" of hope behind each cloud of judgment which is the ultimate purpose of God in judgment after all. The four living creatures shows God using a living creation to carry out His purposes on earth. The wheels with life and eyes shows even inanimate creation being used by God with a spirit of life in them. This shows the connection of God's Throne to all that is on earth. He controls the whole universe and uses any part of it

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He deems necessary to fulfill His purposes. The platform ("firmament") shows that the Throne of Heaven is the "Control Room" for all that is portrayed in the vision Ezekiel is being given. The rainbow symbolizes the ultimate purpose of God which is to fulfill the covenant made with the chosen people. So that out of the judgment of captivity under the Babylonians will come the eventual fulfillment of God's covenant (through a people rid of their idolatry and prepared for the Messiah).

One might write on this subject filling volume after volume. Perhaps the one scripture which sums it all up is found in Romans 8:28. There is now good textual and manuscript evidence to indicate that this passage should read, "God works all things together for good to those that love Him and are called according to His purpose." We leave you now, hoping that you will give this subject more study and contemplation, and that your soul will be thrilled with the revelation that God reigns, acts and that His purpose for your redemption will be fulfilled in spite of all that men, nature or Satan may attempt. God's purposes are certain—He will not change! It all depends upon you, whether you change or not! Speaking of the foreknowledge and immutable purpose of God, Paul write in Ephesians 1:10 that God is pleased "to sum up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth." Some day God is going to draw the line of eternity under all the long list of events of history and they are all going to be summed up. Do you know to what they will add up? Do you realize that every minute historical event and personage, when they are all added up, will total out to the glory of God and His Son Jesus Christ and His Church?! Indeed, everything that has ever happened or ever will happen is ultimately destined to serve to glorify God. Every man is going to eventually serve God to glorify Him—where man spends eternity to the glory of God depends upon man's choice in this probationary existence of life.

FOOTNOTES

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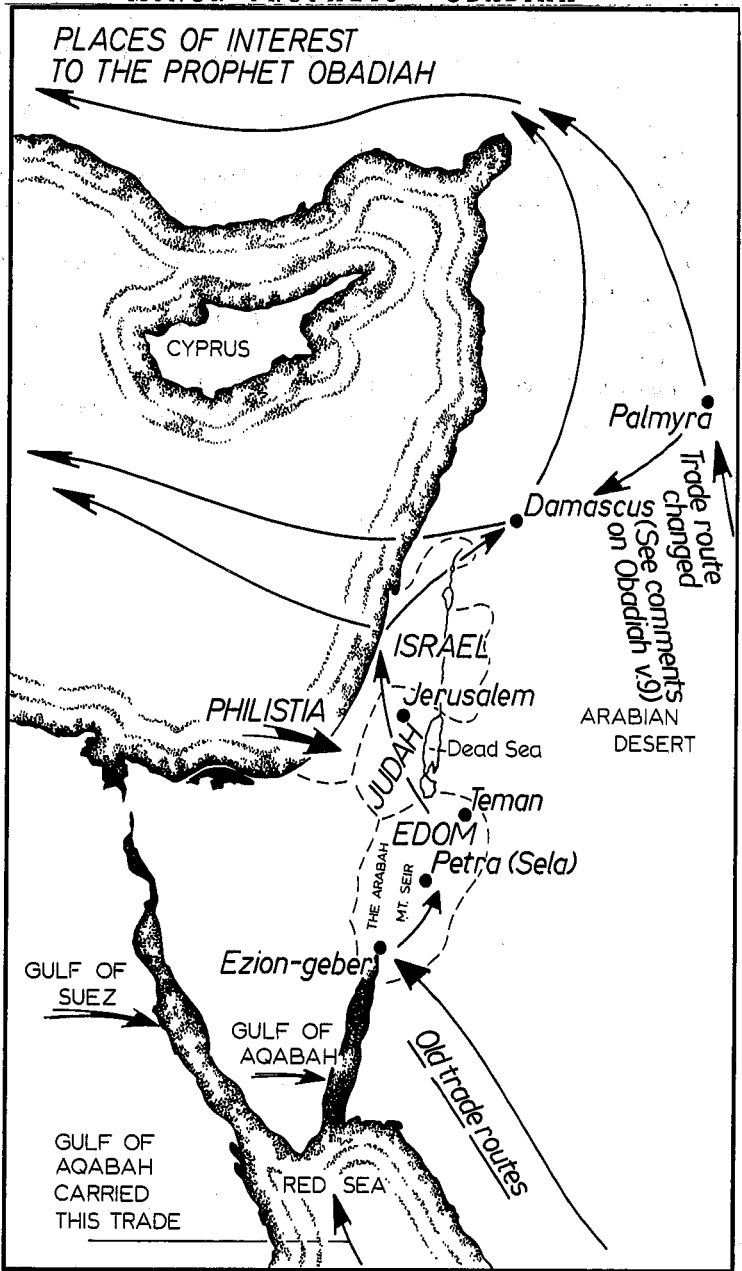
5. Alfred Edersheim, *Prophecy and History*, (Grand Rapids, 1955), p. 135.
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27. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
28. Edward J. Young, *The Study of Old Testament Theology Today*, (London, 1958), p. 31.

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OBADIAH

INTRODUCTION

Author: The name '*Obbadhyah*' means literally, "Servant of Jehovah." It was a common name among the Jews of that time. It was a name borne by a popular Zebulonite of the time of Saul I, Chron. 27:19); a chief servant of the house of Ahab (I Ki. 18:3); a Levite under Josiah (II Chron. 34:12); and several heads of post-exilic houses bore the name also. The Obadiah who wrote the prophecy is not to be confused with any of the above for the circumstances surrounding the date of this book precludes this possibility. If our dating of this book is correct, this is probably the same Obadiah sent out by Jehoshaphat (Jehoram's father) to revive the spirit of true worship in the land by exposition of the law (cf. II Chron. 17:7) and was a contemporary of both Elijah and Elisha who were then prophets in Israel. (see Elijah's letter to Jehoram in II Chron. 21:11-15).

Date: The historical circumstances which called forth this prophecy are evident. An assault on Jerusalem had taken place in which the Edomites, though not the Holy City's principal foe, took part. These Edomites being blood brothers to the Jews (descendants of Esau) were not only malignantly delighted at Jerusalem's calamity but they shared in the plundering of the city and capturing refugees selling them into slavery. Just such an event took place during the reign of Jehoram when the Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah (cf. II Chron. 21:16-17; Amos 1:6). We believe Obadiah's book is properly dated in accordance with this event which occurred approximately 845 B.C. There are other reasons for this early date. The place which the book holds in the canon (being included in the group of Pre-Assyrian "Minor Prophets," Joel, Amos, Hosea, and Jonah). The relationship of Obadiah to other prophets of this period or later who undoubtedly quoted from him (cf. Joel 3:5 and 2:23 with Obad. 17; cf. Amos 1:11 with Obad. 10, 12, 14; cf. Jer. 49:7-27 with the entire book of Obadiah). Obadiah does not mention any of the great monarchies of the world which were known by the later prophets. If he had lived at the time of Isaiah or Jeremiah surely he would have at least mentioned Assyria or Babylon. The few foreigners he does mention are the very ones mentioned in Joel 4:4 as enemies of the kingdom in Joel's day. Obadiah says nothing of a complete destruction of Jerusalem. If he had prophesied after Jeremiah (when Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the temple and the city) it is most certain he would have alluded to such devastation of the Holy City.

O B A D I A H

Background of the Times: Obadiah, if he was born during Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah, lived his early life at a time when religious reform was at its peak in Judah. Jehoshaphat was the second of the five kings of Judah who were outstanding for godliness (the others being Asa, Joash, Hezekiah and Josiah). He took away the high places and Asherim from Judah (II Chron. 17:6), though he apparently was not able to keep the people from using certain high places in worshipping the Lord (I Kings 22:43). For the account of his reign see I Kings 22 and II Chronicles 17-20. He sensed the importance of religious education for the people and sent out princes and priests and Levites to teach the people the law of the Lord. Because of his godly reign "the fear of Jehovah" came upon the nations round about and even the Philistines and the Arabians brought him tribute. In spite of all his godliness he made the fatal mistake of making political and economic alliances with the godless King Ahab of Israel, the northern kingdom. He sanctioned marriage between his son Jehoram and Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Athaliah was almost as wicked and pagan as her mother. Jehoram took complete charge of the kingdom of Judah at his father's death in 849 B.C. Jehoshaphat had seven sons, and in order that there might not be rivalry for the throne, he gave the younger ones great gifts of silver and gold and precious things, with fortified cities in the kingdom of Judah (II Chron. 21:2-3) but when Jehoram became the sole ruler, he murdered his own brothers. Athaliah, like her wicked mother Jezebel before her, was undoubtedly a great influence on her husband in his evil deeds. As soon as his father died, Jehoram began to slip into the idolatrous ways of the northern kingdom. Edom revolted from under the rule of Judah. Libnah in Judah, a Levitical city far enough from Jerusalem to be somewhat independent, showed its abhorrence of Jehoram's deeds by revolting at the same time (II Kings 8:22). Meanwhile, the great prophet Elijah sent to Jehoram a letter of denunciation for his wickedness. Whether this letter from Elijah was sent after his translation to heaven or not is open to question. God sent a plague upon Judah, especially upon the family of Jehoram. He suffered and died unlamented from a horrible disease. The Arabians or their associated forces slew all of Jehoram's sons (II Chron. 21:17) except Ahaziah, the youngest, who succeeded his father at his death. The Edomites participated in these raids upon Judah and Jerusalem. It was God's message of vengeance upon the enemies of His people and His ultimate victory which Obadiah delivered in writing at this time. During the reign of Jehoshaphat God gave Judah peace and prosperity (II Chron. 20:25-30) but during the reign of Jehoram and

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Ahaziah and because of the wickedness and idolatry of the rulers and the people, God brought judgment upon Judah allowing her enemies to plunder her. For additional background information see Special Studies Nos. Two and Three.

Edomites: (For descriptions of other nations during the Pre-Assyrian days, i.e., Egypt, Syria, Assyrians, etc., see the Introduction section of the other prophecies in this book). Edom, or '*edhom*', means "red" and is, as a nation, descended from Esau (cf. Gen. 25:30; 36:1-8). The country is also called Seir after the mountain plateau area between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah where the Edomites dwelt. There is some evidence that the original inhabitants were Horites, or "cave dwellers" (cf. Gen. 14:6). According to archaeological evidence the kingdom of Edom as a monarchy began about 1400 B.C. or before. Edom had kings before the Israelites (Gen. 36:31-39). Before becoming a monarchy the territory was ruled over by tribal chieftians.

The Edomites and the Israelites, although blood brothers, were bitter enemies. The Edomites refused to permit the Israelites to pass through their country as they journeyed toward the Promised Land under Moses (Num. 20:14-21). Saul fought against the Edomites (I Sam. 14:47), but David conquered them and put military garrisons throughout the whole land (II Sam. 8:14). Solomon made Ezion-geber and Eloth seaports from which his ships sailed to Ophir (II Chron. 8:17-18). Judah lost Edom in the reign of Jehoram (at which time the book of Obadiah was probably written) about 847 B.C. (II Kings 8:20-22). About 50 years later Amaziah, king of Judah, inflicted a severe defeat on the Edomites (II Kings 14:7). About 735 B.C. Rezin, king of Syria, at war with Judah, captured Eloth and drove the Jews out of Edomite territory (II Kings 16:6). When Jerusalem was destroyed and Judah depopulated by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., the Edomites were scattered and forced to flee to the Negeb in the southern part of Palestine. Eventually they penetrated as far north as Hebron. The Edomites were also subject to Babylon. Under the Persian Empire the territory of Edom became a province called Idumea, the Greek form of Edom. In 325 B.C. an Arab tribe known as the Nabateans inhabited Petra the eastern part of Edom's territory. In Maccabean times, John Hyrcanus subdued the Idumeans and forced them to accept Judaism. When the Romans took over Palestine (about 64 B.C.) the Edomites were also included. From Idumea came Antipater, the father of Herod the Great (on the throne when Christ was born). After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. the Idumeans disappeared from history. Thus the Edomites came to

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an inglorious end—exiled—having been betrayed and forced to flee their home land of Petra and perishing from the face of the earth in certain fulfillment of the prophecies of Obadiah and the later prophets (see Isa. 34:5-17; Jer. 49:17-22; Ezek. 25:12-14; Malachi 1:1-5).

Purpose and Teaching of Obadiah: Kirkpatrick says, "The teaching of the book of Obadiah is extremely simple." It may be simple but its theme is profound and exciting. There are two prophetic elements in this smallest of Old Testament books which have universal, Messianic significance. First, the judgment of Edom which prophetically pre-figures the later judgment of all the nations with the establishment of the universal Messianic Kingdom (v. 15). Second, the captive exiles of Zion will be restored to their home out of which people shall come the Messianic kingdom, that to which all Israel's history pointed, when "the kingdom shall be Jehovah's," (v. 21). Both of these themes find their fulfillment in the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom (the Church). Even as Daniel was to say later, "And in the days of those kings (the Roman kings) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, . . . and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44). When the Messiah came, all other kingdoms were judged and defeated. Although none of the other prophets were dependent upon Obadiah's book as a source for their messages, it was somewhat of a prophetic proto-type. God's message in all the prophets contain the same two basic elements as are given in such an extremely brief way in Obadiah: Judgment and Redemption (see the section on Interpreting the Prophets). Kirkpatrick sees it aright when he says:

" . . . we are still within the narrow limits of Palestine. No larger hope is expressed of the inclusion of the nations in that kingdom. This agrees with the early date of the prophecy. The nations, as in Joel, are the objects of judgment, not of grace. Not until Israel comes into actual contact with Assyria and Egypt in the days of Isaiah and Micah, does *the truth emerge that Israel's mission is to achieve a spiritual conquest of all the nations.*"

The theme of Obadiah is best summed up in v. 21, "The Kingdom shall be Jehovah's!" Around this theme we have selected to outline the book in this manner:

Theme: The Kingdom Shall Be Jehovah's!

- I. Judgment, v. 1-9, upon Edom, enemies of God's people
 - A. Announcement of it by God's prophet, v. 1

- B. Certainty of it in spite of proud past and present fortifications
v. 2-4
 - C. Extent of it—complete annihilation, v. 5-9
- II. Justice, v. 10-16, of God's judgment
- A. Edom did violence to and stood aloof from God's people in times of distress, v. 10-11
 - B. Edom gloated over, boasted, rejoiced, looted and cut off the fugitives of God's people in their day of distress, v. 12-14
 - C. Edom and all peoples who are enemies of God's elect will reap what they have sown, v. 15-16
- III. Jubilance, v. 17-21, God's elect will be victorious
- A. They shall receive and possess the covenant blessings of Jehovah, v. 17, 19, 20
 - B. They shall conquer their enemies, v. 18
 - C. They shall reign as the redeemed, v. 21

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CERTAINTY OF EDOM'S JUDGMENT

TEXT: v. 1-4

- 1 The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah concerning Edom: We have heard tidings from Jehovah, and an ambassador is sent among the nations, saying, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.
- 2 Behold, I have made thee small among the nations; thou art greatly despised.
- 3 The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart Who shall bring me down to the ground?
- 4 Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why and how did Jehovah send an "ambassador" among the nations calling them to battle against Edom?
- b. Why did Edom's dwelling place make them proud?
- c. How would God bring them down from their "nest"?

PARAPHRASE

The revelation God gave to Obadiah in a vision concerning the nation of Edom: Jehovah has sent His people good news and He has sent His "ambassador" among the Gentile nations with a command, saying, Attention! I command you to do battle against Edom at My direction. To Edom Jehovah says, I have set My mind to reduce your nation to obscurity among the nations of the world and to cause your name to be greatly despised. Your seemingly impregnable dwelling place and fortifications, high in the mountain cliffs, have made you haughty and proud. But your pride has deceptively blinded you and caused you to boast, Who shall ever conquer us—no one shall ever bring us down?! But the great God Jehovah announces, Even if you build your fortifications as high as the eagle flies, or place your nest even higher up in the heavens among the stars, I, Jehovah God, will throw you down into defeat and judgment.

SUMMARY

In spite of invincible fortifications the Omnipotent God will defeat Edom making it despicable and obscure among the nations. God will use other heathen nations to serve His purpose with Edom.

COMMENT

v. 1 THE VISION OF OBADIAH. The Hebrew and Greek words for *vision* all come from root words having to do with seeing. Through visions God revealed truth in a pictorial form. These visions came at various times (both day and night, Dan. 10:7; Acts 9:7; 10:3; Gen. 46:2) and in various ways (asleep at night or awake in the day, in dreams or trances). In the O.T. false prophets feigned visions and were denounced by the true prophets of God (Jer. 14:14; 23:16; Ezek. 13:7).

CONCERNING EDMO; see comments on Edom in Introduction and comments on verse 3 below. What Obadiah writes concerning Edom is specifically claimed to be a divine revelation from Jehovah. God breathed forth this prophecy. Obadiah was the instrument—not the originator.

TIDINGS FROM JEHOVAH, . . . LET US RISE UP AGAINST HER IN BATTLE; The prophet uses the editorial "we" and includes himself among those who (the nation of the Jews) heard the prophetic "tidings." These "tidings" of the protection of God by the overthrow of His enemy Edom were designed to be a consolation to the elect as well as a warning to Edom. In the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible the

word we know as *Jehovah* is written by four consonants YHWH. The ancient Jews held the name of God in such veneration and reverence they decided that the best way to avoid using the name with irreverence was not to use it at all. At least they determined never to fill in the correct vowels and give the word the correct pronunciation. Tradition says that the only occasion on which it was actually pronounced in those days was when the High Priest uttered it on his annual entry into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. So the original pronunciation was forgotten among the Jews. The Masorettes (about 900 A.D.) probably attached to YHWH the vowel points of the word that was supposed to be pronounced in place of YHWH, *Adonay*. Due to the nature of the first consonant of *Adonay* (meaning Lord), the first "a" became an "e" so the name in the text then became *YeHoWaH*. The Jews knew that *YeHoWaH* was an artificial form and continued to pronounce the word *Adonay*, but during the Middle Ages some Gentile scholars in the Church began to treat the artificial form as a real name. Because the language of these scholars transcribed "Y" as "J" and "w" as "v" the name became *JEHOVAH*.

How did God send an "ambassador" among the Gentile nations commanding them to come against Edom? Probably this is only personifying the fact that God sent these nations His command in some invisible, mental form, into the hearts and minds of the heathen rulers. However, He could well have sent one of His angels or one of the angels who ministered to the different nations (cf. Dan. 10:13, 20). The main point of emphasis is that God does use heathen nations to serve His purpose (cf. Is. 10:5-19; 44:28—45:6; Jer. 51:20-23; II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). God is even portrayed as the "general" over His army of locusts when He brings judgment upon Judah in the days of Joel (Joel 2:11). So God called forth the Babylonians and the Romans and others to reduce Edom to ultimate oblivion. For an extended discussion of God's activity in the events of history see Special Study No. nine, page 93, entitled, "Prophetic Philosophy of History."

v. 2 MADE THESE SMALL; As was mentioned in the Introduction to this book, Nebuchadnezzar scattered the original Edomites and reduced them to a small, despised people who were forced to inhabit the barren, hostile desert of southern Palestine known as the Negeb. The Edomites soon ceased to exist. Their original homeland, southeast of the Dead Sea, in Mt. Seir came to be inhabited by Arabians later known as Nabataeans. For centuries now even the Nabataean civilisation has perished from the earth and the territory of Petra (Edom) stands in

complete desolation testifying to the certainty of God's prophetic word. We shall have more to say of the history of this territory in the next two verses. The perfect tense is used in verse 2 where the future is portrayed as taking place in the present. Keil and Delitzsch say, "The perfect . . . describes the resolution of Jehovah as one whose fulfillment is as certain as if it had already occurred."

V. 3 PRIDE . . . HATH DECEIVED THEE; O THOU THAT DWELLEST IN THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK; We present here a description of the "rock" (Petra) by George L. Robinson in "The Twelve Minor Prophets" pub. by Baker Book House, page 66-67:

"For situation and natural beauty Petra is unique among the cities of earth. To describe it adequately is well-nigh an impossibility. Its location, deep down among the mountains of Seir, surrounded on all sides with richly colored rocks of simply matchless beauty and grandeur, renders it a 'wonder of the desert.' One enters the wierd but attractive city enclosure by a narrow gorge, over a mile long, called the *Sik*, or cleft. This defile is one of the most magnificent and romantic avenues of its kind in all nature. A tiny stream flows under one's feet much of the way. The chasm is both narrow and deep, often-times so contracted as to be almost dark at noonday. The rocks which bound it are tinted most beautifully with all the colors of the rainbow. On emerging from it into the great hollow basin, (which is over a mile long by two-thirds of a mile broad), the explorer is confronted by rock-hewn dwellings, tombs, temples, and other cuttings on every side. Several hundreds of these, most of them doubtless mausolea originally, still remain, all carved literally out of the solid sandstone rock. The ruins of a castle and of buildings and the arches of a bridge, and columns, still stand scattered over the bottom of the city's site. The colors of the rocks add immensely to the attractiveness of the place. The deepest reds, purple, orange, yellow, white, violet, and other colors are arranged by nature in alternate bands, shading off artistically into one another, curving and twisting in gorgeous fantasies according to the infiltration of the oxides of iron, manganese, and other substances which so often produce in sandstone rocks color varieties of special beauty. The entire city and its environs are one immense maze of richly colored mountains and cliffs, chasms, rocky shelves and narrow valleys, gorges and plateaus, shady dells and sunny promontories, grand and beautiful; just

the ideal of beauty and protection for a fortress of trade and commerce to satisfy an oriental nomad."

THAT SAITH . . . WHO SHALL BRING ME DOWN TO THE GROUND?; Edom's pride and boasting rested on her assumption of strategic impregnability. One explorer of the territory has stated that a handful of men stationed in the *Sik* could easily hold off a whole army of invaders. The solid stone cliffs were not only perpendicular, they furnished no niches for scaling them at any place. Her self-satisfied security also found credence in her position along the heavily traveled trade route of that time. Through its weird ravines passed camel caravans headed for Egypt and the Mediterranean where their goods were eventually shipped to Greece and Rome. Dromedarians from everywhere paid customs duties and tribute at the gates of Petra for the privilege of passage and protection. As a consequence the inhabitants of Petra assumed commanding importance on trade routes, its citizens were prosperous, its coffers bulging with gold and silver. Its wealth was reputed to be fabulous. Edom's presumptuous boasting in her defenses and her wealth reminds us of many nations, both past and present, whose proud necks have been bowed by the Omnipotent Ruler of the Universe.

v. 4 HIGH AS THE EAGLE . . . NEST . . . AMONG THE STARS; There are a number of references to the eagle as representing power, swiftness and invincibility (cf. Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Ps. 103:5; Isa. 40:31; Jer. 4:13; Dan. 7:4; Matt. 24:28). The hyperbolic figure of "setting one's nest among the stars" is used by other prophets to express human pride (cf. Amos. 9:2ff and Isa. 14:13ff).

QUIZ

1. What is a "vision"?
2. What is the significance of God's tidings for Israel?
3. Why was an "ambassador" sent among the "nations"?
4. How was Edom "made small" and "despised"?
5. Describe the "dwelling" place of Edom.
6. What, besides her dwelling place, probably gave Edom cause for pride?

THE EXTENT OF EDMON'S JUDGMENT

TEXT: v. 5-9

- 5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not steal only till they had enough? if grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes?

- 6 How are the things of Esau searched! how are his hidden treasures sought out!
- 7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee on thy way, even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread lay a snare under thee: there is no understanding in him.
- 8 Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?
- 9 And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one may be cut off from the mount of Esau by slaughter.

QUERIES

- a. What is the significance of the figures of speech, v. 5?
- b. How did Edom's allies deceive her?
- c. Who were the "wise men" of Edom?

PARAPHRASE

Alas! How you are going to be destroyed! Why, even if thieves or night raiders came upon you, they would steal only as much as they could use or find would they not? Or, imagine yourself a vineyard—would not even the harvesters fail to gather some of the grapes? But it would not be so with God; His devastating judgment will be complete in all the things of Esau. How completely He will search out and take away all the hidden treasures of Esau! All the allies with whom you have made treaties and pacts will betray you, join with your enemies and drive you across the borders of your own land into the hands of your enemies. Even your most trusted friends while making covenants of peace with you will, at the same time, be secretly plotting a trap for you. The calamity which comes upon you will be so secretive, sudden and complete none will have the wisdom or understanding to offer defense or help. And it shall most certainly come to pass on that day, says Jehovah, I will utterly destroy the wise men and their wisdom out of Edom. In that day also your heroes and mighty men of valor, O Teman, will become cowards and as a result they will be helpless to prevent the terrible slaughter that is coming upon the inhabitants of Edom.

SUMMARY

Edom's devastation will be absolutely complete! Her destruction will originate with the God of all the earth who will bring it about through His ministers—both the allies and enemies of Edom.

COMMENT

v. 5 THIEVES . . . STEAL ONLY . . . ENOUGH? GRAPE-GATHERERS . . . LEAVE SOME? God, speaking through Obadiah, asks rhetorical questions (expecting "yes" answers). Actually these are interrogative declarations. The whole point is the contrast between what man would do to Edom and what God is going to do. If the plundering of Edom were designed and executed by men only there would be some "gleanings" left after the plundering. But it shall not be so when God's plundering is finished! Nothing will be left. Isaiah prophesies, ". . . they shall name it, No Kingdom There." (read in connection with Edom's plundering, Isa. 34:5-17; Jer. 49:17-22; Ezek. 25:12-14; Mal. 1:1-5). Edom's history, as long as she existed after this prophecy, was one long story of subjugation and plundering. Her glorious culture, one of the richest of the world then, was plundered by nation after nation. Her people were taken time after time and sold into slavery. The nation was driven from its homeland into the southern deserts of Palestine.

v. 7 MEN OF THY CONFEDERACY . . . HAVE DECEIVED THEE . . . THEY THAT EAT THY BREAD LAY A SNARE: Edom's allies (probably the Arabians with whom Edom joined in the plundering of Judah—see II Chron. 22:16ff—) secretly plotted her downfall all the while they were banqueting with her around the peace tables. Edom's neighbors, the Arabians, made commercial treaties with her but betrayed her to her enemies at the same time. Keil says, "Edom was a great emporium of the Syrio-Arabian trade, where many valuables were stored, and because of the loss of these riches the prosperity and power of Edom were destroyed."

v. 8 DESTROY THE WISE MEN OUT OF EDMOM: We, with Keil, do not believe Obadiah means that the wise men of Edom will be slain but that the Lord will take away their discernment, making them to become fools, so that they will be of no help to Edom. That Edom was known for its "wise men" is evident from Jer. 49:7; Isa. 19:11; 29:14 and especially from the fact that Eliphaz, the "wise man" who was the "friend" of Job was from Teman (Job 2:1, etc.). Romans 1:18-32 serves to explain how and why God gave these Gentiles up to their own foolishness. When any people refuses to have God in their knowledge and exchange the truth of God for lies, God gives them up and sends them a strong delusion so that they may believe a lie (cf. II Thess. 2:11-12). This is what happened to Edom. Proud in her own conceit she became a fool!

v. 9 AND THY MIGHTY MEN . . . SHALL BE DISMAYED . . . Teman is another name for the southern district of Idumea, named after Teman a son of Eliphaz and a grandson of Esau (cf. Gen. 36:11, 15). With the destruction of wisdom and discernment by the Lord (cf. Isa. 29:14-16; I Cor. 1:18-31) even the mighty warriors and men of valor lost hope and the nation was cut off. As we have mentioned earlier in our Introduction to Obadiah, the Edomites were betrayed by their allies and lost their high, rocky fortress in Petra delivered to the borders of their enemies and forced to live in the wastelands of the deserts of southern Palestine, there to become known as Idumeans. The Idumeans perished from the earth, as a nation, about 70 A.D. The Nabateans, from the nomadic Arabian tribes, inhabited the cliffs of Petra but not for long for God's doom had been pronounced against this place. God was to speak through other prophets that this territory would become so desolate it would become home only for the hawk, porcupine and owl: Isaiah said that thorns would grow over its strongholds, and it would be the haunt of jackals and other kinds of wild beasts (Isa. 34).

Many words of doom rang out against this seemingly impregnable rock fortress and its inhabitants. But for years it seemed that whoever occupied the cliffs would be safe and secure for no enemy could get in to attack the city. Even in the time of Rome's power and dominion, Petra and her inhabitants were still rich and powerful. But God said the proud city would be brought down, that it would be left deserted. How could this possibly happen when it was in such an important position and so well protected? For centuries the long, rich caravans laden with precious, costly treasures for trade from the East made Petra one of the most important stopping and trading places along the one and only trade route from the East to the West. But without warning and almost without reason a new caravan route opened up far to the north of Petra making Palmyra its chief stopping place. No longer did the camel caravans pass through the mountains of Seir with their precious cargoes. The great trade center Petra was suddenly cut off from the main highway, the city was left alone in its rocky wilderness. Soon the people left the cliff side homes that had taken years of patient labor to build. Their fortress wasn't strong enough to hide them from God's judgment. No great battles, no mighty armies, were needed to make God's sure word of prophecy come true. No, only the changing of a trade route and Petra, the city which had been powerful and rich, became a hollow shell, emptied of all life except the owl and the jackal. You can go there this very day and see the prophecy fulfilled before

your very eyes. In 150 A.D. the Roman emperor Trajan all but obliterated the Nabatean people from the face of the earth.

QUIZ

1. How complete will be God's judgment against Edom?
2. How was Edom's downfall finally brought about?
3. How does God destroy the wisdom of Edom's wise men?
4. Why would the mighty men of Teman be dismayed?
5. How was God's Word, that Petra would become the habitat for wild beasts, finally fulfilled?

THE JUSTICE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON EDM

TEXT: v. 10-16

- 10 For the violence done to thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever.
- 11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away his substance, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.
- 12 But look not thou on the day of thy brother in the day of his disaster, and rejoice not over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither speak proudly in the day of distress.
- 13 Enter not into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, look not thou on their affliction in the day of their calamity, neither lay ye hands on their substance in the day of their calamity.
- 14 And stand thou not in the crossway, to cut off those of his that escape; and deliver not up those of his that remain in the day of distress.
- 15 For the day of Jehovah is near upon all the nations: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy dealing shall turn upon thine own head.
- 16 For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; yea, they shall drink, and swallow down, and shall be as though they had not been.

QUERIES

- a. How were the Edomites and the descendants of Jacob brothers?
- b. When did the Edomites do violence to the people of Judah?
- c. Why does Obadiah write of the day of Jehovah upon all nations?

PARAPHRASE

And why is all this judgment to come upon you? Because of the violent wrong you did to your brethren the Israelites. Now you shall be completely overwhelmed with shame, powerless to help yourself, utterly and forever destroyed as a nation. For you stood aloof, high in your rocky cliffs on the other side of Jordan, not only refusing to help Israel in the days when foreign invaders carried away his treasures and supplies and divided up the booty of Jerusalem amongst themselves, but you joined in with these foreigners in plundering and became the same as these despicable foreigners. You should not gloat over the disaster of your brother; you should not rejoice over the affliction of the children of Judah when they are destroyed; do not boast of your security in the day of distress. Do not invade the land and villages of my people and plunder them in the day of their calamity; do not look with scoffing upon the affliction of my people in the day of their calamity; do not rob and steal the treasures and supplies of my people in the day of their calamity. Do not stand at the crossroads capturing those of my people who escape, delivering the captured into slavery to foreign nations. For the day of Jehovah's revelation of His majesty and omnipotence when He overthrows all ungodly powers by the establishment of His kingdom the church, when He shall despoil the principalities and the powers and make a show of them openly triumphing over them in it is near: and as the worldly powers of darkness have plundered and shed the blood of my people so they shall be recompensed; the downfall of the enemies of God's people will be accomplished in that day. For as they have desecrated and despised my dwellings and my people, so shall all powers and philosophies that are opposed to God taste the bitter cup of defeat, shame and judgment and they will be utterly defeated when He takes captivity captive.

SUMMARY

The prophet enumerates the specific crimes against God's elect of which Edom was guilty. He then, using Edom as typical of all that opposes God, pronounces God's judgment upon worldly power and unbelief in the form of the "day of Jehovah."

COMMENT

v. 10 FOR . . . VIOLENCE . . . TO THY BROTHER JACOB, SHAME SHALL COVER THEE . . . Wrong or violence is all the more heinous when committed against a brother and the Israelites (Jacob) were

brothers to the Edomites (Esau). We recall others sinning against their own; Joseph and his brethren; Ammon and Tamar; Saul and Jonathan; David and Absalom. The strong ties of blood between the Edomites and the Israelites should have impelled the Edomites to give aid to the oppressed people of Judea, but quite to the contrary, they not only gloated over the plundering of their cities and villages but joined in with the enemies of the Israelites. While the hatred of the Edomites for the Israelites, beginning with their progenitor's hatred for his brother (Gen. 27:41), increased over the centuries, the Israelites were commanded in the law to conduct themselves in brotherly attitudes toward the Edomites (Deut. 2:4-5; 23:7). We should not be surprised at the judgment of shame and "cutting-off" pronounced upon the Edomites for their actions toward their brethren. God pronounced prophetic judgment upon Canaan for his evil toward Noah his father (Gen. 9:24-29), Jacob prophecies certain judgments upon the descendants of his sons (Gen. 49:1ff). The shame of defeat and destruction at the hands of the God of Israel was to come upon this proud, rich and unconquerable people. Their wisdom would be turned into foolishness, their bravery would be turned into cowardice, their proud nation would be turned into an exiled group of desert-dwellers, despised by the Jews.

v. 11 . . . THOU STOODEST ON THE OTHER SIDE . . . STRANGERS CARRIED AWAY . . . FOREIGNERS ENTERED . . . CAST LOTS, THOU WAST AS ONE OF THEM. Not only did the Edomites "stand on the other side" watching with glee the plundering of the city of Jerusalem and other Judean villages by marauding tribes of Arabians and Philistines, they joined in the desecration of God's holy mountain and thus became an enemy of God in their actions against God's people. They are like those who later "hated God's anointed without a cause" (cf. Jn. 15:25; Psa. 35:19; 69:4). There are those today who need to know that hatred of God's church and His people is hatred for God. Opposition to the church is declaring war on God (cf. Jn. 15:18; I Jn. 3:13). The church is the militant body of Christ engaged in a great spiritual conflict (cf. II Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-20). Those not on God's side, members of His church, are His enemies. "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity (war) with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). Obadiah is the first of the literary prophets to state this as a principle but all the others from Joel to Malachi teach the same principle.

v. 12 LOOK NOT . . . REJOICE NOT . . . NEITHER SPEAK PROUDLY IN THE DAY OF DISTRESS . . . Obadiah uses the perfect tense to indicate that such events had not only already taken place but that they will take place again. Starting from particular historical events which had already transpired Obadiah sees in them all subsequent events of a similar kind. What Edom has done and what has befallen Judah is typical of the future development of the elect of God and of the attitude of worldly principalities toward them until the coming conquest of the Messianic kingdom. Edom's attitude was one of jealous, spiteful, vengeful rejoicing at the calamities of Judah. Keil quotes Ewald, ". . . the selection of the time of a brother's calamity as that in which to rage against him with such cunning and malicious pleasure, was doubly culpable."

v. 13 ENTER NOT . . . LOOK NOT . . . NEITHER LAY YE HANDS ON THEIR SUBSTANCE IN THE DAY OF THEIR CALAMITY." The Edomites evidently joined in with the invaders of Jerusalem and other Judean cities in pillaging and despoiling and carrying off their possessions. Pillaging was much more common an accompaniment of invasion in that day than it is now. Yet God considered it, in this case, an affront to Him because it was done to His people. Some day, just as God's retribution came upon Edom, all His enemies will be judged for their pillaging, plundering and persecuting of the servants of Jesus Christ through the ages (cf. Heb. 10:32-38).

v. 14 . . . STAND THOU NOT IN THE CROSSWAY, TO CUT OFF THOSE OF HIS THAT ESCAPE . . . The extent of Edom's hate and spite is seen in this verse. They had been, and undoubtedly would be in the future, guilty of fortifying the crossroads, mountain passes and ways of escape against the Judeans fleeing the ravages of the Arabians and Philistines and other marauders, capturing the fugitives and selling them into slavery or delivering them into the hands of their enemies (cf. Joel 3:5-6; Amos 1:6-9). God holds men and nations accountable for contributing to the tribulations of His people in any age. God's word condemns aggression but commands rulers to be "a terror to those of bad conduct." It is wrong to instigate war for aggressive purposes but it is right to defend against aggression, (cf. Rom. 13:1ff; I Pet. 2:13ff).

v. 15 FOR THE DAY OF JEHOVAH IS NEAR UPON ALL THE NATIONS . . . This phrase, ". . . the day of Jehovah," or ". . . the day of the Lord," is one of the distinguishing features of the prophetic literature. It is imperative that the reader know the meaning of this

phrase if he is to rightly interpret the message of the prophets. We shall make extensive comments on this phrase here. In prophetic literature, the Day of Jehovah generally denotes *any great manifestation of God's power* in judgment or redemption. The exodus from Egypt, the locust plague of Joel's day, the captivities, the restoration in the days of Ezra, the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic kingdom (the church), the destruction of Jerusalem—are each called, "The Day of Jehovah." The one great Day of Jehovah (which all judgments and redemptions of Jewish history typify) to which all prophets point is the climactic crisis in the history of God's scheme of redemption which involves the conquest of all opposition and the complete triumph of God and His covenant people. This, of course, is the complete work of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 2:2-5; 9:1-7; 11:1-16; Amos 9:11ff, etc.) when He shall have "taken captivity captive" (Eph. 4:8) and have "disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him," (Col. 2:14-15). The prophets speak of the Day of Jehovah as a day of blessing to those who are right with God, but a day of judgment and terror to those who are not. Every "day of Jehovah" experienced by the Jews (each of which symbolized the age when God would accomplish His goal of judgment and redemption in the Messiah) was a time of judgment for those who had been unfaithful to the covenant but a day of vindication and redemption for that faithful remnant. The coming of the Messiah is prophesied in terminology depicting judgment (Mal. 3:1—4:6). Jesus spoke of His first coming as a "judgment" as well as a "redemption" (cf. Jn. 9:39; 12:31-33; 3:16-21; Matt. 10:34-39). We quote from *Bible Commentary, The Minor Prophets*, by Dr. Theodore Laetsch, pub. Concordia, pgs. 203-205:

"The Day of the Lord is that day appointed by the Lord as the Day of Judgment, a day of vengeance unto all unbelievers, of everlasting salvation unto all that have accepted Him as their Redeemer. This term comprises not only this one day, but also all its manifold heralds and forerunners and the eternities following upon the Last Day. Every visitation, every judgment of the Lord, be that a just penalty for the enemies of His kingdom or a gracious visitation for the members of His Church on earth, is a forerunner of, and a guarantee for, the final Day of the Lord. These individual harbingers of the Last Day form as it were the rays diverging from the focal point, the Last Day, towards which they at the same time converge. Therefore every judgment of God upon the

wicked world is in a certain sense and to a certain extent a Day of the Lord, presaging the great Day of the Lord, whether it be the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., or the annihilation of Edom, or the fall of Babylon, or the Civil War, or World War I or II.

“ . . . It is therefore not mere poetic license nor a misconception on the part of the prophet when he speaks of the Day of the Lord as coming upon all the nations or upon Israel. The judgments visited upon the nations during the centuries of history are an integral part of the Day of the Lord, which extends like a volcanic range throughout the history of sinful mankind and will reach its final consummation on the Last Day, when time shall be swallowed up by eternity.

“The same applies, of course, to all manifestations of God’s grace, everyone of which flows from that unfathomable sea of divine goodness and love which shall be revealed in its full perfection on that great Day of the Lord.”

And so Obadiah announces this Day is near upon all the nations. What Edom has sown, she shall reap! As she has despised and plundered God’s covenant people so she shall be despised and overthrown by God.

v. 16 FOR AS YE HAVE DRUNK UPON MY HOLY MOUNTAIN, SO SHALL ALL THE NATIONS DRINK CONTINUALLY; Edom stands as a symbol or type of all the enemies of God’s covenant people. All world powers or worldly-minded people who are enemies of God (represented in Daniel and Revelation as the Beast and his worshippers) shall drink the wine of God’s wrath (cf. Isa. 51:17, 22, 23; Jer. 25:15; Rev. 14:10). As the nations mock and desecrate God’s church so shall they be mocked and desecrated at His hand, beginning with the establishment of His kingdom.

QUIZ

1. How were the Edomites “brothers” to the Israelites and how were the Israelites commanded of God to behave toward the Edomites?
2. To what extent did the Edomites participate in the plundering of the people of Judah?
3. How did the Edomites treat those Israelites who escaped the attacks upon their cities and villages?
4. What is the “Day of Jehovah?”
5. How shall the Day of Jehovah come upon all nations?

VICTORY FOR GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE

TEXT: v. 17-21

- 17 But in mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.
- 18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall burn among them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining to the house of Esau; for Jehovah hath spoken it.
- 19 And they of the South shall possess the mount of Esau, and they of the lowland the Philistines; and they shall possess the field of Ephraim, and the field of Samaria; and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.
- 20 And the captives of this host of children of Israel, that are among the Canaanites, shall possess even unto Zarephath; and the captives of Jerusalem, that are in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South.
- 21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be Jehovah's.

QUERIES

- a. Where is Mount Zion and how shall it afford escape?
- b. How shall the houses of Jacob and Joseph consume the house of Esau?
- c. Who are the "saviours" to judge Mount Esau?

PARAPHRASE

While God's Day of Judgment is coming upon all His enemies, He will be delivering His covenant people; they shall be made holy and shall be given the spiritual blessings He promised they would possess when He spoke to the patriarchs. The re-united covenant people of God shall become as a fire sweeping through the enemies of God as if they were dry stubble and God's people shall devour their enemy until the house of Esau shall be completely obliterated. The Lord has spoken it and it shall surely come to pass. And the literal conquest of Edom will be one more step in God's plan of redemption symbolizing the ultimate fulfillment of all that God has promised to the Messianic people, including victory over the Gentiles and establishing of the Messianic kingdom in every land and among all peoples of the earth.

Many saviors of God shall be raised up to preserve a remnant of the Covenant people looking forward to the One Great Savior when God shall manifest Himself to the world as King of the world and ruler of His kingdom.

SUMMARY

Obadiah comforts the covenant people with God's promise of victory over their inveterate enemies. Not only will they have victory but they will possess the promises God made with their fathers. Obadiah's promises find their ultimate fulfillment in the Messianic kingdom, the church, when the "kingdom shall be Jehovah's."

COMMENT

v. 17 BUT IN MOUNT ZION SHALL BE . . . ESCAPE . . . IT SHALL BE HOLY . . . AND JACOB SHALL POSSESS . . . Obadiah speaks of the "day of Jehovah . . . near upon all nations" in verse 15. Now God, through the prophet extends His strong right arm of salvation and victory to the covenant people, in verse 17, making "Zion" a place of escape. Mount Zion, the southeastern hill of Jerusalem, is the place where the presence of God dwelt according to the Old Testament way of saying things. The prophets used Mount Zion to mean the place where God would manifest His salvation—in other words the Messianic kingdom (the church). Mount Zion became the symbol of Messianic deliverance, peace, security and realization of the promises made to the fathers (patriarchs). The prophets were not intending that all they predicted of Mount Zion would be fulfilled literally—their predictions of the glorious things that were to happen there were intended to be fulfilled in the Messiah and His kingdom. This is plainly apparent when one compares just a few scriptures (Isa. 33:17-24; Ezek. 34:11-31; Isa. 28:16; I Pet. 2:6; Zech. 9:9; Mt. 21:5; Isa. 59:20-21; Rom. 11:25; and especially, Gal. 4:25ff; Heb. 12:22-24). That the members of the New Testament church were to be the recipients of the prophetic blessings is shown quite conclusively by the following scriptures (Acts 3:11-26; 13:29-37; 15:13-18; Rom. 3:21-22; 9:2-8; 15:8, 12, 20, 21, 27; 16:25-27; Heb. 12:18-29). Now God started His work of redemption through the Messianic kingdom when He made promise first in Genesis 3:15. All who, by faith, kept covenant with God (in whatever covenant they found themselves) found their deliverance in Mount Zion. Abraham saw His day and rejoiced (John 8:56). The verb "shall be deliverance" is in the imperfect and indicates a continuous flow of the deliverance to be found in Mount Zion (this

mountain being symbolic of Messianic promise and covenant). All who remained true to God in Old Testament times—ever looking forward in faith to what God was going to do on Mt. Zion—had deliverance, for Christ died for the transgressions done aforetime (cf. Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15-17).

As a result of the future deliverance which will be accomplished ultimately by the Messiah there shall also come an imputed holiness or perfection. Other prophets spoke much about this cleansing the Messiah would bring (Isa. 35; 4:2-4; Zech. 13:1; Ezek. 36:25ff) and the writer of the Hebrew epistle explained it in Heb. 9-10. Of this holiness the apostle Peter speaks more than once (I Pet. 1:15-16; 2:9-10; II Pet. 1:4; 3:11-14).

Jacob possessing his possessions was never completely fulfilled until the coming of the Messiah. In the Old Testament God promised to the patriarchs a certain land for their habitation—He promised a prolific progeny—He promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through their seed. The Lord did give them a land and numerous offspring. And even when God took them from their land in chastisement for their idolatry and sent them into exile, He promised to return them to their land. But the careful student of the O.T. will discover that when the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity under Ezra and others, they did not repossess all their former land. A large portion of the land originally given them by God was possessed by other nations and never regained by the Jews.

v. 18-19 . . . JACOB SHALL BE A FIRE . . . JOSEPH A FLAME
. . . ESAU . . . STUBBLE . . . NOT ANY REMAINING TO THE HOUSE
OF ESAU . . . THEY OF THE SOUTH SHALL POSSESS MOUNT ESAU
. . . PHILISTINES . . . FIELD OF BPHRAIM . . . SAMARIA . . . AND
GILEAD.

In spite of the fact that the Jews never again repossessed the entire land promised to them Obadiah prophesies that they shall not only regain all that had been promised to them but the covenant people would also possess territory which had never been promised them—namely Edom. In verse 18 Jacob represents the southern kingdom, Judah, while Joseph represents the northern kingdom, Israel. Thus Obadiah sees the great victory over Edom coming to a re-united covenant people. The fulfillment of this prophecy had its beginning when the Edomites were expelled from their homeland sometime between 550 and 400 B.C. by the Nabateans. The Edomites were driven to the southern wastelands of the desert Negeb, where they became the Idumeans. Simon of Gerasa (see Josephus, War, IV, ch. IX, 7) attacked Idumaea, ravaging cities and villages, laying waste the whole country.

By promising them the liberty to plunder and murder at will, Simon succeeded with the aid of Idumean mercenaries in entering Jerusalem where he engaged in bloody battle against other leaders of the city then under siege by Titus the Roman general. At the beginning of of the Roman siege, Simon had about 5000 Jews and 5000 Idumeans under his command. The Idumeans, seeing the hopelessness of resisting the Romans any longer, sent messengers to Titus asking him to spare them if they surrendered. Their plea granted, they were about to leave the city, but Simon discovered it, killed the messengers, imprisoned the Idumean commanders and forced the remaining Idumeans to fight on. The few survivors took refuge among the desert tribes and were absorbed into their communities. Thus ended the proud and cruel nation of Edom. But this was not the ultimate fulfillment as we shall see.

v. 20 AND THE CAPTIVITIES OF THIS HOST OF CHILDREN OF ISRAEL . . . SHALL POSSESS . . . When and how, then, were the promises of vv. 19 and 20 fulfilled? The Bible itself indicates both the manner and the time of fulfillment. As long as the Old administration of the Covenant continued, God had promised a literal, temporal portion of land as the possession of a repentant Israel (cf. Deut. 30:1-5). The Lord kept His promise and raised up Cyrus, king of Persia, as His servant (Isa. 45:1ff; II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4), to return a repentant remnant of Jews to their Land of Promise. But this was not the final goal toward which God was working. It was a step in that direction, but not the final one. The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy of Obadiah concerning Jacob and Joseph possessing even Edom is to be tied directly to the prophecy made by Balaam in Numbers 24:17-18. There it is prophesied that Edom (Seir) is to be a possession of Israel when "the star comes forth out of Jacob and the scepter out of Israel." This, of course, points to fulfillment in the Messianic age. Amos 9:11-12 reveals that when the "tabernacle" (family, dynasty) of David has been rebuilt, not only will the remnant of Edom be possessed by the covenant people but all the nations. There can be no doubt about the fulfillment of this for it has the sanction of apostolic pronouncement (Acts 15:13-18) as having been fulfilled when the Gentiles were received into the New Testament church. And so the book of Acts records the fulfillment of Obadiah, 17-21, the church's (the true Mt. Zion) victorious conquest of the Gentiles by the preaching of the gospel.

v. 21 . . . SAVIOURS . . . ON MOUNT ZION TO JUDGE THE MOUNT OF ESAU; AND THE KINGDOM SHALL BE JEHOVAH'S. This

word "saviours" is the same word used of the "judges" (Samuel, Samson and company). These "saviours" would not come upon mount Easu to inflict punitive judgment but to bring deliverance. Deliverers will be sent (in the Messianic age) to Edom so that even a remnant of Edom (Amos 9:12) will be saved. These "saviours" are those who were ambassadors of *The Savior* taking His gospel to all the world enlarging His kingdom.

The last phrase is majestic! Both Edom and Zion fade from view as all becomes His! All kingdoms are united in that one kingdom, and God is all in all. It began when the "One Shepherd" united all God's sheep in "one flock" (Ezek. 34; John 10) and will find its consummation when the Savior appears the second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him (Heb. 9:28).

God's goal, as Obadiah sees it, is the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. In one form or another this is the closing note of almost every prophetic book in the Old Testament (cf. Obad. 21; Joel 3:21; Amos 9:14; Micah 7:20; Hab. 3:18; Zeph. 3:17; Hag. 2:19; Ezek. 48:35; Zech. 14:20-21, etc.). The composite picture given by such passages as these is that of the victory of God and His kingdom over every foe; of unbroken fellowship between a people finally made holy to the Lord and their everpresent faithful God; of a new Covenant which does not supplant but fulfills the old. God reaches this goal through a series of successive acts of judgment and redemption in history culminating in the Messianic judgment—redemption which is to be consummated at His second coming.

And, so to speak, Obadiah becomes a proto-type of all the later prophets who, speaking the portion God has given them to speak and in the manner God has lead them to speak, (Heb. 1:1), amplify his brief but basic message.

QUIZ

1. What is the "holiness" which Obadiah says will be in Mt. Zion?
2. What are the possessions which Jacob would possess according to Obadiah?
3. What does verse 21 show as to the ultimate purpose of God and thus the principle message of Obadiah?

EXAMINATION

CONSIDERATIONS

1. What are the advantages of having the revelation of the prophets in poetic, literary style? There are four.

OBADIAH

2. Can you remember the four point outline of all the books of the prophets—generally speaking?
3. What are the surest guides of all in learning to interpret the prophets?

ASSOCIATIONS

Associate the people of column one with the person or event of column two most nearly contemporary with them.

1	2
Obadiah	John the Baptist
Joel	Zedekiah
Jonah	Hezekiah
Amos	Jehoshaphat
Hosea	Belshazzar
Isaiah	Chebar
Micah	Jerusalem-Samaria
Nahum	Nineveh
Zephaniah	The Day of the Lord
Habakkuk	St. Paul
Jeremiah	Locust plague
Daniel	Edom
Ezekiel	Tarshish
Haggai	Gomer
Zechariah	Joshua
Malachi	Amaziah

MEMORIZATIONS

Fill in the blanks:

"The _____ of thy heart hath _____ thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the _____, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me _____ to the ground? Though thou mount on high as the _____, and though thy nest be set among the _____, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah."

"But in mount _____ there shall be those that _____, and it shall be _____; and the house of Jacob shall possess their _____."

"And _____ shall come up on mount Zion to _____ the mount of Esau; and the _____ shall be _____."

EXAMINATION
CONTEMPLATIONS

1. Just who is the man Obadiah and when did he write this book?
2. And what were the times like when he lived?
3. And who were these Edomites against whom he prophesied?
4. And how did God send an "ambassador" among the Gentile nations commanding them to come against Edom?
5. And what sort of place was Edom's dwelling place, high in the rocky clefts?
6. And just how extensive would be God's judgment upon Edom?
7. And why?
8. And what is to become of God's covenant people?

“THE KINGDOM SHALL BE JEHOVAH’S”

SERMON ON OBADIAH

INTRODUCTION

- I. PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETING THE PROPHETS
 - A. N.T. passages
 1. Acts 3:17 ff; Heb. 12; Lk. 1:67 ff
 - B. Times coloring
 - C. Covenant Background
 - D. Double Emphasis (Judgment/Redemption)
 - E. The Unifying Focal Point
- II. BACKGROUND TIMES
 - A. In the times of Jehoshaphat, Obadiah was sent out to revive the spirit of true worship in the land by exposition of the law (II Chron. 17:7)
 - B. Then in Jehoshaphat's son's time (Jehoram), Edom revolted from Judah's rule over her and joined, probably, with the Arabs and Philistines in pillaging the villages of Judea and the city of Jerusalem (II Chron. 21:16-17)
 - C. But even when Jehoshaphat brought religious reform to its peak in Judah in Obadiah's earlier days, J. made a fatal mistake.
 1. He made military alliances with the pagan king Ahab of Israel and permitted his son Jehoram to marry Ahab & Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah
 - a. Athaliah brought idolatry and wickedness with her to Judah
 - b. Jehoram murdered his brother and quickly slipped into idolatry
 - c. Jehoram suffered and died unlamented from a horrible disease sent by God . . . his sons were all murdered, except Ahaziah, by the Arabians
- III. OBADIAH'S WRITTEN MESSAGE
 - A. Vengeance upon the enemies of God's faithful covenant people
 - B. Ultimate victory for the faithful covenant people when Jehovah would rule in His kingdom
 - C. The covenant people would possess the kingdom with Jehovah

SERMON ON OBADIAH

IV. EDOM

- A. Means "red" from Esau. Country also called Seir after the mountain plateau area between Dead Sea and Gulf of Aquabah (Petra)
- B. Some evidence that original inhabitants were Horites, cave-dwellers, Gen. 14:6
- C. Edomites and Israelites, though blood brothers, were bitter enemies.
 1. Edomites refused passage to Israel during wanderings
 2. Saul, David, Solomon all fought against them and subjugated them
 3. When Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. by Nebuch. the Edomites were scattered and forced to flee to the Negeb deserts of Palestine. There they became known as Idumeans
 4. In 325 B.C. an Arabian tribe known as the Nabateans inhabited Petra
 5. In Maccabean times, John Hycanus subdued the Idumeans and forced them to accept Judaism
 6. When the Romans took over Palestine 64 B.C. the Edomites were also conquered
 7. From Idumea came Antipater, the Father of Herod the Great . . . When Jerusalem was destroyed 70 A.D. the Idumeans disappeared from history

V. TEACHING OF OBADIAH

- A. Two fundamental prophetic elements which have universal Messianic significance
 1. Judgment of Edom which prophetically prefigures the larger judgment of all the nations as they are enemies of God's kingdom with the establishment of the universal Messianic kingdom
 2. The downtrodden covenant people restored to their land out of which shall come the Messianic kingdom, that to which all Israel's history pointed, when "the kingdom shall be Jehovah's"

Even as Daniel was to say later, "And in the days of those kings (enemies of the covenant people, Rome), shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . it will stand forever." (Dan. 2:44)

When the Messiah came, all other kingdoms were judged and defeated. Israel's mission was to achieve a spiritual conquest of all the nations.

OBADIAH
DISCUSSION

I. JUDGMENT UPON EDM, ENEMIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE,

v. 1-9

A. Announcement of Judgment by God's prophet

1. An ambassador is sent among the nations
2. How did God do this?
 - a. In many and various ways God did and still does announce judgments and speak to heathen people
 - b. He "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus" to let the Jews return to Judah
 - c. He used locusts to call Judah to repentance
 - d. God speaks in natural catastrophies warning mankind that "his wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been made." Rom. 1:18-20
 - e. Sometimes God sent spokesmen like Jonah, Daniel and others to heathen nations
3. Ambassadors or messengers are still sent today among the nations in both forms
 - a. There are the natural judgments of God upon mankind warning of the terrible judgment to come finally, typhoons, earthquakes, famines, plagues
 - b. There are his prophets: every Christian who has ever spoken a word of judgment to his neighbor is a prophet of God

B. Certainty of Judgment in spite of proud past and present fortifications, v. 2-4

1. Description of Edom's proud and present fortifications
 - a. Edom was a monarchy before Israel, rich in material goods, wisdom of leaders was renowned
 - b. The entrance to her fortifications were so narrow that a few men could stand off a whole army
 - c. SO EDM RESTED SECURE IN HER OWN PRIDE. ONE IS REMINDED OF SO MANY OTHER GREAT EMPIRES WHO WERE ENEMIES OF GOD RESTING IN THEIR PRIDE . . . ASSYRIA (Isa 10), BABYLON, GREECE, ROME, GERMANY

SERMON ON OBADIAH

. . . AND NOW WE HEAR PEOPLE BRAGGING ABOUT
THE MILITARY AND SCIENTIFIC POWERS OF AMERICA
. . . THE GREATEST NATION ON EARTH

2. But God replies, do what you will but I will bring you down
 - a. God has at His command a whole universe of ways to bring nations to their knees:
 - b. Natural disasters; plagues; other nations; angels; movements of peoples; etc.
 - c. With Edom it was a combination of many things
 - (1) Other nations subjugated them
 - (2) Their allies deceived them and trapped them and drove them to the border!
 - (3) Later the caravan route was moved and the place became totally uninhabitable

ANY ONE OF THESE THINGS COULD HAPPEN TO ANY NATION WHO SETS ITSELF AGAINST GOD AND AGAINST HIS PEOPLE IT HAPPENED TO GERMANY, AND IT WILL HAPPEN TO RUSSIA! IT MAY HAPPEN TO AMERICA!

- C. The extent of God's judgment—complete
 1. Even thieves usually leave something behind
 2. The harvesters, taking pains to harvest every possible bunch of grapes, leave something which is later gleaned
 3. BUT WHEN GOD REDUCES A NATION NOTHING IS LEFT . . . EDOM BECAME A PLACE WHERE JACKALS, AND OWLS RESIDE

THE CALAMITY WHICH CAME UPON EDOM WAS SO SECRETIVE, SUDDEN AND COMPLETE NONE OF THEIR WISE MEN HAD WISDOM TO OFFER IN DEFENSE OR HELP!

HOW MANY OF THE GREAT EMPIRES OF THE PAST ARE ONLY A MEMORY . . . THEIR GLORY AND GREATNESS RECORDED IN ONLY A FEW WEATHERED AND WORN RELICS OF THE PAST!

II. THE JUSTICE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT, v. 10-16

- A. First, Edom was Israel's brethren according to fleshly descent. THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE ATTACKS UPON GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE WAS INEXCUSABLE
 1. Recall others sinning against their brethren
 - a. Joseph's brethren; Saul and Jonathan
- B. The strong ties of blood between the two should have impelled Edom to give aid to the oppressed Jews
 1. But now they stood aloof . . . watching with glee
 2. Not only so but they became like one of the invaders

OBADIAH

FOR THOSE WHO SEE RIGHTEOUSNESS BEING OPPRESSED AND DO NOTHING . . . STAND ALOOF, THEY ALSO BECOME THE ENEMY OF GOD!

C. Edom gloated over, boasted, rejoiced, looted and cut off the fugitives of God's people in their day of distress

1. The Edomites joined in the desecration of God's holy mountain; they trapped Israelites trying to escape and sold them into slavery; **THUS THEY BECAME OF GOD'S PEOPLE THEY ARE LIKE THOSE WHO LATER "HATED GOD'S ANOINTED ONE WITHOUT A CAUSE."**

THERE ARE THOSE TODAY WHO NEED TO KNOW THAT HATRED FOR GOD'S PEOPLE AND HIS CHURCH IS HATRED FOR GOD/ OPPOSITION TO THE CHURCH IS THE SAME AS DECLARING WAR ON GOD. THE CHURCH IS THE MILITANT BODY OF CHRIST ENGAGED IN A GREAT SPIRITUAL CONFLICT. THOSE NOT ON GOD'S SIDE, MEMBERS OF HIS CHURCH, ARE HIS ENEMIES (Jas. 4:4). Friendship with the world is enmity with God.

D. Edom and all peoples who are enemies of God's elect will reap what they have sown, v. 15-16

1. Obadiah has used perfect tense in past descriptions to indicate that such events had not only already taken place but will take place again.
2. Starting from particular historical events which had already transpired Obadiah sees in them all subsequent events of a similar kind.
 - a. What Edom has done and what has befallen Judah is typical of the future development of the elect of God and of the attitude of worldly principalities toward them until the coming conquest of the Messianic kingdom.

THOSE WHO HAVE VENTED THEIR WRATH UPON GOD'S PEOPLE WILL DRINK THE CUP OF GOD'S WRATH

THOSE WHO HAVE TORMENTED THE CHURCH AND GIVEN HER NO REST WILL BE CAST INTO HELL WHERE THE SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT GOETH UP FOREVER AND THERE WILL BE NO REST DAY OR NIGHT!

3. The Day of Jehovah upon all the nations
 - a. Explain what Day of Jehovah means
 - b. **THIS DAY WAS A DAY OF WRATH FOR GOD'S ENEMIES BUT A DAY OF GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE FOR HIS PEOPLE . . .**

SERMON ON OBADIAH

SO IS ANY SUCH DAY OF THE LORD . . . BOTH ACTS OF GOD ARE ACCOMPLISHED IN ONE SUCH DAY . . . EVEN WHEN SAINTS DIE IN A DAY OF JUDGMENT ON EARTH IT IS CALLED BLESSING FOR THEM! EVERY GREAT JUDGMENT ON EARTH IS A DELIVERANCE AND PROTECTION TOWARD SUSTAINING THE CHURCH UNTIL THE END!

E. They shall reign as the redeemed, v. 21

1. Saviours (those who are ambassadors of THE Saviour) taking His gospel to all the world enlarging His kingdom shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mt. Esau
2. THE LAST PHRASE IS MAJESTIC! ALL KINGDOMS ARE UNITED IN THAT ONE KINGDOM AND GOD IS ALL IN ALL.
 - a. This began when the "One Shepherd" united all God's sheep in "one flock" (Ezek. 34; Jn. 10) and will find its consummation when the Saviour appears the second time,

NOT TO DEAL WITH SIN BUT TO SAVE THOSE WHO ARE EAGERLY WAITING FOR HIM (Heb. 9:28)

3. God's goal, as Obadiah sees it, is the fulfillment of God's covenant promises

IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER THIS IS THE CLOSING NOTE OF ALL THE LITERARY PROPHETS . . .

HOW IS THIS TO BE DONE?

- a. Victory of God over every foe
- b. Unbroken fellowship between a people finally made holy to the Lord and their everpresent God
- c. A new covenant which does not supplant but fulfills the old

AND GOD REACHES THIS GOAL THROUGH A SERIES OF SUCCESSIVE ACTS OF JUDGMENT AND REDEMPTION CLIMAXED IN THE JUDGMENT AND REDEMPTION BY THE MESSIAH, AND CONSUMMATED AT THE SECOND ADVENT OF JESUS!

III. JUBILANCE; God's Elect Will Be Victorious, v. 17-21

A. They shall receive and possess the covenant blessings v. 17, 19, 20

1. God will extend His strong right arm of salvation and victory to the covenant people, making Zion a place of escape
2. Zion was the church of the Old Testament in that the fellowship of the faithful (the remnant) would give birth to the church

OBADIAH

3. ZION BECAME THE SYMBOL OF MESSIANIC DELIVERANCE, PEACE AND SECURITY. ZION BECAME THE SYMBOL OF THE REALIZATION OF ALL THE PROMISES GOD MADE TO ABRAHAM. PAUL EQUATES "JERUSALEM" WITH "ZION" IN GALATIANS 4.
4. THE PROPHETS WERE NOT INTENDING THAT ALL THEY PREDICTED OF MT. ZION WOULD BE FULFILLED LITERALLY. MOST OF WHAT THEY PREDICTED WAS TO FIND ITS FULFILLMENT IN THE MESSIAH AND HIS KINGDOM.
5. A holiness which God would give would also come along with this deliverance. Other prophets spoke of the "Holy Way" to come in the days of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 35; Ezek. 36:25ff; Zech. 13:1).
6. Jacob possessing his possessions was never completely fulfilled until the coming of the Messianic kingdom.

In v. 18-19 the covenant people are told they will possess even that which was never promised them—the territory of Edom. They were never intended to possess this territory literally. The covenant people of God (the Christian Church) now possess this territory in a figurative sense in that members of that heathen territory have been converted and made members of the universal kingdom of God.

- B. They shall conquer their enemies, v. 18
1. How will this be accomplished?
 2. In Num. 24:17-18 it is prophesied that Edom would be a possession of Israel when the "Star comes forth out of Jacob and the scepter out of Israel." This points to a fulfillment in the Messianic age!
 3. Amos 9:11-12 reveals that when the family of David is restored to the throne, not only will the remnant of Edom be possessed by the covenant people but all the nations will be conquered and possessed by them.
 4. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT ABOUT THE FULFILLMENT OF THIS FOR IT HAS APOSTOLIC SANCTION. IT BEGAN ITS FULFILLMENT WHEN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WAS ESTABLISHED ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST IN ACTS 2:1ff, WHEN BY THE GOSPEL HEATHEN WERE DELIVERED FROM THE REALMS OF DARKNESS AND TRANSLATED INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD'S DEAR SON!

SERMON ON OBADIAH

5. SO THE BOOK OF ACTS (chap. 15 esp.) RECORDS THE FULFILLMENT OF OBADIAH v: 17-21. THE CHURCH (the true Mt. Zion, cf. Heb. 12:22ff) IN ITS VICTORIOUS CONQUEST OF THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF UNBELIEVERS TODAY IS STILL POSSESSING "EDOM" (representative of God's enemies).

CONCLUSION

I. WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED AND PROPHESED HE IS MOST CERTAINLY GOING TO FULFILL

A. No empire, however rich or strong is going to thwart His purpose

B. Not even the gates of Hades shall prevail against His kingdom

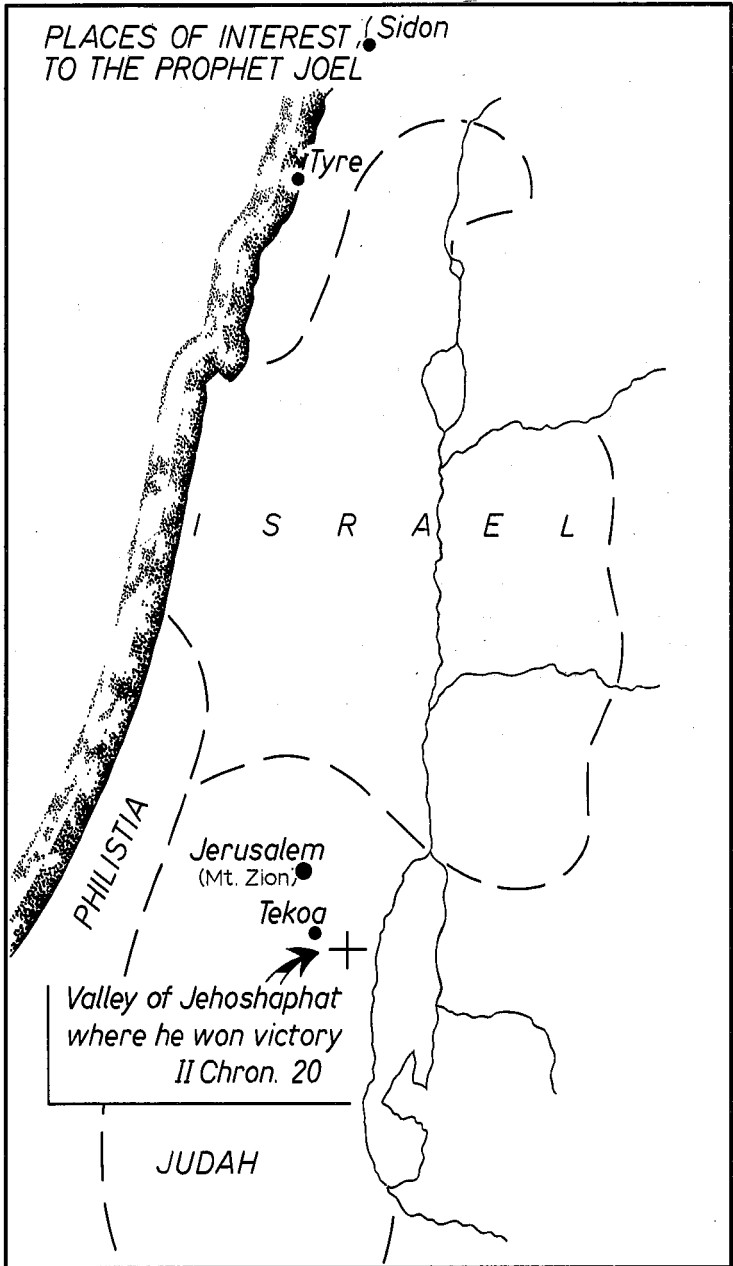
II. WHETHER YOU WILL BE CONQUEROR OR CONQUERED . . . YOUR ETERNAL DESTINY DEPENDS UPON WHERE YOU STAND IN RELATION TO GOD'S WILL AND PURPOSE AND HIS KINGDOM!

A. Aloofness, gloating, active opposition to it will mean your destruction

B. Obedience, faithfulness, being a saviour among the nations will mean you will rule with Him

HE HAS CONQUERED ALL DOMINIONS, POWERS AND PRINCIPALITIES IN CHRIST, DESPOILING THEM AND MAKING A SHOW OVER THEM OPENLY . . . THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST HAVE ALREADY CONQUERED (Read Rom. 8:31-39).

MINOR PROPHETS





Drawn by A. W. Callcott, R.A. from a sketch by C. Barry, Esq.

Engraved by W. Gindon

STREET IN JERUSALEM.

JOEL

INTRODUCTION

Author: "Joel, the son of Pethuel;" of whom nothing besides this book is known. The name "Joel" means literally, "Jehovah is God." The name Joel is common among the people of the Old Testament (I Sam. 8:2; Neh. 11:9). There are certain inferences we may make of his character from his style of writing. He stands out as a literary master although his style of writing is simple and vivid. He carefully polishes and beautifies his work as perhaps no other Old Testament writer does. His ability to describe is forceful and minute. Everything is set before us, as though we ourselves saw it. The prophet adds detail to detail; parallelism to parallelism; each clear, brief, distinct, a picture in itself, yet adding to the effect of the whole. Lange says, "The tenderness of his soul is evidenced by his lingering over the desolation which he foresees. It is like one counting over, one by one, the losses he endures in the privations of others." He even portrays nature and the beasts themselves mourning as he sympathized with the extremities of the dumb animals during the droughts. Joel, as is evidenced by his description of how repentance should be done, was a man of deep religious feelings, heartfelt experience and warm sympathy. He threatens, warns and penetrates into the very recesses of the soul. His writing seems to characterize him as a poetic man of strength, tenderness, insight and dignity. He definitely is a man of moral integrity. He was undoubtedly a native of Judah and most likely of Jerusalem itself for he speaks like a native (2:1, 15, 32; 3:16, 17, 21; 2:32; 3:20). He was very familiar with the Temple and the ministry of the priests (1:9, 13, 14, 16; 2:14, 17; 3:18).

Date: Kirkpatrick ("Doctrine of The Prophets") rightly says, "The date of Joel's prophecy is one of the most keenly debated problems of Biblical criticism." Many of the destructive "higher critics" place Joel as late as 586 B.C. (the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar) and some as extremely late as 400 B.C. or later. We suspect this late dating of Joel is done to preclude the possibility of predictive prophecy—to destroy the supernaturalness of the book. For a fair presentation and excellent refutation of the critical late date read A. F. Kirkpatrick's "The Doctrine of The Prophets," pub. Zondervan.

The evidence for an early date for Joel's prophecy is, to us, conclusive. (1) The position of the book in the canon of the O.T. establishes it. Joel is placed among those books which are definitely pre-Assyrian. The chronological intention of this grouping cannot be

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mistaken. This position was formulated at least as early as 300 B.C. and was the position in the canon of the O.T. used by Jesus and the apostles. (2) According to Joel himself, the priests were held in high esteem and the Temple services were being maintained when he prophesied. This was certainly not true of anytime during the captivities nor for a long time afterward. It would indicate a time early in the history of the southern kingdom. (3) The silence of Joel concerning a king and a royal court on the one hand and the pre-eminence and authority Joel gives to the priesthood on the other is indicative of the circumstances of an early date. Furthermore, the silence of Joel concerning the northern kingdom lends to this early date. There is only one period in the history of Judah to which these circumstances may point—the earlier part of the reign of Joash (c. 837 B.C.), who was crowned king when a boy of seven years of age. During this time Jehoiada, high priest, was *de facto* ruler of Judah. Priestly influence was in the ascendancy. (4) The contents of this book in relation to foreign nations also testifies to its early date. A very early date will account for the absence of all mention by Joel of Syria, Assyria and Babylon. These nations came into contact with Judah at a later date. While on the other hand Joel mentions nations who were enemies of Judah before and during the reign of Joash (e.g. Phoenicia, Philistia, Egypt, Edom). (5) Kirkpatrick argues further for the early date from Joel's relation to Amos and Ezekiel. They seem to have borrowed some phrases and words from Joel thus Joel would have been written earlier than Amos whose early date is well established. The cumulative evidence mentioned above definitely places the prophecy of Joel near the decade 840-830 B.C. in the days of the boy king, Joash, when Jehoiada, high priest, was the ruler in fact.

Background of The Times: There had been a disastrous locust plague throughout the southern kingdom. In addition a drought came upon the land. So severe were the circumstances there was not even enough grain with which to make a "cereal offering" before the Lord. It was so terrible a time it was a "Day of Jehovah," foreshadowing the great and terrible "Day of Jehovah" to come. Joel lived and prophesied during the reign of Joash. Previous to the ascension of Joash to the throne the wicked, murderous, usurper Queen Athaliah ruled and idolatry flourished. Jehoiada, the high priest, led a revolt which deposed Athaliah and placed Joash, rightful heir to the throne, as titular head of the nation. The religious reform instituted by Jehoiada at this same time seems to have been superficial and short-lived. The people turned reformation into formalism. Thus God, according to Joel, sent upon

JOEL

the people these calamitous calls to repentance. Already the people were on the way to the moral decadence against which Amos and Hosea prophesy a few years later. Joel must exhort the "drunkards" to repentance (1:5). Already the priests must be reminded that God desires heartfelt repentance and not formalism (1:13; 2:17). There does not seem to be any extensive idolatry as under Athaliah or as later in the time of Isaiah, but the nation is in dire need of repentance.

The Purpose and Teaching of Joel: Joel has been sent from God to call the covenant people to repentance and holiness. God desires a sanctified people through whom He may fulfill His covenant promises of redemption for the world.

To bring this people to repentance and holiness of life the great day of Jehovah's chastening judgment has come upon the land in a locust plague and drought. But when they repent God redeems them. Thus the ever-recurring method of God in saving the world is judgment causing repentance followed by redemption as He purifies a people fit for communion with Him. This method reached its perfection (completion—fulfillment) in the Messiah and His spiritual kingdom. Even the first coming of the Messiah is spoken of as a day of Jehovah's judgment (cf. Malachi 3:1-4; Jn. 9:39; 16:11). So, combined in the Messiah and His kingdom is the method of God's salvation—judgment and redemption. This method God demonstrated over and over in the historic judgments and redemptions of national Israel and prophesied as coming upon a new covenant people in the last days time and time again through the O.T. prophets. Our salvation awaits only the consummation of final redemption and final judgment (Heb. 9:28). The next time Christ comes it will not be to reinstitute the Jewish sacrifices and Temple or to offer another opportunity for the Jews to be saved. He has dealt with sin once for all. God has overcome His enemies once for all. Each judgment/redemption experience of national Israel foreshadowed and predicted that final and complete judgment/redemption experience realized in Jesus Christ's first advent and the consummation awaits only His second advent. This is the message of Joel. And his message was primarily directed to his contemporaries. Judah was soon to come under the oppression of successive world empires. The cruelty and corruptness of these pagan oppressors would cause many of God's elect to faint for fear. They would wonder if the very existence of God's people and God's covenant promises should perish from the earth. So Joel was commissioned to preach the ultimate act of God's conquest over the powers of world darkness. God overcame the dominions of world power in Christ (cf. Jn. 16:33; Col. 2:15).

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The dwelling of Jehovah among His people—the restoration of the communion between God and man which man wilfully rejected in Paradise—is the final goal of Joel's prophecy. This implies, of course, that God's people have been fitted for God's presence among them. This He also accomplished in Christ and continues to accomplish in the Messiah's kingdom. Truly, "Jehovah dwelleth in Zion." The main theme of Joel, then, is that the Lord has called this covenant people to repentance and holiness by natural judgments (2:12-14) so that He can fulfill His covenant promise to redeem them immediately Israel and materially (2:18-27) and future (new Israel, the church) (2:28—3:21; Acts 2:1) and spiritually (Eph. 1:3).

Sermonic Outline of Joel:

REPENT

- I. Plea for Repentance 1:1—2:11
 - A. The Exclaimer—God's spokesman 1:1-3
 - B. The Extent—Vivid, arresting, forceful, 1:7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 20; 2:2, 3, 9
 - C. The Executor—God, using natural agents, 1:6, 15, 19, 20; 2:2, 4-10, 11
- II. Plan for Repentance 3:12-17
 - A. The People 2:12-14
 1. Awake
 2. Wail, Lament, Weep
 3. Be confounded (humbled)
 4. Blow the trumpet in Zion (preach it)
 5. Tremble (revere)
 6. Fast, mourn
 7. Return to the Lord
 - B. The priests 2:15-16
 1. Gird on sackcloth, pass the night in penitent prayer
 2. Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly
 3. Cry to the Lord (interceed)
 4. Lament, wail
- III. Purpose of Repentance 2:18—3:21
 - A. Immediate blessings 2:18-27
 1. Restoration of crops
 2. Removal of Plague
 3. Remembrance by the Lord

B. Future blessings 2:28—3:21

1. God preparing a new people (His spirit upon all flesh)
2. God's victory over the enemies of His people
3. God's presence among His people.

THE EXCLAIMER OF REPENTANCE— GOD'S PROPHET

TEXT: 1:1-3

- 1 The word of Jehovah that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.
- 2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all inhabitants of the land.
Hath this been in your days, or in the days of your fathers?
- 3 Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children,
and their children another generation.

QUERIES

- a. Who was Pethuel?
- b. Why ask if such a thing had happened in past generations?
- c. What purpose would be served in telling of this event for generations to come?

PARAPHRASE

This is the message of Jehovah God that came by revelation to Joel who is the son of Pethuel. Listen to this all you aged men and let all the other people of the land give their attention! Are you able to recall in all your days or the days of your ancestors such a disaster as this? You shall teach your children the significance of this and your children shall teach their children and their children shall teach other generations.

SUMMARY

The event Joel is about to interpret is so unprecedented it is to be used to teach many future generations of the judgment of God.

COMMENT

v. 1 THE WORD OF JEHOVAH THAT CAME TO JOEL THE SON OF PETHUEL; Joel unequivocally claims his message to have been revealed from Jehovah. He did not get it from other prophets or from other sources. His interpretation of the locust plague and drought came di-

rectly from God. Of Pethuel we know nothing other than this. Undoubtedly he is mentioned only to distinguish this Joel from another well-known Joel of that day.

v. 2 HEAR THIS . . . HATH THIS BEEN IN YOUR DAYS . . . OR YOUR FATHERS? This locust plague, coupled with the drought, brought such unexampled devastation to the land of Judah that the most ancient man of the nation could not remember any time to equal it for its terribleness. Using historical events for didactic purposes was a principle established by the Law of Moses (cf. Deut. 6:4-9; 32:7, etc.). Joel's record of this calamity has served hundreds of generations of God-fearing people for over 2500 years, as a warning and a source of strength.

v. 3 TELL YOUR CHILDREN . . . THEIR CHILDREN . . . AND . . . ANOTHER GENERATION; This same principle, using historical events for teaching the nature of God, is just as valid today as it was then, inasmuch as we have divine revelation by which we may apply and interpret these events. We shall deal with this more specifically later.

THE EXTENT OF THE PLEA FOR REPENTANCE; VIVID, ARRESTING

TEXT: 1:4-12

- 4 That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.
- 5 Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and wail, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.
- 6 For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the jaw-teeth of a lioness.
- 7 He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.
- 8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.
- 9 The meal-offering and the drink-offering are cut off from the house of Jehovah; the priests, Jehovah's ministers, mourn.
- 10 The field is laid waste, the land mourneth; for the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.
- 11 Be confounded, O ye husbandmen, wail, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; for the harvest of the field is perished.

12 The vine is withered, and the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field are withered: for joy is withered away from the sons of men.

QUERIES

- a. What are the different insects described by Joel?
- b. Who is the "nation" come upon the land of Judah?
- c. What would the significance of the cutting off of meat and drink offering be for the people?

PARAPHRASE

What the first plague of locusts leaves after it has eaten all it wishes, others will come swarming the land and eat; what they leave others will come hopping all over the earth eating as much as they will and if they leave any, still others will come to destroy all that is left. You had better sober up from your drunken stupor you notorious drunkards and weep and howl because the fresh sweet juice of the grape has completely perished. A mighty, numberless horde of hostile enemies has invaded my land. Their teeth are as fierce and strong as lion's teeth. They have ruined my vines and stripped the bark off my fig trees and left their trunks and branches bare and white. Mourn as a maiden mourns whose fiance has died. So complete is the devastation there is not enough grain or wine left to make an offering in the Temple. The priests who minister before the Lord mourn; the farm land wastes away and seems to mourn because it bears no produce at all; neither grain nor grape nor olive. Turn pale with disappointment you people and howl you vine dressers because the whole harvest is gone. Every growing plant or tree; whether it be grape vine, fig, pomegranate, palm or apple it has withered; indeed, all of man's gladness has withered and been consumed. There is no joy at all among the people.

SUMMARY

Through successive plagues of swarming locusts the grain and fruit, in fact all vegetation, is being utterly consumed. Even the land is represented as mourning over the desolation.

COMMENT

v. 4 THAT WHICH THE PALMER-WORM HATH LEFT . . . ; There are some who think Joel has given us here four different stages in the development of the one species of locust. Others think we have here four different species of locusts. Palmer-worm means "gnawer-shearer;" locust may be defined "the multitudinous one;" canker-worm means "licker, lapper," or "hopper;" caterpillar means "devourer, stripper." Dr. Laetsch, in *The Minor Prophets, Bible Commentary*, pub. Concordia, comments, "*Locust*, would emphasize the immense masses, the other three terms, their insatiable voracity." We prefer to explain Joel's use of these four terms as simply a designation of successive stages of the plague of locusts. In other words the locusts came upon the land one increment after another in immediate succession until the land was stripped of all vegetation and then the Lord caused a great drought to come upon the land (cf. 1:17-20). The use of the number four probably symbolizes completeness (cf. Isa. 11:12; Jer. 15:3; Ezek. 1:5-6; Amos 1:3ff). Lange and Keil and Delitzsch agree that the proper name is locust while the other terms are figurative, poetic terms to describe the completeness of the work of these great hordes, one after another.

In the December, 1915, issue of *The National Geographic Magazine*, there is a vivid description of a locust plague covering all of Palestine and Syria, by John D. Whiting. According to this account the swarms of locusts appeared in March, coming from the northeast, going toward the southwest in such thick clouds they obscured the sun from sight. The females, about three inches long, began immediately to lay eggs, sinking a hole about four inches deep into the hard soil and depositing about one hundred eggs in a neat cylindrical arrangement (about an inch long and as large as a lead pencil) all enclosed in a glue-like substance. As many as 75,000 eggs may be concentrated in less than one square yard of soil. Once the female locust has laid the eggs, her life's mission is done. She flies away—where to no one can say—and soon dies. Within a few weeks the young locusts are hatched. They resemble large black ants (having no wings) when first hatched. A few days after hatching they start their forward march of about 600 feet per day, clearing the ground of all vegetation before them. They hop forward much like fleas. At the end of May they molt, issuing forth in the pupa state, still unable to fly, standing upright. In this stage they leap only when frightened, using their two long and powerful hind-legs. In the last molt the wings emerge from their

membranous sacs where they have been developing and the locust can now fly. After a few days in the flying stage the color of their bodies deepen into a pronounced red effect. We shall refer again to Mr. Whiting's account as we proceed with our comments.

v. 5 **AWAKE, YE DRUNKARDS, AND WEEP;** The original language indicates those addressed here were in a drunken sleep so sound as to be snoring. It indicates that drunkenness was widespread and stupefying. The prophet admonishes the wine-bibbers to come to their senses, recognize the warning of God in the devastation and weep and mourn in repentance. The "sweet wine," or, "new wine" was spoken of as being found within the grape still in the cluster (cf. Isa. 65:8) and there was great rejoicing when it was first pressed from the grape for it was considered a special blessing from the Lord. Now it was cut off—there was no new sweet wine to be found anywhere in all the land!

v. 6 **FOR A NATION . . . WITHOUT NUMBER . . . TEETH OF A LION;** The prophet portrays the locusts as a "nation", a "people", and this figure is used by the writer of Proverbs to picture ants and badgers (cf. Prov. 30:25-26). This is a figure well chosen since locusts give the appearance of being a well organized army of people. Joel's graphic description of their behavior in chapter 2 illustrates why they should be called a "nation." Their teeth, though tiny, are the weapons of this army. In proportion to their very small bodies, their jaws are even stronger than a lion's.

v. 7 **HE HATH LAID MY VINE WASTE . . . BARKED MY FIG-TREE . . . CLEAN BARE AND CAST IT AWAY;** Whiting writes: "Once entering a vineyard the sprawling vines would in the shortest time be nothing but bare bark . . . When the daintier morsels were gone, the bark was eaten off the young topmost branches, which, after exposed to the sun bleached snow-white. Then, seemingly out of malice, they would gnaw off small limbs, perhaps to get at the pith within." God, the Giver and Owner of the vineyards and orchards, speaks through the prophet, calling them His vines and His fig trees.

v. 8-9 **LAMENT LIKE A VIRGIN . . . THE MEAL-OFFERING . . . CUT OFF FROM THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH . . . PRIESTS . . . MOURN;** Now the prophet calls upon the whole nation to mourn. This is a mourning not only because of the loss of wine and grain but because the loss of these material things have disrupted divine worship. There is not even enough grain or wine to be found to make up an acceptable

offering in the Temple. The prophet calls for a "godly sorrow that worketh repentance" (cf. II Cor. 7:9-10)! Their sorrow is to be one of total immersion—like the sorrow of a newly married maiden who has lost her husband by death in the first few days of marriage. God's bride, the covenant people, has been cut off from communion with her Husband. She should lament and weep—her attitude should be one of heartfelt mourning. The cessation of the daily sacrifices and offerings was for all practical purposes a cessation of covenant relation—a sign that God had rejected His people. Even in the last siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D., the sacrificial worship was not suspended till it had been brought to the last extremity; and even then it was because there were none to offer the sacrifices and not because there were no more materials to sacrifice.

v. 10-12 THE FIELD IS LAID WASTE . . . BE CONFOUNDED . . . WAIL . . . THE HARVEST OF THE FIELD IS PERISHED . . . EVEN ALL THE TREES OF THE FIELD ARE WITHERED: FOR JOY IS WITHERED AWAY FROM THE SONS OF MEN. Whiting records that in 1915 the locusts he observed in Palestine appeared in their fully developed flying stage about June 10 and began at once to complete the destruction begun in the earlier stages. They attacked the olive trees, whose tough, bitter leaves had not been to the liking of the creepers. Food becoming scarcer, both creeping and flying locusts attacked the olive trees, and between the two they stripped every leaf, berry, and even the tender bark . . . Likewise every variety of tree was attacked with the sole exception of the Persian lilac and the oleander bushes. Of the cacti they ate away layer after layer over the whole surface, giving the leaves the effect of having been jack-planed. Even on the scarce and prized palms they had no pity, gnawing off the tender ends of the swordlike branches, and, diving deep into the heart, they tunneled after the juicy pith. The destruction of the present grain crops in Joel's day would also mean no harvest for next year since there would be no seed with which to sow another crop. The absence of grain and all other green vegetation would also probably mean the death of many animals. The drought which accompanied this locust plague would certainly decimate animal life and many people probably starved to death also. The whole nation had fallen into the hands of a chastening God. There was plague, drought, famine and as a result the worship of God in the Temple through offerings and sacrifices has been forced to a cessation. There was both physical and spiritual starvation. Truly, joy had withered away from the sons of men!

QUIZ

1. How do we know that Joel's interpretation of what this locust plague should mean to the people is not his own?
2. How did Joel intend the people use this unprecedented historical event for teaching purposes?
3. Why does Joel describe the locusts in four different terms?
4. Why admonish the drunkards to "awake"?
5. How ferocious are the locusts in their attack upon the vegetation?
6. To what extent are the people to mourn and why?
7. How extensive is the destruction of the locust?

THE EXTENT . . . VIVID, ARRESTING (cont'd)

TEXT: 1:13-20

- 13 Gird yourselves with sackcloth, and lament, ye priests; wail, ye ministers of the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meal-offering and the drink-offering are withholden from the house of your God.
- 14 Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the old men and all the inhabitants of the land unto the house of Jehovah your God, and cry unto Jehovah.
- 15 Alas for the day! for the day of Jehovah is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall it come.
- 16 Is not the food cut off before our eyes, yet, joy and gladness from the house of our God?
- 17 The seeds rot under their clods; the gardens are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the grain is withered.
- 18 How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.
- 19 O Jehovah, to thee do I cry; for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.
- 20 Yea, the beasts of the field pant unto thee; for the water brooks are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

QUERIES

- a. What is "sackcloth" and why put it on to mourn?
- b. Why "sanctify a fast?"
- c. What is the day of Jehovah and how was it "at hand?"

PARAPHRASE

You priests, servants at God's altar, put on mourning clothing, even that which is made from hair, and mourn. And not only in the daytime are you to mourn but even while you are performing the services in the temple at night you are to lie before the altar weeping and lamenting. Be sorrowful and pray because there is no grain or wine for this has caused the offerings in the house of God to cease. Declare a period of fasting and call a solemn meeting of the elders and all the people of the land. Call everyone to the temple of God and there let the priests pray with supplications, crying unto the Lord, for this is a woeful day! The day of the Lord is upon us and it is destruction from the Almighty! The cutting off of all food and the cessation of joyful offerings in the house of God proves to our very eyes that the day of the Lord is destruction upon us for we have been unfaithful. Indeed, the drought is so terrible the seed just lately sown rots in the plowed earth for lack of moisture; the granaries are empty and are rotting away; the barns are falling to pieces from disuse. Even the dumb animals groan because of their suffering. The cattle and sheep are bewildered with fear and hunger because they have no pasture. To Thee, O Lord, I Joel, cry for help for both man and beast. The burning heat of the drought has consumed the meadows of the wilderness and has even burned up all the trees. The animals, in their panting, are crying for help from Thee, O Lord, because they have no water to drink—the drought has dried up all the brooks and burned up all the pastures.

SUMMARY

The extremity of the people of Judah, in both locust plague and drought, is so severe that even the dumb beasts are groaning and "pant" under the Lord!

COMMENT

v. 13 GIRD YOURSELVES . . . LIE ALL NIGHT IN SACKCLOTH . . . MEAL-OFFERING WITHHOLDEN FROM THE HOUSE OF YOUR GOD; Again Joel takes up that which was so impressive to him in v. 9—the cessation of the offerings due to the complete absence of materials with which to make the offerings. It would not have been so calamitous that the people had suffered the loss of physical necessities, but when they were forced to stop presenting their intercessory offerings it indicated that their access to Jehovah, their covenant God, had been

interrupted. It would be as disastrous as telling a Christian he could no longer pray or sing praises or in any manner worship the Lord. So the priests are instructed to put on the customary clothing for mourning and penitence called "sackcloth" in our translation. It was a coarse material woven from goats' and camel's hair and thus of dark color. Sacks were also made from this coarse material and thus it is called "sackcloth." It was not a full garment but more probably a cloth just large enough to wrap around the loins and tie in the front in a knot. They are told they must make their penitent supplications to the Lord day and night without ceasing. The text indicates they should, in some way, prostrate themselves before the great altar in the temple. They are to pray with loud crying ("wailing—lamenting") unto God.

v. 14 SANCTIFY A FAST . . . CALL ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND . . . AND CRY UNTO JEHOVAH; The prophet now instructs the priests to officially consecrate a specific period of fasting. Fasting is a religious exercise whereby the demands of the flesh are subordinated to a concentration upon the spiritual. A fast was a time dedicated to "afflicting the soul—appetites" (Lev. 16:29-31; 23:27-29). A solemn assembly is also to be gathered. There was no occasion for festive mood now! The elders were undoubtedly called to testify that no such calamity had ever before happened and that this surely must be from God. All the people are instructed to make supplication to the Lord. This statement presupposes, of course, that they will do so in an attitude of repentance.

v. 15 ALAS FOR THE DAY! FOR THE DAY OF JEHOVAH IS AT HAND, AND AS DESTRUCTION FROM THE ALMIGHTY SHALL IT COME. In prophetic literature, the Day of Jehovah generally denotes *any* great manifestation of God's power in judgment or redemption. Sometimes, as here in Joel, the prophet denoted a great, calamitous judgment as the Day of Jehovah which had the purpose of calling the covenant people to repentance and purity. Sometimes, and more often than most realize, the prophet, as in Malachi 3:1-6, speaks of the ultimate crisis in the history of God's kingdom which is to involve the overthrow of all opposition and the complete triumph of righteousness (cf. Isa. 2:2-5; Joel 2:28—3:21; Amos 9:11ff; Zech. 14, etc.) which refers to the culminating work of Christ the Redeemer in His atoning death, justifying resurrection and His establishment of the church. This was THE DAY OF JEHOVAH when Jehovah brought all men under judgment and at the same time provided for all men redemption. This awaits only the consummation at the Lord's second coming. The absence of

perspective is very conspicuous when the prophets write of The Day of Jehovah. Chronology is largely disregarded and the Day of Jehovah is seen looming up as the immediate background of every great crisis in which the covenant nation may be involved. The great Day of Jehovah when the Messiah shall appear in judgment and redemption (Mal. 3, etc.) is definitely bereft of chronological perspective as far as the prophets are concerned. They did not know what "person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory." And, in fact, God did not tell them exactly when these things were to be fulfilled. There are inspired guidelines, however, (already referred to more than once, especially in our introductory "Interpreting The Prophets), statements of Jesus and the apostles as to the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. One thing is certain in prophetic literature—the Day of Jehovah is surely coming! The steps by which the goal is to be reached are only gradually revealed in the actual march of God's providential works of redemption and judgment. The Day of Jehovah is a day of judgment and redemption—primarily a day of judgment. Not only upon the heathen nations, but, due to the absolute righteousness of God, includes judgment upon all sin. God judges even the children of favor and privilege when they sin (Amos 5:18). His judgment is a purifying, refining instrument in order that a remnant might be saved (cf. Isa. 6:13; Am. 9:9; Zeph. 3:13-20). Gentile nations are used by God as instruments on His Day of Judgment, yet they too shall be judged by Him. And, consequently, even a remnant of the Gentiles will turn to Jehovah as a result of the Day of Jehovah. For further comment on the Day of Jehovah see comments on Obadiah 15 in this volume. What Joel here wants the people of Judah to understand is that the Day of Jehovah is as destruction from the Almighty. The Jews were persuaded, because of their special relation to Jehovah, that the Day of Jehovah was intended to be judgment and destruction upon the Gentiles but victory and conquest and world dominion for the Israelites. They refused to accept the preaching of the prophets that God was holding them responsible for their sins (cf. Zeph. 1:12; Mal. 2:17; Amos 6; Ezek. 8:12).

v. 16 IS NOT THE FOOD CUT OFF . . . JOY AND GLADNESS FROM THE HOUSE OF OUR GOD? Joel, in asking these questions, is actually interpreting for the people the meaning of the calamities that have come upon them. He asks rhetorically, "Can you not see, even from the fact that contact with God has been cut off, that God is visiting us with judgment?" It was no longer possible to offer even the least offering

to God in the temple—there simply was no produce from field or vineyard by which man could commune with His God.

v. 17 THE SEEDS ROT . . . ; THE GARNERS . . . DESOLATE, THE BARNs . . . BROKEN; The grain seed shrivels up and crumbles into dust for lack of rain. The granaries, storehouses where the people stored their grain, stood deserted and unused. The barns, another type of storage place, also used to house animals sometimes, were actually falling apart from disuse. Even the grain that might have been saved and not sown was withering and becoming unusable because of the extreme drought.

v. 18-28 . . . THE BEASTS GROAN . . . ARE PERPLEXED . . . MADE DESOLATE . . . PANT UNTO THEE; FOR THE WATER BROOKS ARE DRIED UP . . . FIRE HATH DEVoured THE PASTURES OF THE WILDERNESS. The cattle and sheep are dumbfounded (perplexed) and bewildered. They are dying of starvation and thirst. Hunger and fear grips them but being dumb animals they can only groan. The prophet personally implores the Lord on behalf of these suffering beasts.

Lange says, "That this latter event (locust plague and drought) should be made the theme of a prophetic discourse, is no way surprising, because Holy Scripture teaches us that all public calamities are divine dispensations designed to awaken men to a sense of their sins, and to bring them to repentance." But as terrible as this plague and drought is and as devastating upon the material means of subsistence as it is, Joel's main concern is that it has caused a cessation of all sacrifices and offerings in the Temple of God. These services and the Temple were visible signs and pledges of God's dwelling in the midst of Israel as His people. When these services ceased it was a sign that God had withdrawn His covenant pledge and presence. In Ezekiel 11:22-25 the glory of the Lord departed from Jerusalem until after the captivity of the Jews. So here, the absence of worship signifies the absence of covenant relation with God. And now, in chapter two, Joel entreats the people and the priests to repent and call upon God for forgiveness and restoration of covenant relationship. Joel, in striking figures, describes the activities by which the people should make their repentance known to God.

First, he reiterates the announcement that Jehovah God is the Executor of this call to repentance. God, using natural agents (secondary causes), is the First Cause behind their extremities. In the first part of chapter two (2:1-11) the prophet creates a literary masterpiece. A vivid, moving picture of words is painted describing God's "army"—the locusts.

THE EXECUTOR— GOD USING NATURAL AGENTS

TEXT: 2:1-11

- 1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of Jehovah cometh, for it is nigh at hand;
- 2 a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the dawn spread upon the mountains; a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither, shall be any more after them, even to the years of many generations.
- 3 A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and none hath escaped them.
- 4 The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so do they run.
- 5 Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.
- 6 At their presence the peoples are in anguish; all faces are waxed pale.
- 7 They run like mighty men; they climb the wall like men of war; and they march every one of his ways, and they break not their ranks.
- 8 Neither doth one thrust another; they march every one in his path; and they burst through the weapons, and break not off their course.
- 9 They leap upon the city; they run upon the wall; they climb up into the houses; they enter in at the windows like a thief.
- 10 The earth quaketh before them; the heavens trembled; the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdrew their shining:
- 11 and Jehovah uttereth his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for he is strong that executeth his word; for the day of Jehovah is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

QUERIES

- a. Could this particular locust plague be as unprecedented as Joel says in 2:2 (cf. also Joel 1:2)?
- b. Do locusts really behave as Joel describes them here?
- c. Does God really "talk" to the locusts? (2:11)

PARAPHRASE

Sound the long alarm blast on the far-sounding-horn from the midst of the Holy city and from the Holy mountain. Awaken all people from their lethargy in both Judah and Israel and cause them to tremble with fear for the day of Jehovah's judgment comes. It is, in fact, upon us. His day is a day of darkness and gloom; the darkness will be so impenetrable that no one will be able to find escape. A great and powerful people is coming and they will glimmer in the sunlight all yellow like the yellow glimmering rays of dawn upon the mountains. The likes of such an invasion has never been seen before nor shall it ever be afterward like this for many generations to come. This day of God is like a fire that destroys everything. The land before was like the garden of Eden compared to the utter desolation of it now. Nothing has escaped the devastation.

These locusts look like miniature horses as they run to the attack. They rattle like chariots driven charging over the rough mountain roads. They crackle like the fire as it devours dry stubble in the field. They come upon the countryside advancing like an army equipped for battle. When they come, all the people become distraught and grow pale with fear. These locusts, they run to the attack like warriors of valor; they assault the walls like trained soldiers marching in ordered columns without even so much as breaking their ranks. They do not jostle one another but follow in orderly ranks; there is no weapon that will stop them or detour them. They leap and crawl upon everything in the city; they run up and down the walls and climb into the houses through the windows. The earth seems to sway as they run over it and the sky seems to shake and tremble as the great sweeping clouds of these locusts darken the sky so that the sun by day and the stars by night cannot be seen.

The Lord Jehovah is the Commander of this army. His omnipotent voice thunders His orders to them and they execute His word. The Day of Jehovah is great and very terrible—who can be saved from it?

SUMMARY

Joel states unequivocally and in graphic description that the locust plague came at the direct command of Jehovah God. God commanded it to stir up the people to repentance and dependence upon Him.

COMMENT

v. 1 BLOW YE THE TRUMPET IN ZION . . . SOUND AN ALARM . . . FOR THE DAY OF JEHOVAH . . . IS NIGH AT HAND; The trumpet to be blown here is the *shopbar* which is probably a ram's horn called the

"far sounding horn." Trumpets have always been associated literally and symbolically with warning (cf. Num. 10:5ff; Ezek. 33:1ff). Hendriksen, in his book, "*More Than Conquerors*," (a commentary on the book of Revelation), interprets the Seven Trumpets of Revelation chapter 8 thusly:

"These trumpets of judgment, chapters 8:11, indicate series of happenings, that is, calamities that will occur again and again throughout this dispensation (the Christian dispensation). They do not symbolize single and separate events, but they refer to woes that may be seen any day of the year in any part of the globe. Hence, the trumpets are synchronous with the seals.

". . . these trumpets of judgment are clearly retributive in character. Terrible calamities befall the wicked in order to punish them for their opposition to the cause of Christ and for their persecution of the saints. Yet even by means of these judgments God is constantly calling the ungodly unto repentance. These woes do not symbolize God's final and complete displeasure. On the contrary, they indicate His initial judgments. They are charged with serious warning, not with final doom . . . The very function of the trumpet is to warn (Ezek. 33:3).

"Observe also that these trumpets of judgment affect the various parts of the universe: the land, the sea, etc."

Joel is making the same interpretation of the locust plague and drought which has come upon the land. These calamities are God's "trumpet" warnings to call the sinful people to repentance. God uses natural agents in every age to turn impenitent people from their rebellious ways back to dependence upon Him. If they will not turn back to Him, He sends judgments of wrath upon them. These are principles of the Divine government of the universe which are constantly in force and which God executes through secondary causes day by day, year after year, millenium by millenium. The Old Testament prophets, covering nearly a thousand years of history, give us, in their inspired pronouncements and interpretations of natural calamities as judgments and warnings of God, a *divinely revealed philosophy of history*.

At this point we take the liberty of quoting at length again from Dr. Hendriksen's "*More Than Conquerors*" in regard to God's judgments as the commentary speaks on Revelation 15-16.

"In the history of the world a definite and ever-recurring order of events is clearly evident:

"Through the preaching of the Word applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit churches are established. Again and again this happens. (With the O.T. prophets we think in terms of a faithful "remnant" being called out by the preaching of the Word—parenthesis ours). They are lightbearers—lampstands—in the midst of a world that lies in darkness . . .

"Again and again God's people are persecuted by the world. They are subjected to many trials and afflictions. (seals).

"Again and again the judgments of God are visited upon the persecuting world. These judgments again and again fail to move men to repentance (trumpets).

" . . . The question now arises: whenever in history the trumpets of judgment, the initial plagues, fail to result in penitence and conversion, what then? Does God permit such impenitence, such hardness of heart, to go unpunished until the final judgment of the last day? Must we conceive of God's wrath as being completely pent up until the second coming . . . ?

"The answer in brief is this: whenever in history the wicked fail to repent in answer to the initial and partial manifestation of God's anger in judgments, the final effusion of wrath follows. *Final*, though not *complete* until the judgment day. These plagues are the last. They leave no more opportunity for repentance. When the wicked, often warned by the trumpets of judgment, continue to harden their hearts, death finally plunges them into the hands of an angry God . . . "

"Hence, throughout the history of the world God's final wrath again and again reveals itself; now it strikes this one; then another. It is poured out upon *the impenitent*. Thus a very definite connecting-link is established between the vision of the trumpets, chapter 8-11, and that of the bowls, chapters 15, 16. Trumpets *warn*; bowls are *poured out*.

"Throughout history, especially during this entire new dispensation, God is using every department of the universe to punish the wicked and impenitent persecutors of his people. Whoever refuses to be warned by the trumpets of judgment is destroyed by the bowls of wrath. For one individual a certain calamity may be a trumpet of judgment, while for someone else that same event may be a bowl of wrath. Thus,

the disease which hurled King Herod Agrippa I into hell served as a warning to others . . . ”

So it was true in the days of Joel. The locust plague and the drought became a warning trumpet of God's wrath upon rebellion and sin and called those who were humble and penitent enough to hear back to God's word and His will. Those who heard and heeded became part of the faithful remnant. They would be the people through whom God would carry out His covenant promises and bring from them the Messiah. Some undoubtedly perished during the plague and drought. Those who died in sin and rebellion against God died under the judgment of God. In the wisdom of God they had had their last opportunity to repent. They rejected it. God's wrath fell upon them. Perhaps some who believed in God and were following His ways died also, but death did not harm them (cf. Zeph. 2:3; Nahum 1:7). Those who died in the Lord were blessed (Rev. 14:13).

v. 2 A DAY OF DARKNESS . . . A GREAT PEOPLE . . . STRONG . . . THERE HATH NOT BEEN EVER THE LIKE. The "darkness" here may be either literal or symbolic or both. When this "great people" (the locusts) came down upon them, myriads upon myriads, their coming would make the sky black. Darkness is also used to symbolize judgment or times of foreboding. The term "people" is a figurative way of describing the locusts (cf. Prov. 30:25ff). They will behave like an "army" and will go about their destruction with what seems to be a methodical intelligence beyond the native capacity of an insect. This would be one of the most unique disasters to happen to Judah so much so that it might be said, "nothing like it has ever been or ever shall be!"

v. 3 . . . THE LAND IS AS THE GARDEN OF EDEN BEFORE THEM, AND BEHIND THEM A DESOLATE WILDERNESS; Compared to what the land looked like *after* the locusts finished with it, it was like the garden of Eden *before*. The "fire" before and after them probably is a poetical description of the utter devastation that sweeps over the land, at their coming, overwhelming everything before it and leaving nothing behind it. In the *National Geographic Magazine*, 1915, from which we have quoted before, let us describe further the locust devastation. The first swarms of locusts in February, 1915, came in such thick clouds as to obscure the sun for the time being. In 1915 the sections where no eggs had been laid or where the eggs had been carefully removed by governmental orders did not suffer from the creepers, but later the full-grown locusts came and cleaned up every bit of vegetation. On a

television documentary, December 1966, sponsored by the National Geographic, one was able to see motion picture film of locust plagues in the Near East. These films substantiated Joel's graphic description in every respect! The prophet did not exaggerate!

v. 4 THE APPEARANCE OF THEM IS AS...HORSES; There is an old Arabian proverb which goes, "The locust has the form of ten of the giants of the animal world, weak as he is—face of a mare, eyes of an elephant, neck of a bull, horns of a deer, chest of a lion, stomach of a scorpion, wings of an eagle, thighs of a camel, legs of an ostrich, and tail of a serpent." Theodoret, a bishop of Syria, said, "... you will find the head of the locust exceedingly like that of a horse." In verse 4, however, Joel is concerned with their behavior which is like that of cavalry horses.

v. 5 LIKE THE NOISE OF CHARIOTS...LIKE THE NOISE OF A FLAME OF FIRE... John wrote in Revelation 9:9ff, "the sound of their wings was as the sound of many horses rushing to battle..." They are described by the National Geographic as "a loud noise, produced by the flapping of myriads of locust wings... resembling the distant rumble of waves." One who has heard them says, "their noise may be heard six miles off." Others have likened their sound to all sorts of deep, rumbling sounds of torrential rivers or water-falls. One ancient wrote, "... there is a certain sharp sound, as they chew the corn, as when the wind strongly fanneth a flame." The noise of their foraging upon the vegetation crackles like a fire as it licks up the dry stubble of a wheat field.

v. 6...PEOPLES ARE IN ANGUISH...FACES ARE WAXED PALE...; One man who witnessed just such a plague wrote of the people, "... the people become as dead, saying, 'we are lost, for the Ambadas (so they call them) are coming.'... there were men, women, children, sitting among these locusts, as stupefied... they answered that they had no courage to resist a plague which God gave them for their sins." The verb translated *anguish* is the same verb used of women in birth travail (cf. Jer. 30:5-7). Their anxiety causes the color to drain from their faces and they grow pale as the dead.

v. 7 THEY RUN LIKE MIGHTY MEN;...CLIMB THE WALL...MARCH... AND BREAK NOT THEIR RANKS. National Geographic: Once started on their course, nothing could stop them; walls were scaled, they rolled on like a mighty, unconquerable flood. Their ranks remain unbroken by obstacles. Man can mount a wall a few at a time, but locusts pour over a wall in a literal flood.

v. 8 NEITHER . . . THRUST ONE ANOTHER . . . MARCH EVERY ONE IN HIS PATH; . . . THEY BURST THROUGH THE WEAPONS . . . They travel like a well-disciplined, regimented army in close-order-drill without jostling one another. They move in one body, giving the appearance of being organized and directed by one leader. Nothing checks or retards their attack. Nothing makes any impression upon them. Men have tried to kill them with canon fire, water-filled trenches, fire-filled trenches, insecticides—sprayed from airplanes, with clubs—beating them to death by the millions—but still they come, impervious to any weapon. Like waves they roll over one another on and on, and let themselves be stopped by nothing. Bundles of straw are laid in rows and set on fire before them; they march in thick heaps into the fire, but this is often put out through the great mass of those advancing from behind who march right on over the corpses of their dead companions. The sight is utterly appalling! On the television program referred to before it was stated that man, with all his modern scientific means of dealing out death, has not yet found a way to stop the locust.

v. 9 THEY LEAP UPON THE CITY . . . RUN FOR THE WALL . . . CLIMB INTO THE HOUSES . . . ENTER IN AT THE WINDOWS. National Geographic: "Disastrous as they were in the country, equally obnoxious they became about the homes, crawling up thick upon the walls and squeezing in through cracks of closed doors or windows, entering the very dwelling rooms. Women frantically swept the walls and roofs of their homes, but to no avail. They even fell into one's shirt collar from the walls above. A lady, after being away from home for half a day, returned with 110 of them concealed within the skirts. Whenever touched, or especially when finding themselves caught within one's clothes, they exuded from their mouths a dark fluid, an irritant to the skin and soiling the garments in a most disgusting manner. Imagine the feeling with a dozen or two such creatures over an inch long, with sawlike legs and rough bodies, making a race course of your back." Another man who experienced such a calamity in 1646 wrote, "...when the door was opened, an infinite number came in, and the others went fluttering about; and it was a troublesome thing when a man went abroad, to be hit on the face by those creatures, on the nose, eyes, or cheeks, so that there was no opening one's mouth, but some would get in. Yet all this was nothing; for when we were to eat, they gave us no respite; and when we went to cut a piece of meat, we cut a locust with it, and when a man opened his mouth to put in a morsel, he was sure to chew one of them." The television report of December, 1966,

showed that airplanes flying through clouds of locusts spraying insecticides were forced to the ground because the thickness of the locusts made visibility for flying impossible!

v. 10 THE EARTH QUAKETH BEFORE THEM; THE HEAVENS TREMBLE . . . National Geographic: "When anything neared their thickened masses, it seemed as if the entire surface of the ground moved, producing a most curious effect upon one's vision and causing dizziness, which in some was so severe as to produce a sensation not unlike seasickness. The clouds of locusts caused the entire atmosphere to be in a state of commotion as if the very heavens trembled."

v. 11 JEHOVAH UTTERETH HIS VOICE BEFORE HIS ARMY... HE IS STRONG THAT EXECUTETH HIS WORD; FOR THE DAY OF JEHOVAH IS GREAT AND VERY TERRIBLE; AND WHO CAN ABIDE IT? To this day the nations of the Near East speak of the locusts as *Yaish Allah*, Allah's army. God does use natural phenomena to execute His warnings and judgments. He uses natural elements of weather, laws of "nature," wild beasts and insects, and heathen nations and leaders (Isa. 10) to execute His vengeance upon the ungodly, even now! Hendriksen in "*More Than Conquerors*" again, on chapters 4-5 of Revelation concerning the Throne of God: "These chapters do not merely give us a picture of heaven. They describe *the entire universe from the aspect of heaven*. The purpose of this vision is to show us, in beautiful symbolism, that all things are governed by the Throne-Occupant. All things; hence, also our trials and tribulations. That is the point. Hence, the description of the Throne precedes the symbolic prediction of the trials and tribulations which the church must experience here on earth . . . Behold, a Throne! The Throne is the very center of the universe. The universe of the Bible is . . . theocentric. Here, too, is the true philosophy of history. The newspapers and radio announcements give you the headlines and news-flashes. The magazines add the explanations. But these explanations are, after all in terms of secondary causes. The real mind, the real will which—while fully maintaining the responsibility and freedom of the individual instruments—controls this universe in the mind, the will of *the Almighty God!* Nothing is excluded from his dominion." And so God can use the king of Assyria as the "rod of His anger and the staff of His fury" (Isa. 10) and He can stir up the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia, to release the captive Jews (II Chron. 36: 22ff; Ezra 1:1ff). And so the locusts are God's mighty army. When He commands that they go forth to de-

stroy, none can stop them. If man cannot stop an army of locusts when God sends them, who can be saved from any of God's judgments? Joel will take up this question in the next section when he presents *God's Plan for Repentance*.

QUIZ

1. What does "trumpet" signify symbolically in Hebrew literature?
2. In what way is the locust plague a warning? a judgment?
3. Do locusts appear and behave with such frightening appearance as Joel describes?
4. Are they impossible to stop? Can not modern methods of insect control stop them?
5. Does God Himself control these locusts or did this plague just happen and Joel attribute its happening to God?

II PLAN FOR REPENTANCE

TEXT: 2:12-17

- 12 Yet even now, saith Jehovah, turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning;
- 13 and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repenteth him of the evil.
- 14 Who knoweth whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal-offering and a drink-offering unto Jehovah your God?
- 15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly;
- 16 gather the people, sanctify the assembly, assemble the old men, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth from his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.
- 17 Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Jehovah, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?

QUERIES

- a. How may the people "rend" their hearts?
- b. Does God "repent"?
- c. Why were the priests called upon to weep and pray?

PARAPHRASE

But, the Lord says, there is still time, even now, to avert the full judgment predicted if you will come back to Me and do My will with all your heart and soul. Show that you are coming back to Me by the self-denial of fasting and self-abnegation of mourning for your sins. You must tear and break your hard heart until it is contrite and penitent and then return to My ways. Mere ceremonial tearing of the garments will not suffice.

Let your motive for coming back to the Lord be His grace and mercy, His longsuffering toward sinners, His immutable love and His promise to withhold judgment from those who repent.

If you persevere in your repentance you may hope for acceptance in the Lord's eyes and He shall withhold judgment and give blessing instead. You may indeed hope that He will give you so much that you can once again offer your grain and wine as offerings in the temple as before.

Sound the long alarm blast on the far-sounding horn from the midst of the Holy City; declare a time of fasting; call the people together for a serious and solemn meeting. Call the entire congregation to rededication; from the elders to the children, even the infants. Let all festivities cease in this most solemn and serious hour, even the bride and the bridegroom should forego their honeymoon to assemble to hear the word of the Lord.

Let the priests, who are ministers of the Lord for the people, come to the entrance of the Holy Place on behalf of the people and there, between the vestibule and the altar of burnt offering weep, praying, O, Lord, do not cause your peculiar people to be poverty stricken, but spare them this degradation. Do not cause those who are yours in a special way to be reproached and slandered by the heathen and to become dependent upon the heathen for sustenance. Why should they be permitted to shame your chosen ones by taunting them with "Where is this God of theirs? How weak and helpless He must be!"

SUMMARY

Jehovah now, through the prophet Joel, declares there is yet time for salvation from impending judgment through repentance. It must be a true repentance which manifests itself in self-denial, self-abnegation and prayers of dependence upon God.

COMMENT

v. 12-13 . . . TURN UNTO ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART . . . AND REND YOUR HEART . . . FOR HE IS GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL . . . AND

REPENTETH HIM OF THE EVIL. This is one of the clearest statements of the Bible on the meaning of repentance. The Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament translated about 300 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt, by 70 Jewish scholars), uses the word, *epistraphets*, which is in the aorist tense. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary the aorist of this verb "indicates an immediate and decisive change, consequent upon a deliberate choice;" It is nothing less than a "conversion!" The Hebrew word is *Shoov* which means "return." Repentance means a complete turn-about, and not only so, but a turning *toward the Lord*. Reformation is not repentance! One must not only change by giving up former habits and sinful ways but one must in a positive way turn unto the Lord and do His will and walk in His way! It is *all* the heart which God demands. The heart, of course, means the dwelling place of the personality—the intellect, the will, the emotions. *All* of man's mind, all of man's will, all of man's desires are to be turned toward God's will. None of it is to be reserved for self. We remember the "Rich Young Ruler," whom Jesus loved, holding back his great riches but wanting to give the rest of himself in discipleship to Jesus.

The prophet points out that this "turning" unto the Lord involves self-denial ("fasting") and self-abnegation ("weeping and mourning"). The people of Joel's day needed to cease concentrating upon themselves and concentrate upon God and His will, and this they could best do by fasting. They had need of self-examination and self-aborrence for sinning against a gracious and merciful Father—they needed to weep and mourn over their sins. "Rend" and tear your hearts, Joel said. Their hearts were hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. They had become calloused. They were impervious to God's goodness because in their material abundance they had forgotten from whence their abundance came and said, "Mine own hand hath gotten me this." (cf. Deut. 8:11ff). They needed to have their hearts broken in contrition (cf. Psa. 51:17; Isa. 57:15, 66:2; Ezek. 36:26). They must "break up the fallow ground of hearts which have too long lain unbroken (cf. Jer. 4:3; Hosea 10:12). This must be a turning of the inner man, not merely an outward, ritualistic "rending of the garments."

The repentance of which Joel speaks implies a "conscious, moral separation, and a personal decision to forsake sin and to enter into fellowship with God." It means turning away from sin and turning unto righteousness (cf. Dt. 4:30; Neh. 1:9; Psa. 7:12; Isa. 1:16-17; Jer. 3:14; 25:5; Mk. 1:15; Acts. 2:38; II Cor. 7:9-10). Repentance is always conjoined with faith. Where there is true faith there will always be true repentance. And this is exactly the appeal Joel makes as to the motive for the people's repentance. They must have true, un-

reserved faith in the grace and mercy of God. They must trust in His lovingkindness. They must also believe that He will punish sin. In order to come to this trust in God—in both His mercy and His wrath—God has more than abundantly revealed His character in both instances. Prophets were sent to preach the call of God for repentance. Prophets were sent to prove the existence of God and declare His nature. Preaching is still the only means by which men may be called to repentance. The existence of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the infallible authority of the Bible is the call to repentance (cf. Acts 17:22-31). The nature of God must also be preached to lead men to repentance (cf. Rom. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).

v. 14 WHO KNOWETH WHETHER HE WILL NOT TURN AND REPENT, AND LEAVE A BLESSING BEHIND HIM . . . ? To adapt the action of God to finite understanding the Bible speaks of God "repenting." God does not change (cf. Heb. 13:8; James 1:17; Malachi 3:6; Num. 23:19). He does not even change His mind. He has spoken His will once for all. His word is immutable. His covenant is irrevocable. Man may change—man must change! God's immutable Word has said: For sin a curse and judgment; for repentance a blessing and salvation. Only because we know that this is the immutable Word of God may we have hope! If God changed, how could we repent in hope of blessing? And so this verse should be understood as we have paraphrased it, "If you persevere in your repentance you may *hope* for acceptance in the Lord's eyes and *hope* for withholding of judgment and *hope* for blessing instead." As Keil and Delitzsch put it, "On the strength of these facts (facts about God's immutable nature of mercy upon repentance of man) he hopes . . . for forgiveness on the part of God, and the removal of judgment."

v. 15-16 BLOW THE TRUMPET . . . SANCTIFY A FAST . . . CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY; GATHER THE PEOPLE . . . THE OLD MEN . . . THE CHILDREN . . . THOSE THAT SUCK THE BREASTS . . . THE BRIDEGROOM . . . AND THE BRIDE." Again the "trumpet" was to be sounded to herald the solemn meeting (cf. comments on Joel 2:1). The trumpet was customarily used to call together the people for holy meetings, to usher in the beginnings of their months and their feasts with festival gladness. Now in the Holy City the trumpet is to be used for the sounding of alarm. They were to be called to rigorous self-denial. They were to fast in order that their minds might be directed away from the earthly and concentrated on the heavenly. This was a time for seriousness, for solemnity. No one was to be absent—there were no

exceptions to be made. Even the infant children nursing at the breasts of their mothers were beckoned. The bride and bridegroom must forego their honeymoon to assemble for penitent worship. When the Lord of all the earth beckons nothing is so important that it cannot be left in favor of listening to Him.

v. 17 LET THE PRIESTS . . . WEEP . . . AND . . . SAY, SPARE THY PEOPLE, O JEHOVAH, AND GIVE NOT THY HERITAGE TO REPROACH . . . A priest is a mediator between man and God. He is a "bridge," a "go-between." He receives his appointment by the grace and mercy of God. Only one priest ever merited the office by His own nature and that was Jesus Christ, High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Priests are ministers serving both God and man.

In this serious and solemn hour when God was calling man to repentance and when man was seeking the favor of God the priests of God were bidden by God to perform their ministry of intercession. They were summoned to the space between the door to the Holy Place and the altar of burnt offering. This seems to have been a place especially consecrated for intercessory prayer.

The prayer is that God might withhold further judgment and at the same time bless the devastated land with new abundance. This prayer assumes, of course, that the people have repented. This is actually the case as verses 18-19 show. Keil and Delitzsch believe that the word "rule" in this verse is an unfortunate translation. There was no immediate (or future, for that matter) prediction by Joel that the people would be subjugated by heathen. Verse 19 seems to indicate that the Lord removed what the people prayed would be removed, "reproach from the heathen." K & D translate it, "Spare, O Jehovah, Thy people, and give not up Thine inheritance to shame, so that the heathen scoff at them." Except the Lord restore, upon their repentance and calling upon Him, that which He has taken away by the locust plague and the drought, the heathen would scoff and taunt those who claimed to be the Lord's chosen with, "Where is this God of yours?" "You have repented and called upon Him, but He does not hear you!" The heathen would sneer at Jehovah, the God of the Jews, and the people plead that God should protect His own honor and glory. This is always the right attitude. We ought always to pray for the Lord's deliverance not for our sake but that the Lord might be glorified. The Lord does not save us for our own merits but in order to glorify, vindicate and exalt Himself and His Son, Jesus Christ. He saved the penitent elect of the Old Testament for the same purpose—to glorify His name (cf. Ezek. 36:21ff).

QUIZ

1. What does the word which is translated "turn" mean here?
2. What connection does "fasting" and "weeping and mourning" have to their "turning" to the Lord?
3. What motives and what means direct men to repentance?
4. Why is it important that God does *not* repent?
5. Why was everyone without exception called to the assembly?
6. What were the priests instructed to pray for?
7. Why were the Jews desirous that the heathen not be given an opportunity to scoff at Jehovah?

III THE PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE IMMEDIATE BLESSINGS

TEXT: 2:18-27

- 18 Then was Jehovah jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.
- 19 And Jehovah answered and said unto his people, Behold, I will send you grain, and new wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations;
- 20 but I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive it into a land barren and desolate, its forepart into the eastern sea, and its hinder part into the western sea; and its stench shall come up, and its ill savor shall come up, because it hath done great things.
- 21 Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice; for Jehovah hath done great things.
- 22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth its fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength.
- 23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah your God; for he giveth you the former rain in just measure, and he causeth to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain, in the first month.
- 24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.
- 25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you.

- 26 And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of Jehovah your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be put to shame.
- 27 And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am Jehovah your God, and there is none else; and my people shall never be put to shame.

QUERIES

- a. Whose "army" is this "northern army" which is to be removed?
- b. What is the "former rain and the latter rain?"
- c. Why is the phrase, "and my people shall never be put to shame," repeated so often?

PARAPHRASE

Then Jehovah burned with eagerness to vindicate His name in His land and so He had compassion upon His people in order to uphold His power and trustworthiness. Jehovah said unto His people, Pay attention now, for I am going to bless the land and send you an abundance of grain, fresh vintage from the grape, and oil from the olive tree. There will be enough to satisfy all. In blessing you so I will cause the heathen to cease their ridicule of you. I will remove far away from you the army of locusts which have swooped down upon you from the north. I will drive it into the arid desert-land putting its front part as far east as the Dead Sea and its rear part as far west as the Mediterranean Sea. The stench of its destruction shall be so putrid and vile as to be unbearable. Jehovah has done these great things.

Indeed, there is no reason for fear, O land of my people. Be glad and rejoice and praise His name for your God has done great and marvelous things. You need not be dumbfounded any longer, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness spring forth with new grass. The trees are now bearing their fruit and the fig tree and the vine yield abundance. Be glad then, you children of the covenant promises made to Zion, and rejoice in your covenant God, Jehovah. He is giving you the Teacher unto Righteousness. And He will send down to you rain, the early rain and the late rain in the first month. And the threshing floors shall be full of wheat and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. I will recompense you for the years which the locust and the licker and the stripper and the gnawer have devoured, My great army which I sent among you. You shall have plenty of food to satisfy your hunger and for this you will praise the name of Jehovah your God because He has delivered you in a wondrous

way. I will so bless you that you will not be held up to shame by your enemies any more. When this comes to pass you will know of a truth that I am dwelling in the midst of Israel, my covenant people, and that I am Jehovah, your covenant God, and that there is no other god beside Me. When this comes to pass you will not be an object of shame for your enemies any more.

SUMMARY

For the most part (with the exception only of verse 23b) the prophet predicts (future perfect—as if it had already come to pass) the immediate, material blessings with which God is going to bless His covenant people, because they repented.

COMMENTS

v. 18 THEN WAS JEHOVAH JEALOUS . . . AND HAD PITY: The word translated jealous means literally, "to be red, to glow; hence, be fiery, eager, zealous." The reason Jehovah was jealous for His land is due to the fact that it is impossible to separate in any way the covenant God from the covenant land and people. Whatever is done to the land and the people of the covenant is also done to the covenant God. Whatever is done for the covenant land and people is done by the covenant God. He is jealous for the land and the people because He is jealous of His own name and character.

He had promised centuries before to curse them for rebellious sin and to bless them upon their repentance. They had been judged and punished for their sin, by the locust plague and drought. We presume they have now followed the prophet's instructions and manifested their repentance. Now God, in order to fulfill His immutable Word, was eager to vindicate His name and so He had compassion upon them and blessed them. He said, "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:13-15). He would cease to be what this name involves if He did not fulfill His word. He must, by His very nature, show His absolute sovereignty (cf. Ex. 20:5; Deut. 29:18-20; Zeph. 1:17-18; 3:7-8). He also loves His people as the apple of His eye (Deut. 32:10; Zech. 2:8) and He is just as eager to vindicate their name when they are in harmony with His will.

v. 19-20 BEHOLD, I WILL SEND YOU GRAIN, AND NEW WINE, AND OIL . . . AND I WILL NO MORE MAKE YOU A REPROACH AMONG THE NATIONS; . . . I WILL REMOVE . . . FROM YOU THE NORTHERN ARMY . . . The Lord now promises to bless the people with prosperous crops. They will have enough to satisfy the gnawing hunger that came with

the destruction of their crops by the locusts and the drought. They will have enough now to eat and plenty left to reinstitute the offerings of grain and wine which had to be stopped earlier (cf. 1:13). In His deliverance of Israel He will prove to the heathen world that Israel is still the people of the Omnipotent God who delivers with a miraculous hand and their reproach would be removed.

We recall an instance when God, by His mighty power through one of His servants and through miraculous providence, brought an emperor to praise His name and cease reproaching the people of God (cf. Daniel 4:1-37).

God also promised to remove the "northern army" ("my army" v. 25) from the land. This army is none other than the locusts. Usually these locust plagues come from the south but they have also been known to blow in on the winds which come from the north. Facing the rising sun in Palestine, before you is east, behind you is west. God caused some to fall into the Dead Sea, some in the Mediterranean and some in the arid desert of the Negeb. Jerome says of the locusts of Palestine, when the shores of both seas were filled with heaps of dead locusts which the waters had cast up, their stench and putrefaction were so noxious as to corrupt the air, so that a pestilence was produced among men and beasts. Stench is all that is left of the great and powerful enemy of God's people. This enemy had wrecked great destruction—it had done terrible things but Jehovah God not only removed it but He also restored what had been destroyed. Yes, God even holds the creatures responsible for their devastation upon "the apple of His eye" (cf. Gen. 9:5; Ex. 21:28-32).

v. 21-22 FEAR NOT, O LAND, BE GLAD AND REJOICE . . . BE NOT AFRAID, YE BEASTS OF THE FIELD . . . It is not strange that God would call upon nature itself to praise His name (cf. also Psa. 65:13; 98:8; 148:3). Nature is also represented "groaning and travailing in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22-23). Just as the fields and the beasts were before called upon to mourn and be confounded at the Majestic Power of God in judgment, so now they are called upon to take comfort and security in His Compassion.

v. 23-24 BE GLAD THEN, YE CHILDREN OF ZION . . . FOR HE GIVETH YOU THE FORMER RAIN . . . AND HE CAUSETH TO COME DOWN FOR YOU THE RAIN, THE FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN . . . AND THE FLOORS SHALL BE FULL . . . AND THE VATS SHALL OVERFLOW The term "Zion" is a covenant-relation term. God speaks to them as "children of the covenant" here, (cf. Isa. 40-66; Heb. 12:22; Rom. 11:26), and this is to reach its fulfillment in Christ, King of Zion,

the church of the living God! The first phrase, "the former rain," should be translated, "he causeth to come down for you the teacher unto righteousness," according to Keil and Delitzsch. They make the blessings of the grace of God at this time not to consist merely in material things but also in spiritual (which is undoubtedly true), and both these material and spiritual blessings (especially the spiritual) were "a teacher unto righteousness." But, further, just as Moses was a type and the whole law was a type of the Messiah to come (Heb. 10:1), so these blessings at this time were also a type predicting the coming of the ultimate covenant blessing in "The Teacher unto Righteousness," the Messiah. Other commentators think this Hebrew word *isedaqah*, which has a definite article, can refer only directly (not indirectly as K & D) to the Messiah.

For the sake of the Messianic people, because they have become such by faith and repentance, and for the sake of the Messiah, God will graciously send the former rain (falling from October to December) and the latter rain (March to April). God will send them, *first of all* (and this is what is meant by the phrase translated "in the first month,") the material blessings—He will bless the temporal Israel with temporal things—but later He will bless spiritual Israel with spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:3ff). These spiritual blessings are spoken of next in Joel 2:28—3:21. There will, however, be, first of all, abundance of moisture which brings in turn overflowing abundance of agricultural blessings.

v. 25-27 AND I WILL RESTORE TO YOU THE YEARS THAT THE LOCUST HATH EATEN . . . AND YE SHALL . . . BE SATISFIED, AND SHALL PRAISE THE NAME OF JEHOVAH . . . AND YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM IN THE MIDST OF ISRAEL . . . God promises to repay or recompense the people of Israel for the years which the various stages of the locust plague took away that is the produce of their fields. See 1:4 for a description of the various names used for the locusts. This repayment will be so gracious and abundant that the people will be caused to praise the name of Jehovah. It will also be another of the many evidences that the God of all the earth dwells in their midst—that He is their God and that He is jealous for them when they repent. The mighty deeds of Jehovah are appealed to time and time again as empirical evidence for His existence and His nature (both of wrath and compassion) in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. ch. 41:45; Rom. 1:18ff; Acts 14:15-17). Ezekiel's most prominent refrain is "then shall ye know that I the Lord have done it . . . or spoken it." The Lord has never left Himself without a witness. He has constantly appealed

REPENTANCE — IMMEDIATE BLESSINGS 2:24-27

to man with evidence directed at the senses of man (eyesight, hearing, touching, etc). And so here Joel tells the people that when God's rich blessings of deliverance from the locusts and His miraculous, providential restoration of the grain and wine is seen and experienced they will have evidence that Jehovah is God and that He is among them, and that there is no other god besides Him. And as Joel has hinted (by the teacher unto righteousness) when the Messianic age (of which Joel will speak more fully next) comes the covenant people of God will know that God has shown even more abundantly the immutability of His purpose (Heb. 6:17-18) to keep His covenant, for all the promises of God find their "yea" in Christ (are affirmed) II Cor. 1:20.

QUIZ

1. Why is God jealous for His land? Give two reasons!
2. How would God demonstrate His pleasure at their repentance (three ways)?
3. How should the phrase "the former rain" be translated and to whom does it refer?
4. How does God prove the immutability of His purpose (what type of evidence does He give)?

III THE PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE (cont'd) FUTURE BLESSINGS (GOD PREPARING A NEW PEOPLE)

TEXT: 2:28-32

- 28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:
- 29 and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.
- 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.
- 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh.
- 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call.

QUERIES

- a. How will "all flesh" have the Spirit poured out upon them?
- b. When are we to look for a fulfillment of the wonders of "blood and fire, and pillars of smoke?"
- c. What does the prophet mean by saying that only those in "mount Zion" and "Jerusalem" will escape from the "terrible day of the Lord" be possible?

PARAPHRASE

And it will come to pass in the Messianic age, that I will no longer limit the blessings of the Holy Spirit to a specific race and to certain people within that race but I will pour out the blessings of my Spirit upon all races of people who believe in Me; the Spirit will come to old and young, to man-slaves and women-slaves alike and they will all proclaim that God has revealed Himself. At the end of this Messianic age will come the great and terrible day of the Lord but before that day comes I will demonstrate its coming over and over again by showing portents of its coming through terrifying wonders in the heavens and in the earth; wars, natural disasters and fearful phenomena in nature. And then it will come to pass that God's covenant promise made to Abraham will be vindicated and fulfilled for whosoever, whether he be Jew or Gentile, shall believe and obey Jehovah will be delivered from the great and terrible day of the Lord. In the new covenant city, where the Messianic presence of God dwells, will be found those who have escaped even as Jehovah has said, and the Messianic remnant are those whom Jehovah calls.

SUMMARY

With one dramatic sweep of the brush this prophet-artist has graphically portrayed the entire scope of the Messianic age from its beginning with the pouring out of the Spirit, to the working of God during this age in fearful phenomena calling men to repent, to the conclusion of the age at the great and terrible day of Jehovah.

COMMENT

v. 28-29 . . . AFTERWARD . . . I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH . . . SONS AND DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY . . . OLD MEN . . . YOUNG MEN . . . SERVANTS AND . . . HANDMAIDS . . . Although a veil of discontinuity obscures this whole section (vs. 28-32), the *ideas* in the the prophecy are definite. It is the time element,

the near and the distant blended into one picture, which is temporarily disconcerting.

The inspired pronouncement as to the fulfillment of this prophecy is the final authority. There can be no question that Joel's prophecy began to have its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, for the inspired apostle declares it to be so. In the Old Dispensation particular members of the covenant people received special dispensations of the Spirit, but in the New, Messianic Dispensation, the Spirit would be poured out on people of all races, as many as would call upon the name of the Lord. Calling on the name of the Lord is, of course, synonymous with believing, repenting and obeying in baptism as is shown in Acts 22:16 when Paul was exhorted to call on His name by being baptized! In other words, Joel says that all who become Christian (who call upon the name of Jehovah) will receive the Spirit of God. Peter confirms it by saying "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For unto you is the promise and unto those who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him." (Acts 2)

That this general giving of the Spirit to all believers was not to be accomplished until the establishment of the church is at once evident from the words in John 7:38 ". . . for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified . . ." Peter's words in Acts 2 also confirm the fact that this outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh was to continue even to those "afar off" (the Gentiles), even as many as God would call.

Joel specifically states that the Spirit will come without limitation as to age, sex or race. The only limitation is that those who expect to receive it must call upon the name of the Lord (v. 32). The outpouring of God's Spirit upon slaves (servants and handmaids) is something extraordinary for not a single case occurs in the entire O.T. of a slave receiving the Spirit or gift of prophecy. Even the Jewish expositors could not reconcile themselves to this announcement. The translators of the Septuagint substituted "servants of God" in place of "slaves of men" in this text.

That these who have called upon the name of the Lord and have received the Spirit of God would prophesy, dream dreams and see visions could mean either of two things or both. It undoubtedly means that some in the Messianic age would receive special gifts of the Spirit to prophesy or to receive direct, infallible revelations of God's will through dreams and visions. We know from the historical record of the New Testament that this is so. There were even some women who

prophesied (Acts 21:9). But we believe the word "prophesy" is also used in a general sense to mean that all in the Messianic age who receive the gift of the Spirit will go everywhere preaching and teaching the revealed will of God (Acts 8:4). We do know from the figurative and hyperbolic usage of language in the Bible that it is not necessary to assume that when Joel says "your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions..." thus all who receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit and become Christians will be given direct dream or vision revelations from God. All who become Christians will receive the Spirit, but only some of the sons and daughters would receive the special, miraculous gifts of prophecy, visions, dreams, etc. If we let the New Testament interpret the Old Testament we will know what Joel means.

The important point of this passage is often missed in an effort to dogmatize or theologize about miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The important point is that in the "latter days" that is, in the Messianic age the fulfillment of God's covenant promises—the pouring out of His Spirit—would come to *all* people. It would no longer be a covenant restricted to a certain nation but to men of every tongue and tribe who would call upon Him in trustful obedience. God was going to do something unique in the Messianic age (Isa. 43:19) and this would be the "pouring" out of the Spirit from on high (Isa. 32:15)—the creating of a "new Spirit and a new heart within man" (Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26ff; 37:1-28 and Zech. 12:10).

This outpouring of the Spirit of God, as Peter interprets it, ushers in the Messianic age. Furthermore, as Peter declares, all during this age, men of every race and station who call upon the name of the Lord will receive the indwelling Spirit. If we will but follow the inspired apostle's interpretation we will see that Joel's prophecy was not limited only to the special, miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

v. 30-32 AND I WILL SHOW WONDERS IN THE HEAVENS AND IN THE EARTH . . . BEFORE THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF JEHOVAH COMETH . . . AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL ON THE NAME OF JEHOVAH SHALL BE DELIVERED; . . . In highly figurative language Joel tells both the people of his day and all generations that during this entire Messianic age God will be showing "wonders in the heavens and in the earth; blood and fire, and pillars of smoke." This, as is evident from the context, will be one of the means by which God will call men to repent in preparation for the "great and terrible day of Jehovah." It is without question that these "wonders" are to transpire *before* that "great and terrible day," so they

must be before the second and final coming of Jesus Christ who comes on that terrible day to judge all who have not called upon the name of Jehovah. These "wonders" are both natural disasters and human holocausts. God certainly sent a warning upon an impenitent Jewish nation which had rejected the Messiah when He destroyed their city and their nation in 70 A.D. (cf. Matt. 24:1-28). God has also permitted nation after nation to be destroyed in blood, fire and smoke because of ungodliness. He has permitted the forces of the heavens (nature) to carry out His warning judgments upon the earth (cf. comments on Joel 2:1ff).

Then at the end of the ages, the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come (v. 31). God will call during the entire Christian age through Spirit filled men proclaiming His word and by sending terrifying wonders in the heavens and on the earth; and then suddenly, without warning the consummation of the ages.

For those who call upon the name of the Lord (v. 32) this day of the Lord will be one of deliverance. Their faith and their works will be vindicated. They shall receive an eternal weight of glory when they are recognized and glorified by God Himself. But for those who do not call upon His name in faith and obedience shall be His perfect, divine wrath.

Keil and Delitzsch's statement here will help to clarify our interpretation:

"For the signs in heaven and earth that are mentioned in vers. 30 and 31 were to take place before the coming of the terrible day of the Lord, which would dawn after the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, and which came, as history teaches, upon the Jewish nation that had rejected its Saviour on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and upon the Gentile world-power in the destruction of the Roman empire, and from that time forward breaks in constant succession upon one Gentile nation after another; until all the ungodly powers of this world shall be overthrown (cf. Ch. 3:2). On account of this internal connection between the day of Jehovah and the outpouring of the Spirit upon the church of the Lord, Peter also quoted vers. 30-32 of this prophecy, for the purpose of impressing upon the hearts of all the hearers of his address the admonition, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40), and also of pointing out the way of deliverance from the threatening judgment to all who were willing to be saved."

So Joel, blending the events of the Messianic age into one picture with the near and the distant painted like mountain peaks and ranges seen from a distance, does not portray for us the valleys of centuries of time between the mountain-top-events. This is what is called the "shortened perspective" of prophetic literature. It should caution us to pay more attention to what the prophets preach of the fundamentals of faith and practice and much less to what prophecy may seem to say about "times and seasons."

In the Messianic age God intended to bless all who would answer His call in Christ Jesus with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." For it was in the New Testament dispensation that He "set forth in Christ . . . a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." It is in Christ that men of all races "have heard the word of truth, the gospel of . . . salvation, and have believed in him, and were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit . . ." Yes, Ephesians, chapter one, is the completed revelation of that which Joel wrote in long ages past!

QUIZ

1. When did the pouring out of the Spirit of God on all flesh take place? Is it still taking place?
2. Does this promise of Joel mean that all Christians should expect to prophesy, receive revelations by dreams, and have visions? Why not?
3. What and when are the "wonders in heaven and on earth?"
4. How does God "call" the remnant?
5. Why do we say it is not important that men should attempt to force these great mountain-top events into a rigid schedule of times and seasons?
6. How is Ephesians I a completed revelation of this section of Joel?

GOD'S VICTORY OVER THE ENEMIES OF HIS PEOPLE FUTURE BLESSINGS (cont'd)

TEXT: 3:1-15

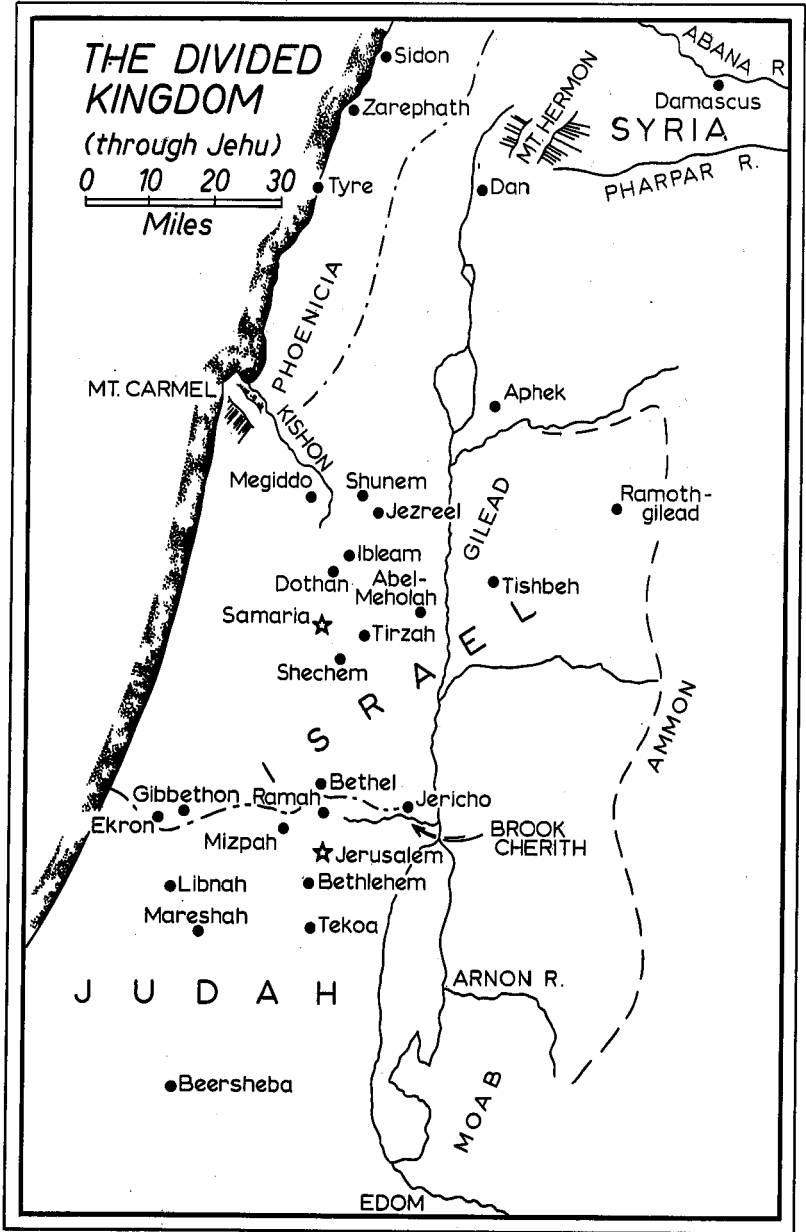
- 1 For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,
- 2 I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will execute judgment upon them there for

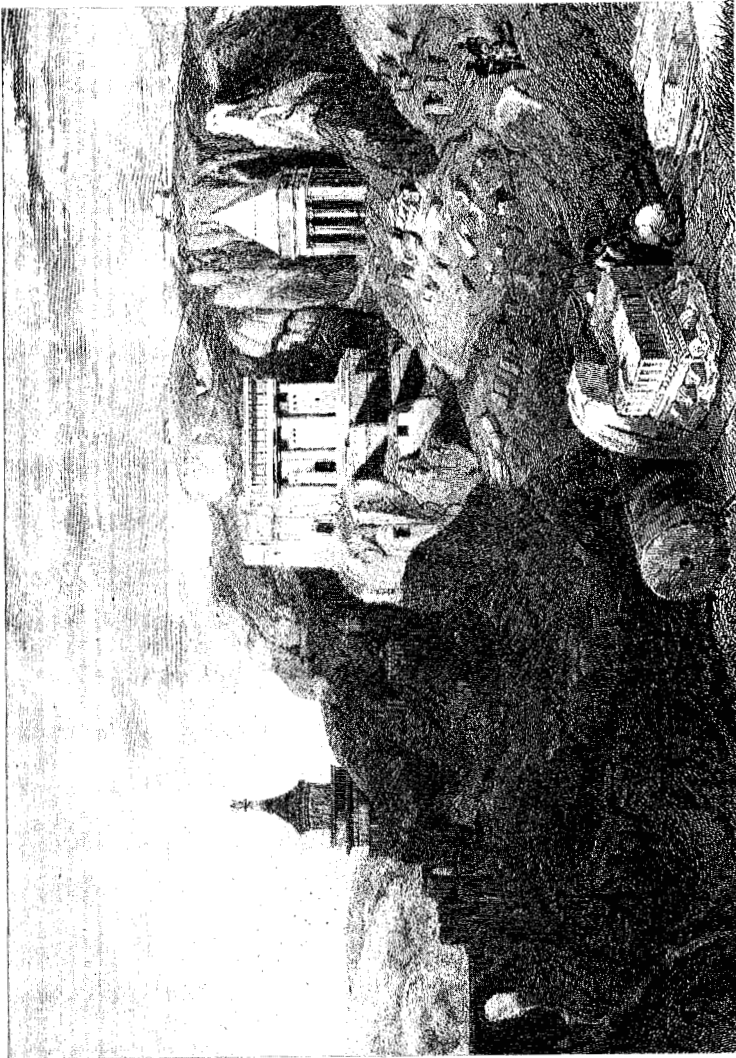
REPENTANCE -- FUTURE BLESSINGS 2:32—3:15

- my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations: and they have parted my land,
- 3 and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.
- 4 Yea, and what are ye to me, O Tyre, and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? will ye render me a recompense? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head.
- 5 Forasmuch as ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly precious things,
- 6 and have sold the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem unto the sons of the Grecians, that ye may remove them far from their border;
- 7 behold, I will stir them up out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head;
- 8 and I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the men of Sheba, to a nation far off: for Jehovah hath spoken it.
- 9 Proclaim ye this among the nations; prepare war; stir up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near, let them come up.
- 10 Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.
- 11 Haste ye, and come, all ye nations round about, and gather yourselves together: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Jehovah.
- 12 Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about.
- 13 Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.
- 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision.
- 15 The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

QUERIES

- a. When are "those days . . . when I shall bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,"?
- b. How will God "gather all nations . . . into the valley of Jehoshaphat"?
- c. What war does the prophet tell the nations to prepare for?





Drawn by D. Zuber, from a sketch by the Rev. M. Mearns.
TOMB OF ASSALON.
BROOK KETCHUM.

TOMB OF ST. JAMES.

TOMB OF ZACHARIAH.

Engraved by W. Fisher.

THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT.

Between Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives.

JERUSALEM.

PARAPHRASE

Behold! In those glorious latter days which are the Messianic days, when I shall make an end to the oppression of My covenant people finally and completely, I will gather all who have been enemies of My people since the beginning of time and bring them into My presence for judgment. I will execute judgment upon them in vindication of My precious saints whom they have despoiled and violated, and shamefully used for their own indulgence.

Yes, O Tyre, and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia, you are included among those of my enemies! Are you actually daring to oppose Me—to do evil to Me? Even as you attempt to do something against Me, I will swiftly and speedily pay back your deeds upon your head! In plundering My people you have plundered Me; in selling My people into slavery to the Greeks you have despoiled My precious heritage. Behold! I will deliver those you have sold into slavery and use them to pay you back in kind. They shall sell your sons and daughters to foreigners. What you have sown you shall reap!

Let this proclamation be made among the enemies of God: Prepare for war! Arouse your mighty warriors! Bring on your powerful armies—let them come! Transform all your implements of peace into weapons of war and let even the weak be seized with warlike enthusiasm. Let all this be done with haste.

Now, where these are gathered, O Jehovah, cause thy mighty angels to come down and fight against the enemies of your people. So shall it be! Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to war against Me in the place where I have appointed each one and I will sit to judge the nations there. Let My mighty angels fulfill their grim reaping of My enemies for their wickedness is like a harvest which is ripe; let the winepresses of their vileness be trampled for their wickedness is full to overflowing. Throngs upon throngs of these enemies of God's people surging in a noisy din blindly and wilfully straight unto the judgment of Jehovah. This day of Jehovah will be so terrible that the whole universe trembles and shakes and withdraws at its severity.

SUMMARY

First the prophet makes a general introduction to the effect that God will, in these Messianic days He has spoken of before, bring final judgment upon His enemies. Then the prophet turns to the contemporary enemies of God's people and announces their judgment. Finally Joel declares the challenge of Almighty God to His enemies that though they do their utmost in war against Him they will still be defeated and judged.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 . . . IN THAT TIME, WHEN I SHALL BRING BACK THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM . . . I WILL GATHER ALL NATIONS, AND WILL BRING THEM DOWN INTO THE VALLEY OF JEHOShAPHAT; . . . The words "in those days, and in that time" most definitely refer back to the preceding Messianic prophecy of the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh and the great and terrible day of Jehovah of 2:28-32. Therefore, whatever gathering together into the valley of Jehoshaphat and judging to be done will be done in the Messianic age. Furthermore, we must also interpret the "bringing back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem" as an event to be within the same Messianic age. The phrase translated "bring back their captivity" could be translated, "make an end of their oppressions." The RSV translates it, "when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem." The conclusion of chapter three shows that God, in "restoring their fortunes" is going to bring on something more glorious than the literal return from the Persian captivity. So, the "bringing back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem" undoubtedly means that God is going to relieve His covenant people from all oppressions delivering them from all their enemies.

In addition, He is going to execute His judgment upon all the enemies of His people in that same glorious age of the Messiah. Lange says, "This distinctly shows that the object of the day of the Lord is, the deliverance of the people of God. The judgment of the heathen world is simply a means to that end." God's judgment (His victory over the enemies of His people) is given a contemporary setting. Jehoshaphat, by the miraculous help of God, won a great victory over a Gentile army in a valley which was afterward named for him (II Chron. 20). So the prophet's use of the king's name and the valley of Jehoshaphat would remind the people of this glorious victory over the enemies of God. Also, the name Jehoshaphat means "Jehovah judges." That there is ever going to be a literal gathering of *all* the nations into this valley near Jerusalem is a geographical impossibility! There is not going to be a literal war there between the literal forces of all the nations of the earth and the literal forces of a millennial kingdom of God. The prophet was led by the Holy Spirit to use the valley of Jehoshaphat in a symbolic or figurative way much the same as we say someone has met his Waterloo. At the end of the Messianic age (which will be the end of all ages) God is going to demonstrate a complete and final victory over all the forces of evil. Actually, God has already won the complete victory over evil in His Son. He "de-

spoiled the principalities and the powers . . . making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in Him" (Col. 2:15). The prince and god of this world has been "judged" and "cast out" (Jn. 12:31) (see our comments on Obadiah). But at the end of this age He is going to manifest and vindicate that which He has already revealed in the Bible—that those now who are in Christ are "more than conquerors" (cf. Rom. 8:28-39). And why is God going to judge all nations in a final way if He has already accomplished victory over Satan, sin and death in Christ?—"for my people and for my heritage Israel!" God is jealous for His people. The forces of evil and enmity against God will be shown to be what God said they were all along—eternal death and destruction. At the same time faith and righteousness and obedience to God will be openly shown to lead to what God said they would all along—eternal life and bliss.

V. 4-8 YEA, AND WHAT ARE YE TO ME, O TYRE, AND SIDON . . . WILL YE RENDER ME A RECOMPENSE . . . SWIFTLY AND SPEEDILY WILL I RETURN YOUR RECOMPENSE UPON YOUR OWN HEAD . . . I WILL SELL YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS INTO THE HAND OF THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH . . . Now Joel turns to a contemporary enemy of God's people—Tyre and Sidon and the regions of Philistia. These heathen powers had plundered the precious heritage of God. They had carried away the silver and gold from God's temple and desecrated it in their idolatrous temples. They had even carried away people and sold them as slaves into the far distant lands of Greece. The prophet represents God as almost incredulous at the audacity and brazenness of these heathen powers. Have they no sensibility to the wrath of the Higher Being? Do they dare to go on in their evil in complete disdain of judgment? We are reminded of those of our own age who seem to be completely and unabashedly disdainful of righteousness, justice or judgment. There are even those who would speak happily of the "death of God" while they hold requiem for Him. But God promises to return to them what they have sown? God's promises do not fail! This prophecy was fulfilled by Alexander the Great and his successors, under whom many Jewish captives were liberated and restored to their own land, while various parts of Philistia and Phoenicia were brought under Jewish rule.

V. 9-10 PROCLAIM YE THIS AMONG THE NATIONS; PREPARE WAR . . . BEAT YOUR PLOWSHARES INTO SWORDS . . . Now the prophet, on behalf of God, throws down the challenge. Let all the enemies of God and His people put forth every effort—let them muster every ally—let them turn every resource into a weapon for war and then let them

gather themselves together and come with haste against Jehovah God. It is interesting to note in verse 10 the reverse figure of speech to that of Isa. 2:4 and Micah 4:3 where the swords are beaten into plowshares and the spears into pruninghooks. There the figure is to depict the peace that the Messianic reign will bring into the hearts of men. Here the figure is used to depict the evil enmity that reigns in the hearts of the unconverted.

v. 11-12 HASTE YE, AND COME, ALL YE NATIONS ROUND ABOUT, . . . THITHER CAUSE THY MIGHTY ONES TO COME DOWN, O JEHOVAH . . . LET THE NATIONS BESTIR THEMSELVES, AND COME UP TO THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT; FOR THERE WILL I SIT TO JUDGE ALL THE NATIONS ROUND ABOUT. Verse 11b seems to be a prayer of the prophet in the midst of his pronouncements. He prays that God will send His forces to do battle against the forces of heathendom. The answer to his prayer comes immediately in verse 12 and continues in verse 13. Lange cannot accept the idea that angels are referred to here. However, in the light of all that the Scripture says of angels carrying out the judgments of God and fighting the battles (even literally at times) of the chosen people it would seem that a reference to angels could be the only acceptable meaning. Daniel is told by an angel of the spiritual conflict of angelic beings (cf. Daniel 10:13, 20, 21).

v. 13-15 PUT YE IN THE SICKLE; FOR THE HARVEST IS RIPE . . . MULTITUDES, MULTITUDES IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION . . . THE SUN AND THE MOON ARE DARKENED . . . Yes, God answers, I will send my mighty ones to carry out the grim task of reaping a harvest of wrath. God's angels have carried out such assignments in the past (the death angel in Egypt; the angel of the Lord who slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers), they are carrying out such assignments now as they protect and serve the saints (Heb. 1:14) and they will in the future (Matt. 24:31; I Thess. 4:16; II Thess. 1:7-8, etc.). Both harvest and winepress are figurative descriptions of the fullness of their wickedness and both terms are also used to symbolize judgment.

The term, "multitudes, multitudes" may be translated "tumult, tumult in the valley of decision." The word literally means "noisy crowds." The repetition of the word signifies a confused, tumultuous multitude. The picture Joel draws for us is that of "thongs upon thongs" of these enemies of God in a blind, raging confusion surging headlong and headstrong into a showdown with an Omnipotent Judge. The Psalmist adds to the picture, "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against Jehovah, and against his

anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh: The Lord will have them in derision. Then will he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure: Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psa. 2:1-6). Joel says the wrath of God will be so terrible that even the heavenly bodies (the whole universe) tremble at it and withdraw from looking upon it!

God's judgment of the nations for injuries done to His people here is the final and ultimate judgment of all the enemies of all the elect, both Old Testament and New Testament. Each judgment of God upon each enemy of His people foreshadowed and certified the one which is to come finally. Each judgment also turned into a redemption for the elect of God and so foreshadowed and certified the final redemption. And we have received an immutable oath from God, sealed with the blood of His precious Son (Heb. 6:17-20), that our redemption has been forever accomplished and awaits only the consummation. It is this fundamental truth prophesied by all the prophets, accomplished by Jesus Christ, which brings hope to our hearts.

QUIZ

1. What does the prophet mean "bring back the captivity of Judah...?"
2. Will there be a literal battle between God and heathendom in a literal valley of Jehoshaphat? Explain!
3. How has God already judged the world?
4. What is God's way of dealing with his enemies as illustrated with Tyre and Sidon?
5. Does God send His angels to battle for Him against the forces of evil? Cite Scripture references for your answer.
6. What is portrayed by the phrase "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision"?
7. What lesson are we to learn from each of the judgments of God upon His enemies in the past?

III THE PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE (cont'd) GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE

TEXT: 3:16-21

- 16 And Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem: and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel.

- 17 So shall ye know that I am Jehovah your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.
- 18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with waters; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of Jehovah, and shall water the valley of Shittim.
- 19 Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.
- 20 But Judah shall abide for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation
- 21 And I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed: for Jehovah dwelleth in Zion.

QUERIES

- a. How will God make Jerusalem free of "strangers" passing through her forevermore?
- b. What is the "fountain" coming forth from the house of Jehovah?
- c. What "blood" has Jehovah *not* cleansed and how will He then cleanse it?

PARAPHRASE

And from the midst of the redeemed people of Zion God will speak with a mighty revelation of His power and He will shake the principalities and powers of the heavens and the earth; but God will dwell among His Covenant people and be a refuge and a stronghold for them. Then your generations will know from experience that I am Jehovah, the God who keeps His covenant for then I will be dwelling in the midst of Zion, the covenant people; furthermore, the covenant people shall then be a holy people and the unholy shall not be permitted to dwell in their midst. It will come to pass that the redeemed will be supplied blessing upon blessing; and a Fountain shall spring forth from presence of Jehovah and shall refresh with the water of life those thirsting after righteousness. On the other hand, I will make all My enemies arid, impotent and barren like the wilderness because they have done violence and hurt to My people and have shed innocent blood. But my precious elect will dwell secure forever and I will declare their innocence finally and fully for I will be dwelling in the midst of My redeemed people.

JOEL
SUMMARY

God's presence among a people prepared for Him by repentance will mean protection, holiness, blessing and vindication.

COMMENT

v. 16 AND JEHOVAH WILL ROAR FROM ZION . . . AND THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH SHALL SHAKE: BUT JEHOVAH WILL BE A REFUGE UNTO HIS PEOPLE . . . This closing hymn is the completion of the first section of chapter three showing that the end result of the future covenant fulfillment is not judgment but redemption and victory and blessing from a new and personal relationship with God. The Lord "roaring" from Zion will proclaim judgment. In the "latter days" of the Christian age the Lord will cause the message to go forth, "The time of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31). This message will not only come from His covenant people, whom Joel represents as "Zion" and "Jerusalem" (where the presence of God abides), but Christ says that the prophets foretold its going forth literally from "Zion" and "Jerusalem" first (cf. Lk. 24:44-49). When God established His kingdom on earth (the church), He shook down all other kingdoms, both those in the heavenly places and those on earth (cf. Dan. 2:44-45; Eph. 1:18-23; Col. 2:15; Heb. 12:18-29). Paul, in Hebrews chapter twelve, points out that those who had become Christians had then come to Mount Zion, the kingdom that shall never be shaken, but that those who rejected Christ and held on to Judaism belonged to that which was about to be (70 A.D.) shaken.

Jehovah, when He should become "Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14) ("God with us"), would be a refuge to His people. Incidentally, this same idea of being a refuge and protection to the covenant people with the coming of the Messiah is exactly what Isaiah was foretelling. Hebrews 6:18-19 is the fulfillment of this prophecy by Joel.

v. 17 SO SHALL YE KNOW THAT I AM JEHOVAH YOUR GOD, DWELLING IN ZION . . . THEN SHALL JERUSALEM BE HOLY, AND THERE SHALL NO STRANGERS PASS THROUGH HER ANY MORE. That Zion means the church ought to be evident from Hebrews 12:22. But it is even more evident that Joel is writing of the church when we see Paul referring to the church as the "Jerusalem that is above"

in Galatians 4:26. The word "above" as Paul uses it here does not mean high up in the heavens, that is, he is not referring to heaven, but "above" is used in the sense of preeminence. Paul's allegory is between the two covenants, Old and New Testaments, and so the Jerusalem that is above is the New Dispensation. It is on "mount Zion" that the Lord was going to "make a feast of fat things . . . destroy the covering that is cast over all peoples . . . and swallow up death forever" (Isa. 25:1-12). And Isaiah is also the one who spoke of the Messianic age as the "Holy Way" where the "unclean would not pass over it . . . but the redeemed would walk there and the ransomed of the Lord would return and come to Zion with singing . . ." (Isa. 35:1-10). So it seems to us that Joel is looking at the Messianic age. He is looking at the future (exactly when even he does not know) fulfillment of God's covenant promises. It may even be that he is compressing the whole Messianic age (from beginning to end) into a few verses here. But he is not interested in pinpointing a schedule of "times and seasons" but in graphically proclaiming the certainty of God's fulfillment of His promises to the people if they repent.

v. 18 AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THAT DAY, . . . THE MOUNTAINS SHALL DROP DOWN SWEET WINE, . . . AND A FOUNTAIN SHALL COME FORTH FROM THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH . . . As we have mentioned above, the prophets used contemporary terms of agricultural prosperity to depict in a figurative way the blessings of God in the Messianic age (cf. Isa. 25; 55; etc.) Jesus depicted the kingdom like a feast again and again. Paul calls the Christian life a feast (I Cor. 5:7-8).

As for the "fountain" flowing from the presence of God we have a number of indications that this must be the Living Water, the Messiah (cf. Ezek. 47:1ff; Zech. 13:1; John 4:13-15; 7:37-39; I Cor. 10:1-4). And so God, in fulfilling His covenant promise in sending the Christ, has sent a cleansing, refreshing, life-giving Fountain to satisfy those who thirst after righteousness, lost in the arid deserts of sin. And the consummation will come when the redeemed are gathered at the river of the water of life (Rev. 22:1ff).

v. 19 EGYPT SHALL BE A DESOLATION . . . FOR THE VIOLENCE DONE TO THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH. When God shall make Christ the "yea" of all His promises (II Cor. 1:20) He will render His enemies impotent. He has "destroyed him who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14); He has destroyed the works

of the devil (I Jn. 3:8); and by His power in us we are able to conquer our enemies (Rom. 8:31-39) and protect ourselves (Eph. 6:10-18).

v. 20-21 BUT JUDAH SHALL ABIDE FOR EVER, . . . AND I WILL CLEANSE THEIR BLOOD, THAT I HAVE NOT CLEANSED: FOR JEHOVAH DWELLETH IN ZION. So God's elect shall be justified—they shall not be condemned. If God justifies, who can condemn? (Rom. 8:31-39). The phrase ". . . I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed" probably means that when God ushers in the consummation of the Messianic age He will vindicate completely His precious saints. Justice, which in some cases on this earth is left undone, will be carried out by the Just Judge of all the earth. It might, on the other hand, refer to the fact that when the blood of Christ is shed all those sins of the Old Testament saints which were purged only potentially (Heb. 10:1-4) will be once for all cleansed (Heb. 10:5-18; Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 9:15-17).

Joel's prophecy ends on the same glorious note of triumph and complete victory as Obadiah's. Ezekiel prophesied that the New dwelling place of God, the church, "the habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22), "the name of the city henceforth shall be, The Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35). Yes, Christians form God's holy temple (I Cor. 3:16-17).

Joel's closing chapter has a certain eschatological element to it but this is primarily because Joel is looking forward with eager anticipation to that day when God will consummate His covenant. The prophets all predict the future; but they do so primarily because God has directed them to foretell of the eventual fulfillment of His covenant promises. The prophets are not interested in giving us a literal picture of some future millennial war or a national restoration of carnal Israel because, as the New Testament so specifically points out, the covenant blessings were never intended to be fulfilled in their final sense in any carnal nationality (Gal. 3:16-17, 29; Eph. 2:11, 13, 19).

We quote here from *Prophecy Interpreted* by John P. Milton, ". . . because God is active in redemptive history this history is moving towards a divinely appointed goal. The prophets picture that goal in terms of *the covenant fulfilled*. In speaking of this fulfillment they employ much of the "times-coloring" of their own age, with the emphasis in the actual fulfillment seen to be upon the "fundamentals" rather than upon the "times-coloring." In the conviction of the prophets the goal of the covenant becomes the "goal of history." Simeon's prophecy in Luke 1:68-75 is a good example to show how

the prophets spoke in a language contemporary with their times and yet intended it to refer to what the Messiah would accomplish—He would “save Israel from her enemies . . .” and “perform the mercy promised to their fathers . . .” and “remember his holy covenant . . .”, etc.

If we take these frequent references like the one here in Joel which imply a final redemptive act of God and divest them of the local “times-coloring” then we have in essence the prophetic message of hope which the N.T. confirms: a hope fulfilled in Christ, yet moving forward to the day of “the great Restoration” of which Christ is God’s own guarantee for the faith of His people.

Indeed, as the prophets often see history, the past and the present blend into the future (or as Milton has said “their perspective is shortened”). The prophets are never concerned with the past for its own sake, but rather with its relation to the present and to the future; for in their concept of history *the present moment* is unintelligible apart from the past, and meaningless apart from the future covenant fulfillment of God in all the various stages of that fulfillment.

QUIZ

1. How has God “roared” from Zion?
2. What Zion is Joel speaking of?
3. Show how the New Testament is the fulfillment of Joel here.
4. How does Joel’s use of figurative language compare to that of Isaiah respecting the Messianic age?
5. What other scriptures speak of the “fountain” from Jehovah?
6. What two possible interpretations may there be for verse 21?
7. How do the prophets consider and write of the far distant future?

J O E L
 EXAMINATION
 CONSIDERATIONS

1. What did the "Day of Jehovah" mean to the people of Joel's day? What does it mean to you?
2. Who was Joel? and what about his literary style?
3. What is Joel's contribution to the Messianic prophecies?

ASSOCIATIONS

Associate the persons or events of column one with the correct person or event of column two.

1	2
Jehoiada	Pethuel
Joash	Mt. Zion
Valley of Jehoshaphat	high priest
Joel	trumpet
Tyre	pour out my spirit
locusts	boy king
Jerusalem	judgment
Pentecost	Jehovah is God
Athaliah	my army
shophar	queen
Joel's father	city of Phoenicia

MEMORIZATIONS

Fill in the blanks:

"Yet even now, saith Jehovah, _____ ye unto me with all your _____, and with _____, and with weeping, and with _____: and _____ your heart, and not your garments, and _____ unto Jehovah your God; for he is gracious and _____, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and _____ him of the evil. Who knoweth whether he will not _____ and _____, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal-offering and a drink-offering unto Jehovah your God?"

"And it shall come to pass _____, that I will pour out my _____ upon all _____; and your sons and your _____ shall prophesy, your old men shall _____, your young men shall see _____."

"And I will show _____ in the heavens and in the earth: _____, and fire, and pillars of _____. The sun shall be turned

EXAMINATION

into _____, and the moon into _____, before the great and terrible day of _____ cometh. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be _____; for in mount _____ and in Jerusalem there shall be those that _____, as Jehovah hath said, and among the _____ those whom Jehovah doth call."

CONTEMPLATIONS

1. What was Joel's interpretation of the meaning of the locust plague?
2. What does his interpretation mean to our concept of God and history?
3. Name the things the people were instructed to do to show their repentance.
4. What is the meaning of the terrifying figure or picture Joel gives of the sun turning to darkness and the moon to blood?
5. Is the "valley of Jehoshaphat" a place where a literal judgment will be made or does it stand as a figurative representation of God judging the nations in Christ? Prove it!
6. Why does Joel reverse the saying of Isaiah when he says, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears?"
7. Have strangers ever passed through Jerusalem since the time of Joel—will Jerusalem be inhabited forever?

JOEL

“REPENT”

SERMON ON JOEL

Joel 2:12-14

INTRODUCTION

I. JOEL THE AUTHOR

A. Nothing but what is known about him in this book can be discovered

1. Name means literally, Jehovah is God, which is providentially according to his message

a. The name Joel is a common one among O. T. people, cf. I Sam. 8:2; Neh. 11:9

B. His style

1. A literary master

a. Carefully polishes and beautifies his work as no other O. T. writer

b. Everything is set before us vividly as though we ourselves were witnessing it

c. He adds detail to detail; parallelism to para.; each clear, brief, distinct, a picture in itself, yet adding to the effect of the whole

C. His character

1. The tenderness of his soul is evidenced by his lingering over the desolation which he foresees

2. He was, evidenced by his description of repentance, a man of deep religious feelings, heartfelt experience and warm sympathy

3. He threatens, warns and penetrates into the very recesses of the soul with his figures of speech

4. He is a poetic man, yet one of strength, tenderness, insight and dignity

5. He was a man of moral integrity, undoubtedly a native of Judah being familiar with the Temple and the ministry of the priesthood

II. BACKGROUND OF THE TIMES

A. Disasterous locust plague and drought has devastated the land

1. So severe that there is not enough even to present cereal or drink offerings at the Temple

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2. So severe that it is a "Day of Jehovah"
- B. Prior to Joel's time Athaliah (wicked woman) ruled
 1. But Jehoiada, high priest, led a revolt which deposed her and put Joash, boy king, upon the throne
 2. It was really Jehoiada, the high priest who was the voice behind the throne . . . the priesthood was in the ascendancy in Joel's day . . . they were the leaders of the people . . . to them Joel appeals for repentance.
 3. Jehoiada started a revolt but it was short-lived and the people had returned to formalism
 4. So God sent these calamitous calls to repent . . . and sent Joel to interpret the events
 5. Already the people were on their way to moral downfall

III. PURPOSE AND TEACHING OF JOEL

- A. Joel has been sent to call the covenant people to repentance and holiness
 1. God desires a sanctified people through whom He may fulfill His covenant promises
- B. To bring this people to repentance and holiness of life, the great day of Jehovah's chastening judgment has come upon the land in locust and drought
 1. Thus the ever-recurring method of God in saving the world is chastening judgment causing repentance, followed by redemption as He purifies a people fit for communion with Him
 2. This method reached its perfection in the Messiah and His spiritual kingdom
 - a. Even the first coming of the Messiah is spoken of as a day of Jehovah's judgment cf. Mal. 3:1-4; Jn. 9:39; 16:11
 - b. So combined in the Messiah and His kingdom is the method of God's salvation—judgment and redemption
 3. Each judgment/redemption experience of national Israel foreshadowed and predicted that final and complete judgment/redemption experience realized in Jesus' 1st advent and the consumation awaits only His second advent
 - a. This is the message of Joel
- C. And his message was primarily directed to his contemporaries
 1. Judah was soon to come under the oppression of successive world empires
 2. The cruelty and corruption of these pagan oppressors would

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cause many of God's elect to think God had forgotten His covenant promises

3. Joel was commissioned to preach the ultimate act of God's conquest over the powers of the world darkness. God brought them to the valley of Jehoshaphat in Christ (Col. 2:15)

THE DWELLING OF JESUS AMONG HIS PEOPLE—THE RESTORATION OF THE COMMUNION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN, IS THE FINAL GOAL OF JOEL'S PROPHECY . . . THIS IMPLIES, OF COURSE, THAT GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FITTED FOR GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG THEM . . . JOEL CALLS THE COVENANT PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS SO THAT GOD CAN FULFILL THESE COVENANT PROMISES

DISCUSSION

I. PLEA FOR REPENTANCE, Ch. 1 & 2

A. The Exclaimer—God's spokesman, the prophet

1. The prophet Joel is commissioned to put his message in the form of an exclamation
2. So unprecedented were the calamities which had come to Judah that for generations and generations back no one could recall such a thing
3. So unprecedented were they, they were to serve as a reminder for generations to come
4. When God does such a thing there is no doubt about it . . . He has done it again and again but men deceived by their own pride have not learned what God wants them to learn

B. The extent of God's call to repent: IT IS VIVID, ARRESTING, FORCEFUL, UNMISTAKABLE

1. The crops, vineyards, fig trees were stripped of their bark, splintered, chewed up, burned up
 - a. Something like no man's land in the battle zone or like the woods around an ammunition plant when it blows up
2. Joel represented even the beasts of the field and the ground itself mourning
3. v. 1:11 represents the farmers as unable to comprehend . . . completely dumbfounded
4. The food vanished . . . there was nothing whatsoever to joke about nothing to make one glad
5. Barns and graneries falling into disuse and ruin . . .
6. The beasts perplexed and dismayed, crying unto God for water

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7. IT WAS A DAY OF GLOOM (like declaration of war) A DAY OF DARKNESS . . . THICK DARKNESS . . . PEOPLE WERE LIKE THOSE OF DUST BOWL DAYS . . . EARTHQUAKES

C. The Executor of the plea—GOD, using natural agents

1. The locusts are called "a nation"
2. What has come is a day of the Lord . . . destruction from the hand of the Almighty
3. God used the drought to burn up the crops and pastures v. 19-20
4. The terrible nature of the locusts is described in 2:4-10
5. In v. 11 they are called God's army . . . Hs is their general . . . He commands them

MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, GOD COMMANDS ALL OF NATURE AND USES IT TO SERVE HIS PURPOSES OF CALLING MEN TO REPENTANCE THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE FORM OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH EXCEPT GOD HAS ORDAINED IT TO BE SO . . . HE ESTABLISHES THE BOUNDARIES OF NATIONS . . . HE SITS UPON THE THRONE OF THE UNIVERSE . . . ALL NATURE AT HIS COMMAND

II. THE PLAN FOR REPENTANCE, Ch. 1-2

A. What we have done here is go through the two chapters selecting the words Joel uses to signify THE MANNER REPENTANCE IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

B. The People

1. Awake, like the prodigal who came to himself
 - a. Repentance involves the powers of reason as well as emotions
 - b. PEOPLE NEED TO WAKE UP TO WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THIS AGE OF GRACE AND MERCY IN THE GOSPEL CALL TO REPENT!
 - c. THEY NEED TO WAKE UP TO THE FACT THAT IN CHRIST THE WORLD HAS BEEN JUDGED AND CONDEMNED
2. Wail, lament, weep, like Peter
 - a. There needs to be sorrow for sin . . .
 - b. There needs to be wounded hearts, pricked consciences, shame
3. Be confounded, men need to be humiliated before God . . . to feel the futility of their own righteousness and wisdom
 - a. They need to be brought to the very point of death so that they will learn to depend on God! II Cor. 1:8-9
4. Blow the trumpet in Zion—repentance must be proclaimed
 - a. Few people ever hear sermons on repentance today

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- b. There are two kinds of promises in God's book . . . one equally as emphatic as the other: Curses and Blessings; warnings and blessings
 - 5. Tremble, again, that which God does in nature and through His revelation in Christ should cause men to fear and reverence God . . . THIS IS WHY THERE IS A LACK OF REPENTANCE . . . THERE IS A LACK OF FEAR
 - a. When Jesus demonstrated His deity, Peter cried, Depart from me for I am a sinful man
 - b. Men trembled when in the presence of angels
 - c. We had better tremble when we read His word which is just as penetrating, discerning and Holy in nature? THERE JUST ISN'T ANY EXCUSE FOR IRREVERANCE WHEN THE WORD IS BEING READ OR PREACHED . . . FOR THIS IS THE GOD BEFORE WHOM WE TREMBLE SPEAKING!
 - 6. Fast, mourn . . . GIVE YOURSELF TO CONCENTRATION ON THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUAL . . . SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE
 - 7. RETURN TO THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART
- C. The Priests
- 1. Gird on sackcloth, pass the night in penitent prayer
 - a. IF THE SPIRITUAL LEADERS CANNOT LIVE PENITENT LIVES HOW CAN ONE EXPECT THOSE OF THE FLOCK TO REPENT?
 - b. FOR SOME REASON OR ANOTHER SOME PREACHERS AND ELDERS AND DEACONS HAVE GOTTEN THE IDEA THAT WHAT IS GOOD FOR THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH IN REPENTANCE DOES NOT APPLY TO THEM
 - c. These are the kind of shepherds of the flock of whom Ezekiel writes, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep . . .
 - 2. Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly
 - a. Religious leaders are to lead in CONCENTRATION ON SPIRITUAL THINGS
 - 3. Cry to the Lord
 - a. Prayers of intercession, supplication to the Lord
 - b. Prayers of dependency get men in the right frame of mind and attitude toward God in order that God may truly bless them

PRAYERS DO NOT CHANGE THE MIND OF GOD . . . GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE AND WITHOUT VARIATION . . . PRAYERS ARE MANIFESTATIONS

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THAT MEN ARE GETTING THEMSELVES INTO THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP TO GOD . . . MEN ARE SURRENDERING TO HIS WILL WHICH IS TO BLESS AND GIVE MAN ALL HE NEEDS FOR LIFE AND GODLINESS

4. And so the priests are charged to lament and wail . . .

III. PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE, Ch. 2 & 3

A. Immediate blessings

1. Restoration of the crops, 2:18-19

a. THESE ARE THE MATERIAL BLESSINGS GOD GAVE TO JUDAH FOR HER REPENTANCE

b. THESE SAME PRINCIPLES HOLD TRUE FOR ANY NATION IN THE MATERIAL SENSE TODAY WHO WILL WALK HUMBLY IN THE PENITENCE BEFORE THE GOD OF ALL THE EARTH . . . THEY CAME TO GOD FEARING FATHERS OF AMERICA, BUT HOW LONG THEY WILL REMAIN IN VIEW OF AMERICA'S GROWING UNGODLINESS IS UNCERTAIN!

2. Removal of the Plague, v. 20

a. GOD HAS POWER TO TAKE AWAY THE SCOURGE OF HIS JUDGMENTS AND TO RENEW THE LAND AS IF IT HAD NEVER BEEN JUDGED

3. Remembrance by the Lord, v. 26-27

a. HERE JOEL BEGINS TO PASS FROM THE MATERIAL BLESSINGS INTO THE SPIRITUAL

b. The Lord will remember His people to protect them, guard them and guide them

B. Future blessings, spiritual blessings, 2:28—3:21

1. God will prepare a new people

a. He will pour out His spirit upon all flesh

b. THIS PROPHECY WAS FULFILLED, OF COURSE, IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH Acts 2. THE PROPHETS SPOKE OF THIS FUTURE EVENT IN DIFFERENT WAYS

2. God's victory over the enemies of His people

a. THIS WAS INTENDED TO BE FULFILLED AT THE COMING OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM ALSO

b. IT IS JUST THAT JOEL PUT IT IN THE VERNACULAR OF THE PEOPLE OF HIS TIME! OF COURSE THERE WERE JUDGMENTS UPON THE NATIONS THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE O. T. PEOPLE BUT IT WAS ALL POINTING TO THE FINAL OVERTHROW OF ALL WORLDLY POWER IN THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH AND HIS KINGDOM

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3. God's presence among His people, v. 3:17-21
 - a. GOD DWELLS IN ZION, THE CHURCH . . . THE CHURCH IS A HABITATION OF GOD IN THE SPIRIT!
 - b. THE FOUNTAIN COMES FORTH FROM THE HOUSE OF THE LORD TO REFRESH THE COVENANT PEOPLE
 - c. ZION WILL BE A HOLY KINGDOM AND IT WILL NEVER AGAIN BE CONQUERED . . . STRANGERS WILL NEVER AGAIN OVERCOME GOD'S PEOPLE

CONCLUSION

- I. THE LESSON THAT GOD'S WAY IS THE WAY OF DISCIPLINE
 - A. Paul writes to the Hebrews that the Israelites of old did not know God's way and fell through unbelief
- II. GOD DOES NOT CHANGE BUT MAN MUST IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE BLESSINGS OF GOD
- III. THE LESSON THAT GOD'S ULTIMATE PLANS WERE TO BE PERFECTED IN THE MESSIAH AND THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM
 - A. We are the sons of the covenant . . . heirs of the promise
 - B. We are to be a new people, victorious, with God's presence in our midst, protecting, sustaining, guiding



Jonah 3:1-5, 10

1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time; saying,

2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

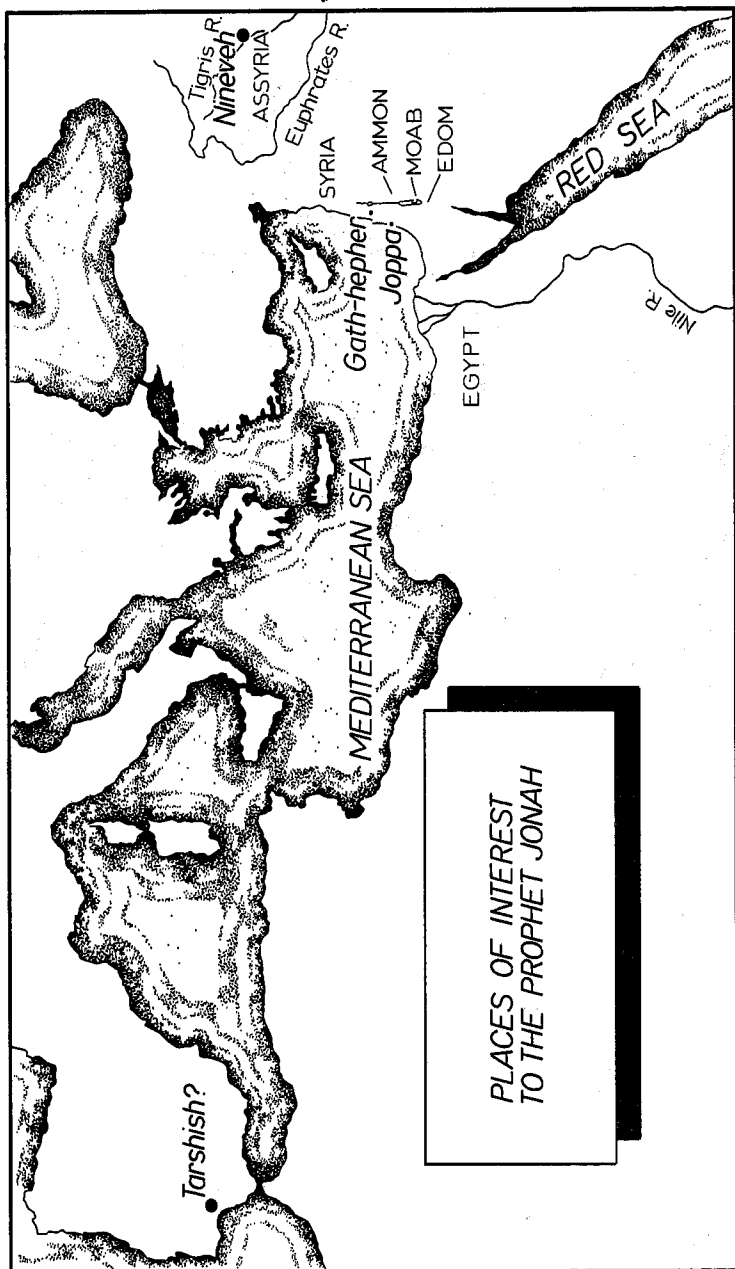
4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

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10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

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INTRODUCTION

Author: Jonah (or *yonah*, which means literally, *a dove*), the son of Amittai, from Gath-hepher in Galilee. Jonah was a citizen of the northern kingdom, Israel. The destructive critics attack the book as "legendary, mythological—a fairy-tale." One of the reasons the book is attacked as unhistorical is the presence of Aramaic phrases within the book which the critics say would be impossible if Jonah lived at such an early date. The presence of Aramaisms in the book cannot be made a criterion for determining the date or the authorship since Aramaisms occur in Old Testament books from both early and late periods. Furthermore, the recently discovered texts from Ras Shamra contain Aramic elements and they date as early as 1500-1400 B.C.! To deny the authenticity of Jonah is to impeach the integrity of our Lord Jesus Christ for He not only verified the historicity of the miracles recorded in the book (Matt. 12:39-40) but also the historicity of the prophet's mission to the Ninevites thus verifying the authorship and veracity of the book! In addition to the foregoing proof of the book's historicity, J. W. McGarey adds the following observations in his little book "Jesus and Jonah": (a) It is incredible to believe that any Israelite, although capable of conceiving such a tale, would be so irreverent toward one of the great prophets of his nation; (2) It is even more incredible to believe that, if the book be a myth, the chosen people would at any period of their history allowed such a document a place in their Canon of Scriptures—nothing of the mythical is to be found elsewhere!; (3) No Israelite would ever invent a story representing God showing mercy towards the Gentiles; (4) A late date for the book makes the book to be written hundreds of years after the Assyrian city had fallen into virtual obscurity and obliteration!

Date: It is not difficult to date the book if the passage in II Kings 14:25-28 be accepted. Jeroboam II, under whom he carried out the most of his ministry, reigned from 783-743 B.C. But, as Fairbairn points out, this statement in II Kings 14 was made at a time when the affairs of Israel were in the most shattered and depressed condition; "there was none shut up or left, nor any helper for Israel . . ." and this was certainly not true in the days of Jeroboam. Israel had been in this condition in the days of Joash, Jeroboam's father, and Joash gradually restored it by a succession of victories and began the prosperous administration which Jeroboam inherited. So the prediction of Jonah concerning the recovery of Hamath and Damascus seems

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to belong to the reign of Joash, which would make Jonah a contemporary of both Elisha and Joel. Perhaps the date of Jonah would best be put at approximately 800 B.C.

Background of the Times: It is important to understand what has transpired in the history of the divided kingdoms as well as what is currently taking place in Jonah's time in order to understand the purpose of the book. When God first decided to give part of the kingdom over to Jeroboam I (I Kings 11:26-40), it was because Solomon had perverted the chosen people from their God-appointed purpose of leavening the heathen nations round about them! Instead of being an influence for holiness and a witness to the true God, the chosen people under Solomon incorporated heathenism into their religion and their lives. Jeroboam the First was called by God to bring reform (I Kings 11:37-39) and to be the witness God desired among the heathen. But Jeroboam did not fulfill this high calling. His perversion of worship by worshipping idols caused great numbers of the priests to desert back to Judah (II Chron. 11:13-14) while a revived prosperity in the southern kingdom also led many to desert back to Judah (II Chron. 15:9ff). Now this did not abate even though there were periods of superficial reform between Jeroboam I and Jeroboam II. Jehu, great-grandfather of Jeroboam II wrought a bloody purge of the prophets of Baal in his day. Jehoahaz, Jeroboam's grandfather also attempted a reform (see our comments on the Introduction to Obadiah) but it was short-lived. And Jeroboam II followed the example of his ancestors (II Kings 14:24) in keeping up the idolatrous worship of the golden calves. He reigned for 41 years and outwardly his tenure on the throne seemed to be one of prosperity, peace and growth. But, as Amos and Hosea describe it, it was a time of heinous crime and licentious indulgence (see our comments on the Introductions to Amos and Hosea). The material prosperity was a thin veneer covering the utter spiritual decadence which the prophets, men of righteousness and faith, saw plainly.

Purpose: Israel had become so bereft of any right relationship to the One True God they had begun to call Jehovah, Baal and Baal, Jehovah (Hosea 2:16). So Jonah's mission and the recording of it was to teach Israel that if they would repent God would spare them the judgment that must inevitably come from the Righteous Jehovah should they continue in wickedness. Further, if they should continue in heathen wickedness and reject their divine calling to become a peculiar people, a holy nation, witnesses to the One True God, then

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God had children among the Gentiles who would repent and thus become the vessel God needed to carry out His purpose to redeem the world. Fairbairn's interpretation of Jonah's behaviour at the withdrawal of Nineveh's destruction by God is tied in with this purpose of Jonah's mission. Mr. Fairbairn is persuaded that Jonah is so desperately anxious that his own people, Israel, repent he believes the only thing that will bring about this repentance is a terrible manifestation of God's judgment upon this wicked Nineveh. So when Nineveh is spared, Jonah is "grieved and vexed sore," not because he is a sadist and delights in seeing thousands of people suffer, but because he is sure that now Israel will not repent. Mr. Fairbairn does not in any way attempt to excuse Jonah for the spiritual blindness he manifests in misunderstanding the mercy God shows to the Gentiles but his interpretation certainly portrays Jonah in a kinder light than the sadistic, pessimistic, bigoted character by which he is usually portrayed. We personally feel Fairbairn's treatment of Jonah is fairer and represents a deeper understanding of this man whom God called and Jesus praised. We shall have more to say about Mr. Fairbairn's book, "Jonah, His Life, Character, and Mission," later in our exegesis of the text.

Jesus pointed to Jonah twice as a typical prophecy of His Messiahship. Jonah was a *sign* of the humiliating death, and glorious resurrection in the personal experience of the Messiah. The reception of Jonah's preaching by the Gentiles also typified the fact that the message of the Messiah would be rejected by the Jews and received by the Gentiles (cf. Matt. 12:38-42). There are some (Lange, for example) who would, while in full agreement as to the historicity of the account, extend the typical nature of the book even farther. Mr. Lange sees Jonah typifying the nation of Israel as follows:

Jonah

1. Sent to Nineveh to declare the nature of Jehovah to Gentiles.
2. Shuns his call and attempts to forget God by taking a trip.
3. God attempts to reprove the fugitive by a storm.
4. Jonah is thrown into the sea and swallowed by a monster.

Israel

1. Set amidst the heathen to declare the nature of Jehovah to Gentiles.
2. Abandons purpose and goes after other gods.
3. God calls them to repent through national calamities.
4. Israel is thrown into the sea of heathendom and swallowed by a monster ("beast" says Daniel).

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| <p>5. In adversity Jonah prays to God.</p> <p>6. Jonah remains there for a definite time allotted to serve God's purpose.</p> <p>7. The fish vomits Jonah out at the command of God.</p> <p>8. Jonah is sent a second time to be a witness to the Gentiles.</p> <p>9. Jonah's preaching works repentance among the Gentiles.</p> <p>10. Jonah rejects God's mercy unto the Gentiles.</p> | <p>5. In adversity Israel turns to God.</p> <p>6. Israel remains there for a definite time allotted to serve God's purpose. (Hosea 6:2).</p> <p>7. God stirs up Cyrus to "vomit" out Israel.</p> <p>8. Israel is restored in order to be the holy nation she was purposed to be at her first call.</p> <p>9. Israel's bringing in the Messiah works repentance among the Gentiles.</p> <p>10. Israel rejects its Messiah because of mercy extended to the Gentiles.</p> |
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After a number of years studying and teaching the Old Testament Prophets and studying and teaching the book of Hebrews and the emphatic, all-inclusive statements concerning the typical nature of the Old Testament in Hebrews, it is not difficult for us to accept Mr. Lange's view as altogether in harmony with the typical nature of the Old Testament. One has but to refer to the many references of the New Testament to see that the entire Old Testament, although absolutely historical, was at the same time "a shadow of the good things to come." Compare the following references (Matt. 5:17; Lk. 24:25-27; Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 3:18, 24; I Cor. 10-11 where the word *impos* "type" is used; Heb. 8:5; 9:9; 9:23; 10:1). One thing is certain—Jonah's experience was typical for the Lord Jesus so classified it! And it is interesting that Jesus implied Jonah's experience was to be a "sign" to the Jewish nation pointing to their Messiah and He inferred that the Jews, even of His day, should so understand it!

In all our attempts to outline the book of Jonah and in all our searching for suitable outlines we have found that the book falls into four natural divisions (by chapter) which practically all commentaries and survey books use as a standard outline.
Theme: God's Messenger Is To Declare God's Message To All Men (Rom. 3:29)

- I God's Messenger Running From God (chapter 1)
 - A. The commission of Jonah (1:1-2)
 - B. The contrariety of Jonah (1:3-10)
 - C. The chastening of Jehovah (1:11-17)

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- II God's Messenger Running To God (chapter 2)
 - A. The prayer of Jonah (2:1-6)
 - B. The promise of Jonah (2:7-9)
 - C. The preservation of Jonah (2:10)
- III God's Messenger Running With God (chapter 3)
 - A. The commission renewed (3:1-3)
 - B. The cry for repentance (3:4)
 - C. The consequences of repentance (3:5-10)
- IV God's Messenger Running Ahead of God (chapter 4)
 - A. The displeasure of Jonah (4:1-3)
 - B. The demonstration by Jehovah (4:4-10)
 - C. The declaration of Jehovah (4:11)

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING FROM GOD— THE COMMISSION OF JONAH

TEXT: 1:1-2

- 1 Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
- 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

QUERIES

- a. Who was Jonah—where did he live—when did he live?
- b. Why send a Jewish prophet to a Gentile city?

PARAPHRASE

And now at Jehovah's appointed time in the course of events the word of Jehovah was communicated to Jonah, the son of Amittai. Jehovah said to Jonah, Arise and go with haste to that great Gentile city of Nineveh, in Assyria, and preach My sentence of judgment against it; for the wickedness of the people is great and it has come up before Me.

SUMMARY

Jehovah's righteous judgment is about to fall upon Nineveh but He commissions Jonah to go with a final message of repentance, which, if heeded, will bring salvation from the impending judgment.

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COMMENT

v. 1-2 . . . THE WORD OF JEHOVAH CAME SAYING . . . GO TO NINEVAH . . . AND CRY AGAINST IT . . . The story of Jonah, beginning with the conjunction *vav*, unites with all the preceding history of God's scheme of redemption and thus becomes "one more pearl of great price" fitted to the whole string of pearls which form the priceless revelation of God's grace to man. It has a specific purpose to serve, it is not incongruous. It reminds the Jews of their election to be a witness to the nations; it proclaims God's sovereignty over all peoples; it typifies the Messiah's humiliation and glorification; and it prophesies Israel's chastening to come. It is God's trumpet blast warning both Jew and Gentile of their responsibilities toward Him at a critical time in the scheme of redemption.

The city of Nineveh, according to Diodorus, was the greatest city of antiquity. It had a population of about 600,000 and was some 80 miles in circumference. Upon its walls, 100 feet high, flanked with 1500 towers, each 200 feet high, four chariots could drive abreast. It filled, together with the adjoining suburbs, the whole space between the rivers Tigris, Khoer, the Upper or Great Zab, the Gasr Su, and the mountainous boundary of the valley of the Tigris on the east. This great metropolis occupied an area of about 18 square miles.

The first mention of Nineveh is in Gen. 10:11 where it is stated that Nimrod (or Asshur) went out into Assyria, and builded Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen, adding, "the same is the great city." It is very probable that the Nineveh of Jonah's day consisted of all these cities in one "great city." The first king of any greatness in Nineveh was Assur-nasipal II (885-860 B.C.) who was warlike and cruel but who welded Assyria into the best fighting machine of the ancient world. Shalmaneser II (860-825 B.C.) was the first Assyrian king to come in conflict with Israel. Ahab fought him and Jehu paid him tribute. Then came Shansi-adad (825-808 B.C.) and then Adad-nirari (808-783 B.C.). Adad-nirari is undoubtedly the person who was king when Jonah went to "cry against" that great city. There are archaeological records to indicate that Adad-Nirari made reforms in his empire similar to those of Amenophis IV in Egypt. And, under the reigns of the three kings following Adad-Nirari (Shalmaneser III, 783-771 B.C.; Assur-dayan, 771-753 B.C.; Assur-lush, 753-747 B.C.) there was a let-up in Assyrian conquests. In this period Israel recovered lost territory, II Kings 14:25. These are hints that Jonah's influence on Nineveh was profound.

About 100 years later, under Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) Nineveh blossomed into beauty and splendor that she had never known. Sennacherib built his palace which covered 8 acres and was elevated on a brick platform 90 feet above the city level. Flights of marble steps led up all four sides of the palace and each entrance was flanked by five pairs of human headed beasts, lions and other figures. These palace ruins show numerous halls, rooms and passages, many of which were faced with slabs of coarse alabaster, sculptured in relief with military operations, hunting-scenes, mythological figures, etc.

Assur-banipal (668-626), one of Assyria's last, but greatest kings, built one of the ancient world's greatest libraries. It contained originally over 100,000 volumes. It was thoroughly cataloged and indexed and specific volumes were easily referred to. Archaeologists have found magnifying glasses supplied to read the many texts which, because of voluminous amount of material, had to be written in small characters. Among these volumes were such works as grammars, dictionaries, interlinear translations, works on astronomy relating observations of eclipses and the like, religious texts, legal texts including the code of Hammurabi, scientific works in taxonomy, geography and medicine, poetry, epics on the great Deluge and the Creation, fiscal documents relating to collection of taxes and works of various other natures.

About 612 B.C. Nineveh was destroyed by a coalition of armies from the Babylonians and Medes. It happened exactly as Nahum, the prophet, predicted it. Its destruction was so complete that even its site was forgotten. When Xenophon and his 10,000 passed by 200 years later he thought the mounds were the ruins of some Parthian city. When Alexander the Great fought the famous battle of Arbela, 331 B.C., near the site of Nineveh, he did not know there had ever been a city there.

To this cruel, cold-blooded, profligate, power-worshipping, materialistic, animistic metropolis God sent Jonah. Jonah was commanded to "preach against" that great city. Their wickedness cried out to the whole earth and God saw it just as He had seen it before (Gen. 6:5; 18: 20-21). The wickedness of every man and every nation is a "cry against God." But God has, by sending His Word, "cried out against all wickedness" (cf Rom. 1:18ff). Who will win in this struggle? Men cry their rebellions against God—God cries His judgments upon men. Whose voice shall be finally heard? The Bible says God's cry will prevail and history confirms it!

But why send Jonah to a foreign nation? Did he not have enough to do in preaching to his own people? No doubt he had preached

to Israel time and time again of God's judgment to come upon them because of their materialism, rebellion and unbelief. But his preaching had fallen upon sin-deafened ears. Nothing he said, however scathing, could turn them from their headlong plunge into heathenism. But look again at Nineveh. Its power and security, its prolificacy and licentiousness had become a by-word throughout the whole world. It was the subject upon every lip—the fear in every heart. Whatever might be achieved there by God through His prophet would not be "as a thing done in a corner!" The report of whatever should be accomplished there at Jonah's preaching would be reported throughout the world!

If by this one call to repentance Jonah should effect the repentance of this Gentile city, what a lesson that would be to the sin-calloused hearts of Israel. It should reveal to Israel the perverseness and foolishness of her behaviour toward her loving God—it should make her ashamed. If it did not so shame her into repentance then there was nothing left for God to do but cast Israel out as one no longer worthy to be called a child and receive and honor the recovered and penitent prodigal, Nineveh. This is precisely the use Jesus made of the preaching of Jonah at Nineveh and its results. Jesus told the Jews of His own generation that the people of Nineveh would rise up in the judgment to condemn them, because *they* had repented at Jonah's preaching; while He, a greater than Jonah, spoke only to cold and unconcerned hearts. The lesson to be learned from the response of the Gentiles should be even more graphic to the Jews of Jonah's day. The Ninevites surrendered to the call of God and ceased from their sins while the covenant people despised God's word and His prophet and hardened their hearts fearing Him not. Israel then could only learn that repentance, such as expressed by Nineveh, would bring salvation. The only other alternative was certain, sure and just retribution from the God they insisted upon spurning.

This is a principle common to all ages. Jesus used it over and over again (Matt. 8:10-12; 22:1-14; 21:33-41); Paul reiterated it again and again both by example and precept (Acts 13:46-47; 28:24-28; Romans 11, etc.). This principle is: God is not now nor was He ever a respecter of persons, "But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34). When God chose the seed of Abraham He intended to bless not simply the physical offspring of Abraham but the spiritual seed of Abraham. The people of Israel in Jonah's day were in very real danger of

forgetting this truth. Jonah is merely illustrating by an object-lesson this great truth which Hosea would later prophesy (Hosea 1:10; 2:23) and which Paul would quote in Romans 9:19-26. When God judged and redeemed Israel it was a revelation—a lesson—to all mankind at large. Just as Israel, in apostatizing, became as the heathen falling under the judgment of God, so Israel in being redeemed upon her repentance was equally a promise to all Gentiles of their redemption if they should repent. In the case of Jonah's preaching to the Gentiles and bringing about their repentance and salvation it was this same lesson *in reverse*—teaching the principle which those who should have known it best had so readily forgotten!

This was why Jonah was sent. God would use the repentance and salvation of Nineveh as a last effort of a loving Father to provoke a recalcitrant child (Israel) to shame and to a jealousy that would penitently seek the favor of its Father (cf. Rom. 10:19). But Jonah, so intent upon his own opinion as how to best accomplish Israel's repentance (which would be by a catastrophic display of God's wrath upon the sin of Nineveh), was found "running ahead of God."

Another prophet, enamored of his own ideas as to how best bring about the purposes of God, was also found "running ahead of God" in a similar way and received a similar rebuke (cf. I Kings 19:9-14). The Jewish concept of the Messiah was one of a mighty military despot who would come to bring the retribution of God upon the Gentiles thus calling Israel to repentance but the Messiah came with the "still small voice" and the Jews, having already formed their concepts, rejected Him. We shall have more to say of this later.

QUIZ

1. How does this singularly unique book of Jonah fit into the whole revelation of God?
2. How "great" was the city of Nineveh—population, area, militarily?
3. Who was the king of Assyria when Jonah preached "against" its capitol city?
4. What was the eventual fate of the city of Nineveh?
5. Why was Jonah sent to a Gentile city to preach "against" it?
6. Are there any illustrations of other ages and other people of God's purpose in Jonah's commission? Name some!

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING FROM GOD— THE CONTRARIETY OF JONAH

TEXT: 1:3-10

- 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah.
- 4 But Jehovah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.
- 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them. But Jonah was gone down into the innermost parts of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.
- 6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not.
- 7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.
- 8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?
- 9 And he said unto them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land.
- 10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, What is this that thou hast done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them.

QUERIES

- a. How did Jonah think he could flee "from the presence of Jehovah?"
- b. How could Jonah sleep through the storm upon the sea?
- c. Why did the mariners want to know so much about Jonah?

PARAPHRASE

But Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh so he decided to go far, far away to Tarshish hoping thereby to relieve himself of the obligation of serving God in this special task. He went down to the great seaport of Joppa and finding a ship there bound for Tarshish, he

paid his fare and went aboard and climbed down into the inner-most part of the ship and sailed with them in order to be free of the responsibility of this particular task God had given him. But God sent one of His servants to bring a great wind upon the sea and there was a mighty tempest on the sea which threatened to break the ship apart. Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors cried to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard in order to lighten the ship. All this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold of the ship. So the captain went down after him. What do you mean sleeping at a time like this? he said. Get up and cry to your god and perhaps he will have mercy upon us and keep us from perishing. Then the crew decided to cast lots to see which one of them had offended the gods and caused this terrible storm; and the lot fell upon Jonah. You, who have brought this displeasure of the gods upon us, tell us, they said, Who are you? What is your occupation? Where are you from? What is your country—and your nationality? Jonah replied, I am a Hebrew; I worship Jehovah, the God of heaven, who made the earth and the sea. Then the sailors were terrified and yelled at him, Why have you done this? They knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them.

SUMMARY

Jonah, thinking to relieve himself of the prophetic responsibility if he gets away from the place where this commission was given, flees toward Tarshish. But God arrests him in the middle of the ocean by a storm and the falling of a lot upon him. Jonah then confesses his failure to the ship's crew.

COMMENT

v. 3 JONAH ROSE UP TO FLEE UNTO TARSHISH FROM THE PRESENCE OF JEHOVAH . . . Was Jonah foolish enough to think that he could hide from God? Destructive liberal critics of the Bible say that the phrase "from the presence of Jehovah" indicates a "tribal concept of God." That is, the liberal critics think the Hebrews of Jonah's day had the same concept of their God as the heathen did of theirs—each ethnic group of people had their own localized gods—and when they got away from their homeland the local gods had no power over them. This attack upon the supernatural character of the Bible is too absurd to be given much credence by anyone who has ever read the Bible at all. Long before Jonah ever lived the Hebrew people knew that Jehovah God was the Only True God and that He was Creator and Sus-

tainer of the whole universe—that His presence was everywhere (cf. Psa. 139:7ff). What then is the meaning of this phrase “from the presence of Jehovah?” The Jewish commentator, Kimchi, says, “He imagined that if he went out of the land of Israel, the Spirit of prophecy would not rest upon him.’ In other words, Jonah was simply trying to rid himself of the responsibilities of his official status in this one particular task of going to Nineveh. The phrase “. . . presence of Jehovah” is often used to indicate some official capacity (cf. Gen. 41:46; Deut. 10:8; I Kings 17:1; 18:15; II Kings 3:14; Lk. 1:19). Jonah’s intention was not to hide himself from the omnipotent God, but to withdraw from the service of Jehovah. So Jonah acted, as men often do today who do not like God’s call upon their lives to special service, by removing themselves as far as possible from being under the influence of God, and from the place where he *could* fulfill God’s command. All the circumstances which weighed upon Jonah’s soul causing such disobedience we are not told. However, he gives us one reason himself near the end of the book (4:2). Fairbairn supposes Jonah to have rationalized thus: “Alas! what can I hope to accomplish as the bearer of God’s message against the crying sins and abominations of Nineveh? I, a solitary individual, a poor and unknown stranger, in the midst of a proud, overgrown city, revelling in wealth and wantonness! What success have I had at home even among the people of my own tongue and nation? Here, with every advantage on my side, I have borne the testimony of God in vain, and have seen the hand of the Lord stretched out to save from impending ruin, with no other effect among the people at large than of giving new wings to profligacy and corruption. My soul is already sick with looking at the things which have been proceeding around me; my hands hang down nerveless and enfeebled; and yet I am the man to be sent to deal with that mighty mass of pride and unrestrained wickedness! Is there the least likelihood of their listening to my voice? . . . And, whatever success might attend my labors when transferred to that distant field, will not He who has so long spared Israel under so many provocations, much more spare them? Why may not matters, then, be allowed to take their course? Or, if the call to repentance must be proclaimed, let it be at least committed to one better prepared for the toils and difficulties of the undertaking.” Discouragement, the devil’s sharpest knife, has stabbed the heart of Jonah and many a preacher of God since, weakening their faith and prodding them into “fleeing from the presence of Jehovah.” Jonah had seen no visible “success” from his ministry and so he was ready to quit. He had seen enough in the past to believe that all his preaching to Nineveh would not bring

the judgment of God upon them but mercy which would be but another failure. His faith was not strong enough yet to accept at all times that the ways of men are not always the ways of God (Isa. 55:8). When Isaiah was warned many years later that his preaching would not be listened to, Isaiah cried out, "How long, O Lord?" The Lord answered Isaiah and all preachers who have ever asked the same question, "Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste . . ." (Isa. 6:9ff). Lack of apparent success, unresponsive listeners, discouragement blinded the eyes of Jonah to the power of God and he went with haste to the city of Joppa, one of Israel's greatest seaports, and paid his fare on a ship bound for Tarshish.

Tarshish is probably Tartessus, in Spain, about 2000 miles west of Palestine, and one of the most western points of all the Phoenician trade. Jonah was fleeing in as opposite a direction from Nineveh as he could go, as Nineveh is almost directly east of Palestine about 500 miles. Joppa is the city where Peter was when God called him to take the Gospel to the Gentile army captain, Cornelius (Acts 10:5ff).

v. 4-5 BUT JEHOVAH SENT OUT A GREAT WIND UPON THE SEA . . . THEN THE MARINERS WERE AFRAID . . . BUT JONAH . . . WAS FAST ASLEEP. His going out from the presence of the Lord did not ensure his escape from the government of the Lord. All the forces of nature are at the command of God, and are pressed into His service when need requires. The ship started on course, but God sent out a wind (cf. Psa. 104:4; Heb. 1:7). The mariners were heathen—they were polytheists—men who worshipped many gods. This tempest was so severe that even these experienced seamen were terrified. When prayer to each one's deity did not avail they hurled their cargo overboard, but even this did not help. The ship was groaning and creaking, tossed about, and in immediate danger of breaking apart. And Jonah was fast asleep! It is hardly justifiable to attribute his ability to sleep through the storm to a perverse stupified, seared conscience. He was probably so exhausted from the long trip from Gath-hepher to Joppa (a distance of some 60-70 miles) and from the psychological wrestling with his soul (which causes physical exhaustion) that he simply fell into a deep sleep which the rocking and rolling of the ship might even have helped, as we ourselves have experienced drowsiness induced by the rolling of a ship under our feet.

v. 6-7 . . . WHAT MEANEST THOU, O SLEEPER? . . . COME, AND LET US CAST LOTS . . . AND THE LOT FELL UPON JONAH.

The "chief-sailor" (shipmaster) remembered the passenger who had boarded at Joppa and probably had been informed that he was asleep down in the hold. Jonah had told them (exactly when, we are not told) that his purpose for buying passage was to flee from the presence of Jehovah (v. 10). So the chief "rope-puller" (the literal word for "sailor") awakened Jonah shouting, over the noise of the storm and in incredulity that he could sleep, "What do you mean sleeping at a time like this? Get up and call upon your God in hope that he will look with favor upon us all that we do not perish." These polytheists had tried calling upon every god represented by every other man on board all to no avail. They had thrown the cargo overboard. Now, they will try Jonah's god. The record does not indicate whether Jonah prayed then or not, but the crew decided to take further action as a last resort. These sailors were at their wits' end when it occurred to them that this violent storm was the expression of the gods' anger with someone on board. Although many of the ancient and contemporary heathenistic concepts of God and natural phenomena are utterly false yet the Bible reveals very plainly that there is a relationship between man's sin and natural calamity (see our comments on Joel and Special Studies on Prophetic Philosophy of History and The Day of Jehovah).

The Arabic word which corresponds to the Hebrew word "lot" is translated "stone, pebble, etc." Stones, pebbles, dice, colored balls, pieces of wood of different lengths, and so on, were used for the "casting of lots." Because men of old believed that the will of the powers which ruled over man's destiny could be known in this way, it was a common practice to cast lots for important decisions. We also read that individual Israelites and the entire nation made use quite frequently of some sort of "lot." The Urim and Thummim, placed into the breastplate fastened to the ephod worn by the high priest in his official duties served to reveal God's will, the exact manner of such revelation being unknown to us (cf. Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21; Josh. 9:14; I Sam. 22:10, 13, 15; 23:6-13; 30:7ff; Neh. 7:65). The Lord commanded the casting of lots only in important matters (Lev. 16:8; Num. 26:53ff; 33:54; 34:13; Josh. 7:13ff; chs. 14-21). Saul's use of the lot (I Sam. 14:37-45) was an act of a king rejected by God (I Sam. 13:13ff), an example illustrating Prov. 13:33, without giving permission to resort to casting the lot. In the New Testament there is no divine command to cast lots and only one example of such being done (Acts 1:26). Neither the deacons (Acts 6:1-6), nor Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to the heathen (Acts 13:1ff), nor the delegation sent to Antioch by the congregation at Jerusalem (Acts

155:22ff), nor the evangelists placed in the newly planted congregations (I Tim. 4:14; Titus 1:5) were chosen by casting lots. We do not think it would be sinful if a congregation or individual Christians resorted to the lot in order to decide certain details in carrying out a work in which they are agreed in general. But the outcome of the lot is not to be regarded as a divine decree. God has made know His will through which "he has granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through a knowledge of Him (Christ)" (II Pet. 1:3ff). God has given us minds to make intelligent decisions and when our decisions are in accord with His revealed word we do not need to cast lots.

In the Old Testament times God revealed His will in "divers portions and divers manners" (Heb. 1:1). In the case of Jonah here it is very evident that God controlled the outcome of the casting of the lots. The lot fell upon Jonah. It was God's way of saying, "Thou art the man!"

v. 8-9 . . . WHAT IS THINE OCCUPATION? AND WHENCE COMEST THOU? . . . I AM A HEBREW; AND I FEAR JEHOVAH . . . They inquired about his occupation, because it might be a disreputable one, and one which excited the wrath of the gods; also about his parentage, and especially about the land and people from which he sprang, in order that they might deal with him according to his position, or influential friendships. They would not want to deal severely with a man whose influence might get them into trouble later.

We cannot but admire the frankness of Jonah's confession of guilt, and his willing surrender to the claims of justice, when he was tempted sorely to take an opposite course. This certainly shows that Jonah's conscience was not seared over. He answers their questions truthfully and at the same time finds an opportunity to bear witness to the One True God. His testimony resembles a great deal that made by the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 14:14-18; 17:22-31).

v. 10 . . . WHAT IS THIS THAT THOU HAST DONE? Now if Jonah's claims were true, it was Jonah's God who had sent the storm. How then could Jonah rebel against such a god? The sailors were amazed by what Jonah had told them. It was as if they said, "Jonah, if your god is the god of heaven, sea, and land, how could you dare disobey him and run away from his command to you?" They also wanted to know why he had involved them in his troubles with his god!

QUIZ

1. Was Jonah foolish enough to think he could hide from God?
2. What does the phrase "... from the presence of Jehovah" mean?
3. Why did Jonah "flee from the presence of Jehovah?"
4. Where is Tarshish?
5. Why was Jonah asleep?
6. Should we try to determine God's will by casting lots?
7. Why did the sailors question Jonah about his occupation, country, etc.?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING FROM GOD— THE CHASTENING OF JEHOVAH

TEXT: 1:11-17

- 11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea grew more and more tempestuous.
- 12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.
- 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get back to the land; but they could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.
- 14 Wherefore they cried unto Jehovah, and said, We beseech thee, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee.
- 15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.
- 16 Then the men feared Jehovah exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah, and made vows.
- 17 And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

QUERIES

- a. How did Jonah know God wanted him thrown into the sea?
- b. Would God hear the prayers of these heathen?
- c. What sort of fish swallowed Jonah?

PARAPHRASE

Then the mariners said, Either you pronounce your own sentence or tell us what your god would have us do to you that this stormy sea may be calmed—we are not going to be responsible for guessing

at what should be done. The sea and the storm grew worse and worse. Then Jonah, knowing from God's revelations of the severity of His justice, said, Throw me out into the sea and then the sea will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm has come because of my rebellion and I deserve to die for it. But the mariners do not at once throw Jonah into the sea and try harder to row the boat to the land and safety but they are not able to do so because the storm grew even more fierce than before. Then they raised a prayerful cry to Jehovah, Jonah's God; O Jehovah, do not make us die for this man's sin—do not hold us responsible for his death. In the sending of the storm and the falling of the lot upon him, you have ordained that we must cast him into the sea—it is your doing and not ours. Then they picked up Jonah and threw him overboard into the raging sea—and the storm stopped suddenly! The seamen were gripped with fear of Jehovah and they immediately offered a sacrifice and made vows to Jehovah. As for Jonah, the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow him; and Jonah was in the belly of this fish for three days and three nights.

SUMMARY

Jonah knows that this raging storm is God's chastening hand against him. He surrenders to God's justice and commits himself to death for his rebellion. As he is cast into the sea, the storm ceases, and he is swallowed by God's providentially prepared fish.

COMMENT

v. 11-12 . . . WHAT SHALL WE DO UNTO THEE . . . TAKE ME UP, AND CAST ME FORTH INTO THE SEA . . . The "lot" having fallen upon Jonah, coupled with Jonah's confession of fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, the men correctly conclude that Jonah must somehow be made to atone for his sin. They have seen enough and Jonah has told them enough to make them very reluctant in presuming to pronounce sentence upon this Hebrew themselves. They know Jonah is a prophet of his God and so they ask him what shall be done.

Jonah's reply is that he should be cast into the raging sea "*because I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.*" K & D say, "He pronounces this sentence, not by virtue of any prophetic inspiration (direct revelation from God), but as a believing Israelite who is well acquainted with the severity of the justice of the holy God, both from the law and from the history of his nation." This

is correct. Every Hebrew would know from such historic incidents as Achan, Uzzah, Korah and others of the severity of the justice of the holy God. Pusey says, "In that he says, *I know*, he marks that he had a revelation; . . ." Whichever be the case, the subsequent calm of the storm shows Jonah's pronouncement to be God's will.

v. 13 NEVERTHELESS THE MEN ROWED HARD TO GET THEM BACK TO THE LAND; Even though Jonah asked the crew to throw him overboard, they were reluctant to do so. Not because of any feeling of mercy towards Jonah, but probably they hesitated to lay hold of a man after whom a god would chase and raise such a storm. This Hebrew was a chosen servant of a most powerful god. They may have reasoned that this powerful god would be more pleased if they could deliver the runaway prophet safe to the land. But row as hard as they might, the storm only increased in fury. This would be a final demonstration to them that only the life of Jonah would satisfy his god.

v. 14-15 . . . WE BESEECH THEE, LET US NOT PERISH FOR THIS MAN'S LIFE, AND LAY NOT UPON US INNOCENT BLOOD . . . SO THEY TOOK UP JONAH, AND CAST HIM FORTH INTO THE SEA These heathen seamen saw that there was no possibility of rowing to land against this storm whose raging increased by the moment, so they began to shout a prayerful cry to Jonah's god. If, as the circumstances seemed to dictate, Jonah must be cast into the sea, they wanted to be sure it was all right with Jonah's god. They did not want to be found in rebellion against such a god as this. If such a god could pursue a reluctant prophet to the middle of the sea and bring on such a storm as this, what might he do to these sailors who had never even prayed to him before? Their prayer contained two requests. First they prayed, Do not let us perish along with and because of this man. Secondly they prayed, Do not hold us guilty of willful murder in the case of this man—we are innocent of his blood. It is all between this man and his god—we are innocent bystanders. We had no control over Jonah—he did what he did of his own free will; we had no control over the falling of the lot upon him and we are not therefore guilty when we throw him overboard. The circumstances leading to the present predicament were not of their own choosing, but, rather, Jonah's god had done as it pleased him. As Calvin suggests, "We see, therefore, that although they had never enjoyed the teaching of the law, they had been so taught by nature, that they knew very well that the blood of man was dear to God, and precious in His sight." All heathen races have enough of the

revelation of God's character through Nature to condemn them under sin (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; 2:11-16). What they now need is God's special revelation in Jesus Christ in the New Testament to save them by His grace! This revelation they can never know unless it be preached to them, and how shall preachers go to them except the churches send them (cf. Rom. 10:13-17).

Having prayed to Jonah's god, the seaman lifted Jonah up and hurled him into the sea. Repentance was beginning to have its way in Jonah's heart. He did not resist. He surrendered to God's will and God's way. And with fearful, awe-inspiring suddenness, the sea ceased its tossing and churning and became calm! It was a miracle! This, among other things, is one of the unique characteristics of the book of Jonah.

- a. Jonah is the only minor prophet in whose career the miraculous plays a prominent role.
- b. Jonah is the only minor prophet whose major activity is on foreign soil.
- c. The only minor prophet who preaches exclusively to a foreign people.
- d. The book is the only latter prophet cast in narrative form.
- e. Jonah is the only Old Testament character represented as taking a trip on the Mediterranean.
- f. Jonah is also the only minor prophet mentioned by Jesus by name.
- g. Jonah is the only Old Testament character likened by the Lord to Himself.
- h. The book stresses universalism more than any other minor prophet.

v. 16-17 . . . THEY OFFERED A SACRIFICE UNTO JEHOVAH, AND MADE VOWS . . . AND JEHOVAH PREPARED A GREAT FISH TO SWALLOW UP JONAH, AND JONAH WAS IN THE BELLY OF THE FISH THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS The sudden calming of the sea proved conclusively to the sailors that the storm had come on Jonah's account and that they had not shed innocent blood by casting him into the sea and that Jonah's god had been pleased with their actions. So they sacrificed. Perhaps they had retained an animal or two on board during the storm for just such an occasion. They not only worshipped Jonah's god then but made vows, presumably to do so at a later date also. Pusey thinks these heathen sailors were converted and became, "perhaps . . . the first preachers among the heathen, and their account of their own wonderful deliverance prepared the way for Jonah's mission to Nineveh." W. L. Banks in his book, "Jonah, The Reluctant Prophet," is skeptical and says, "Fear is a great inventor. Many things are done and many vows are made under stress and

strain which, when conditions become more favorable, are soon forgotten. This characteristic of human nature creates doubt in our minds that these men abandoned their own gods to fully serve Jehovah, the God of Jonah and Israel." On the other hand, remember the conversion of a great heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, who experienced the mighty hand of God (cf. Dan. 4:28-37).

Be that as it may, the significant portion of this section is verse 17 concerning the great fish and the three days and three nights. First, let us take a look at the "fish story." The word in Hebrew is *dag gadol* ("fish, great"). *Dag* may be a fish of any species, including the whale (cf. Gen. 9:2; Num. 11:22; Neh. 13:16). The continuous debate over whether there are fish in the Mediterranean, or any other ocean, that could swallow a man is actually *beside the point* since it is said that the *Lord prepared* the fish. There are certain species of sharks in the Mediterranean capable of swallowing a man. K & D, Lange, Pusey and others have documented evidence that these sharks (*squalus carcharias*) have swallowed horses later found whole, inside them. In the year 1758, according to Muller, "a sailor fell overboard from a frigate in very stormy weather, into the Mediterranean Sea, and was immediately taken into the jaws of a great fish and disappeared. The captain, however, ordered a gun, which was standing on the deck, to be discharged at the shark, and the cannon-ball struck it, so that it vomited up again the sailor that it had swallowed, who was then taken up alive, and very little hurt . . ." The miracle is not so much the fact that there was a fish large enough to swallow a man but in the fact that the fish was at the right place at the right time and in the fact that Jonah survived for "three days and three nights." The event is unequivocally, a miracle. Besides, the issue is not taken to be decided on a basis of whether it is possible or not—but on a basis of did it actually happen or not—are there enough witnesses to the veracity of the book to establish it as a record of an actual event or not! See our Introduction to this book for proof of its historicity and veracity.

Now, let us deal with the phrase, "three days and three nights." Jesus, we know, used this incident to refer to His own death and resurrection as a sign (Matt. 12:40). Jesus' use of this incident form what is alleged to be a contradiction in view of the fact that Jesus, being crucified and buried late on Friday and resurrected on Sunday morning early could not have been in the tomb 72 hours. Lange says, "Three days and three nights is a Hebrew expression, which does not describe, with chronological exactness, the space of seventy-two hours, but corresponds to our mode of designating time by such

phrases as 'the day after to-morrow,' 'the day before yesterday.' (I Sam. 30:1; I Sam. 30:12; Esth. 4:16)." K & D say, "The three days and three nights are not to be regarded as fully three times twenty (four) hours, but are to be interpreted according to Hebrew usage, as signifying that Jonah was vomited up again on the third day after he had been swallowed (cf. Esth. 4:16 with v. 1 and Tob. 3:12, 13)." McGarvey, in "Jesus and Jonah," says, "It was the invariable custom of Hebrew writers to count a fraction of a year, or a day, at the beginning of a series and at the end of it, as each a year, or a day. This can be demonstrated by many examples . . . (I Kings 15:1, 2, 8, 9; 15:25, 28; 15:33; 16:6, 8, for years, and cf. Gen. 42:17-18; Esth. 4:16; 4:1; Acts 10:3, 7, 8, 9, 23, 24, 30; Matt. 27:63, 64 for days)." McGarvey points out that "After three days," and "on the third day," were simply equivalent colloquialisms of the Hebrew people (cf. Mk. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34 with Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Lk. 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 46). If, then, Jesus could at one time say in strict compliance with Jewish usage, that he would rise *after three days*, He could with precisely the same meaning say that He would be in the grave *three days and three nights*. Neither assertion, says Mr. McGarvey, would be true according to modern usage, but both would be strictly true according to the usage of the Hebrews. For more study on this question see *The Gospel of John, Vol. II*, pg. 405-408, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press.

QUIZ

1. Where did Jonah get the idea that he should be cast into the sea?
2. Why didn't the seamen thus throw Jonah into the sea immediately?
3. What finally persuaded the seamen to throw him into the sea?
4. Make a list of the unique characteristics of the book of Jonah.
5. What did the sudden calming of the sea prove to the sailors?
6. Is the account of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish incredible? if not, why not?
7. What is the meaning of the phrase "three days and three nights?"

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING TO GOD— THE PRAYER OF JONAH

TEXT: 2:1-6

- 1 Then Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God out of the fish's belly.
- 2 And he said, I called by reason of mine affliction unto Jehovah, And he answered me; Out of the belly of Sheol cried I, And thou heardest my voice.

- 3 For thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas, And the flood was round about me; All thy waves and thy billows passed over me.
- 4 And I said, I am cast out from before thine eyes; Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.
- 5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; The deep was round about me; The weeds were wrapped about my head.
- 6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed upon me for ever; Yet hast thou brought up my life from the pit, O Jehovah my God.

QUERIES

- a. How could Jonah pray while in the belly of the fish?
- b. Where is "Sheol?"
- c. What does Jonah mean by "the bottoms of the mountains?"

PARAPHRASE

Then Jonah turned his heart and mind to the Lord his God and prayed from his heart in the belly of this great fish. He prayed, It was my affliction which caused me to call upon the Lord, and the Lord heard me! When I was in the embrace of death and the very grave itself I cried unto the Lord and You, O Lord, heard my plea. You cast me down into the very depths of the sea and I was surrounded by the waters. The raging waves and billows you sent to arrest me, Lord, passed over me. Then I realized that I had been banished from Your protecting love and care because of my sin; yet in faith I look forward to the hope that I would once again come into Your presence to worship You in Your holy temple. Yes, I was so sure that the sea was my grave that I despaired even in my soul. I sank beneath the waves and death was very near. The waters closed above me; the seaweed wrapped itself around my head. I sank to the very bottom of the sea where the foundations of the mountains are found. The way back to the earth was barred to me as a door of escape is bolted; yes, O Lord, My God, you rescued my life and brought me up from the very grave itself!

SUMMARY

Jonah's "soul was sorrowful even unto death" (cf. Matt. 26:38) and he "despaired even of life itself" (cf. II Cor. 1:8). He was so close to death that he considered himself actually dead. Yet the Lord delivered him back to life.

COMMENT

According to the destructive "higher critics" of the Old Testament this book we know as the book of Jonah was written by an unknown composer who took legends and mythological fairy-tales and formed it into the present book of Jonah. In the course of time this composition is supposed to have received certain changes, the most notable of which was the inclusion of the "thanksgiving song" (2:3-10) with 2:2 as an introduction to this song. Those who believe that chapter 2 contains a psalm from a different source than the rest of the book of Jonah give the following arguments:

- a. In 2:1 it is said that Jonah prayed, but what actually follows is not a prayer but a psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance. And furthermore, they say, this psalm which suggests its connection with Jonah's experiences. One critic was sure that verse 5 excluded the idea that Jonah was in the fish's belly, because "weeds do not grow in a whale's belly."
- b. The critics say, lastly, that the text reads smoothly *without* this psalm, if 2:10 be placed immediately after 2:1, this proves it is not a part of the original.

Dr. Edward J. Young, in *Introduction To The Old Testament*, pp. 280-282, gives a conclusive defense of the unity of the book of Jonah. We include here his defense of chapter 2:

- a. In the first place, if 2:2-9 be removed from the book of Jonah, the symmetry of the book is most certainly destroyed.
- b. There is no conflict between the statement that Jonah prayed, and a psalm of thanksgiving—for is not thanksgiving of the very essence of prayer??
- c. Of course weeds do not grow in whale's bellies, but this is *not* a psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from a whale's belly, but of deliverance from drowning in the depths of the sea.
- d. The prayer *does not* take place *before* the deliverance when we realize Jonah was saved when he was swallowed by the great fish and that his prayer was made then.
- e. That there is nothing in the psalm which connects it with Jonah's experience is so absurd as to merit no answer!

There are some who explain the prayer as simply a fragmented collection of the book of Psalms interpolated here in Jonah's book by an unknown redactor (editor). Moeller makes the following comparisons:

*Jonah 2**Psalms*

3b	18:7; 120:1
4b	18:6; 30:4
5	42:8
6	31:23; 5:8
7	18:8; 69:2f
8	18:17; 30:4; 103:4
9	142:4; 143:4; 18:7; 5:8
10	88:3; 31:7; 26:7; 50:14, 23; 42:5; 116:17

This is no evidence, whatsoever, for an unknown redactor interpolating excerpts from the book of Psalms into the book of Jonah. It is evidence that Jonah, the prophet of God, was a student of the Hebrew Scriptures and had written the word of God upon his heart and when in extreme circumstances was able to lift himself up by having hidden this Word of God in his heart.

v. 1-2 THEN JONAH PRAYED . . . I CALLED BY REASON OF MINE APPLICATION UNTO JEHOVAH . . . AND HE ANSWERED ME . . . It was because of his affliction that Jonah was led to cry unto God. This is the purpose of chastening. Our Heavenly Father knows that we have need of chastening and of endurance (cf. Heb. 10:32-39; 12:3-11). We should rejoice when it comes (cf. James 1:2-4). It is a school wherein we are trained (cf. II Cor. 1:3-11). It is only when we see our own helplessness and hopelessness that we are able to turn to God (II Cor. 1:8-9). It is when we are *made* weak that we become strong (cf. II Cor. 12:7-10). The salvation of Jonah was the affliction the Lord placed upon him.

Prayer is "an act of worship which covers all the attitudes of the soul in its approach to God." Some think there are certain postures necessary for prayer but the Bible shows by example that men may pray in any posture; kneeling (I Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5); standing (Nehemiah 9:5; Lk. 18:13); bowing down upon the earth with face between the knees (I Kings 18:42); lying in a sick bed and turning the face to the wall (II Kings 20:2); falling prostrate upon the ground (Matt. 26:39); walking along or standing in public (Jn. 11:41-42; 12:28-28). Prayer is more an attitude than it is a formula or a ritual. Jonah could easily have prayed in the belly of the great fish without even opening his mouth. We are to "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17) and the only way this can be done is to be in an attitude of praise, thanksgiving, supplication and dependence upon God at all times whether, silent or aloud, whether lying down, sitting up or standing, wherever we may be.

Sheol is the Hebrew word usually translated in the Old Testament "hell." It is also translated "pit" or "grave." The context helps to determine the best translation. The etymology is uncertain. It may have been derived from a root word meaning "a hollow place." *Sheol* means "underworld," or "nether-world," and is equivalent to *Hades* in the New Testament. In fact, the Septuagint, or Greek Old Testament, uses the word *Hades* in Jonah 2:2. Jonah cried out from the very grave!

v. 3-4 . . . THOU DIDST CAST ME INTO THE DEPTH . . . THE FLOOD WAS ROUND ABOUT ME . . . I AM CAST OUT FROM BEFORE THINE EYES; YET I WILL LOOK AGAIN TOWARD THY HOLY TEMPLE. Jonah was as good as dead! He had resigned himself to it! As far as he was concerned there was no possibility of saving himself. And this is exactly where God wanted him! One of the great paradoxes of God is that we must die before we can live (cf. Jn. 12:20-26).

Jonah had first to realize his estrangement from the Father before he could in all humility and dependent faith turn to the Father for help. Jonah, the "Prodigal," recognized this when he said, "I am cast out from before thine eyes." But then Jonah's heart turned to God's Word for its "great and exceeding precious promises" and in faith cried out that he would, God willing, be restored to the presence of Jehovah.

v. 5-6 THE WATERS COMPASSED ME ABOUT, EVEN TO THE SOUL . . . THE WEEDS WERE WRAPPED ABOUT MY HEAD . . . BOTTOMS OF THE MOUNTAINS . . . EARTH . . . BARS CLOSED UPON ME . . . YET HAST THOU BROUGHT UP MY LIFE FROM THE PIT . . . The weeds are probably the reeds and grass, the vegetation on the very bottom of the sea. Jonah was down as far as one could go! The word translated *bottoms* is from a verb which means to "cut off," or to "shear". It signifies the extreme end. Jonah was at the very bottom of the sea where it seems as if the very foundations of the earth are to be found. That he lived through this experience is indeed a miracle when one considers the short time it takes to drown and the death that can come from extreme pressures of the oceanic depths. The "bars" of the earth had clanged into place and he would not be permitted access there now. Jonah thought of the earth as a walled city with its gate shut and locked with a bar, preventing him from ever again entering. From all outward appearances, and as far as he could determine, he would never again see the earth.

Yet the Lord did bring up his life. He was resurrected from the grave—saved out from death. Thus he became a sign to his generation and a type of the Messiah Who was a Sign to His generation and all

generations. We shall deal more with Jonah's typical relation to the Messiah later.

QUIZ

1. Show that chapter 2 is not an interpolation by an unknown editor.
2. Why is it possible that Jonah's words may be quotations of the Psalms?
3. What purpose does affliction serve?
4. What is Sheol?
5. How extreme was the condition of Jonah in the sea?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING TO GOD— THE PROMISE OF JONAH

TEXT: 2:7-9

- 7 When my soul fainted within me, I remembered Jehovah; And my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple.
- 8 They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy.
- 9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. What does Jonah mean by his "soul fainting within him?"
- b. Who are the "they" of verse 8?
- c. What had Jonah vowed that he felt obligated to pay?

PARAPHRASE

When I found no strength in myself to save myself, I remembered the promises and power of the Lord to save. Then I turned to God in prayer and my earnest prayer went to You, Lord, in Your holy temple. Salvation and deliverance are found only in Jehovah and those who worship false gods have turned their backs on the only hope they have for mercy. As for me, I will worship only You, O God! I will give thanks to you with my lips and by obediently keeping the vows and commitments I have determined in my heart to do. The only salvation is to be found in such a relationship to Jehovah!

SUMMARY

Jonah's experience leaves him with only one place to turn for salvation—the merciful promises of God. To Him Jonah turns pledging himself to keep the vows he made to God.

COMMENT

v. 7 . . . MY SOUL FAINTED WITHIN ME, I REMEMBERED JEHOVAH; . . . As we pointed out earlier, only when a man is convinced that he cannot save himself—that all other ways, systems and helps are insufficient for his needs—only then will he turn to God. It is the authoritative statement of God's Word that all men are lost and condemned in sin unless they believe and obey God's Word. The primary objective of Christians then is to convince men of the authority of God's Word, the Bible. This has to be done by presenting the empirical, historical evidences that the Bible is the Word of God. God, by providential acts upon the course of events, oftentimes brings men and women to know their impotency and insufficiency. Then they are ready to turn to Him, but if they do not accept the Bible as His word, how can they trust in the promises of it? Jonah knew the Lord—he knew the Word of the Lord was true. Now he realizes his insufficiency so he turns back to the promise of the Lord. He prays in his most extreme hour of need and finds the peace which passes understanding. Christians have an even surer "confidence" and are commanded to "come boldly" to the throne of grace (cf. Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-25).

v. 8 THEY THAT REGARD LYING VANITIES FORSAKE THEIR OWN MERCY. Jonah is here referring to the heathen who worship idols. When men refuse to have God in their knowledge they become vain in their reasoning (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; Eph. 2:1ff). The Bible speaks of the gods and idols of man's invention as "vain," (cf. Isa. 40:18-23; 41:21-24; 44:6-20; Acts 17:22-29, etc.). The word translated "lying" means, literally, "a vapor" or "a breath." "Vanity" means empty, void, worthless, useless. The gods men invent are dumb, speechless, powerless, useless, false and deceitful! This is also true of religious, theological, philosophical systems invented by men which do not conform to the revealed will of God in the Bible. When men worship or put their hope in such gods and systems they "cut off their noses to spite their faces." They willingly turn their backs on the only hope of mercy which is found exclusively in Jehovah God. We do not believe Jonah had specific reference to the heathen sailors with whom he had just parted company. The statement of verse 8 forms what is known in Hebrew poetry as an antithetical parallelism. That is, Jonah is stating his praise for Jehovah God in the negative. Jonah's reference to the nothingness of dead idols was calculated to heighten his praise of the living God! In verse 9 he makes the positive statement of his parallelism of praise.

v. 9 . . . SACRIFICE UNTO THEE WITH THE VOICE OF THANKSGIVING . . . PAY THAT WHICH I HAVE VOWED . . . SALVATION IS OF JEHOVAH. The sacrifices with which God is most pleased, offered by Jonah here, are the fruit of lips given to praise Him and a life surrendered, committed to His service, (cf. *Psa.* 51:15-17; *Heb.* 13:15-16). Jonah's vow was not extraordinary or peculiar; it was common for Jews to make vows in time of need, with the expectation of keeping the promise after relief was granted. Vows were never regarded as a religious duty even in the O.T. (cf. *Deut.* 23:22). But when a vow was made God considered it binding (cf. *Deut.* 23:21-23; *Judg.* 11:35; *Eccl.* 5:4; *Psa.* 66:13). Vows *as such* are not required in the N.T. neither are they prohibited. Jesus mentions vows only to condemn the abuse of them (*Matt.* 15:4-6; *Mk.* 7:10-13; *Matt.* 23:16-22). But we most certainly must *surrender* and *commit* our entire being to the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. *Rom.* 12:1-2) and we must *confess with the mouth* that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father (cf. *Rom.* 10:9-10). If this is vowing then vow we must! The Hebrew word for "salvation" is the same word which we translated *Joshua* for it is a contraction of *Jehoshua* which means "Jehovah is salvation." The Greek rendering of *Joshua* is *Jesus*. Jonah now knew by experience that the help he needed could come only from the Lord!

QUIZ

1. What two things are necessary, oftentimes, before men will turn to the Lord?
2. Why are gods and systems of men "vain?"
3. With what type of sacrifices is God most pleased?
4. Should Christians make religious vows?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING TO GOD— THE PRESERVATION OF JONAH

TEXT: 2:10

- 10 And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

QUERIES

- a. How does God communicate with fish?
- b. Where did Jonah land?

PARAPHRASE

And the Lord commanded the fish to spit up Jonah on the beach and the fish obeyed the command of the Lord.

SUMMARY

Jonah is delivered with a second opportunity to carry out his commission from the Lord.

COMMENT

v. 10 . . . JEHOVAH SPAKE UNTO THE FISH, AND IT VOMITED OUT JONAH . . . God has set the whole creation, except man, to function through orderly laws and instincts imposed upon it by His will. Man He created in His own spiritual image with a will free to make moral choice. But God, impells by a certain divine and secret power, as Cyril says, animal and inanimate creation to do His will in a miraculous way when it serves His purpose to do so, (cf. Balaam's ass, Num. 22:21-30; the star of Bethlehem, Matt. 2:2, 9). The land upon which Jonah was "spewed out" is not known for certain but we assume it to be the coast of Palestine or Syria (K & D think it was near Joppa where he boarded the ship to run away).

QUIZ

1. Cite other incidents where God has imposed His will on animals to use them miraculously.
2. How long was Jonah's life preserved by God in the belly of this fish?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING WITH GOD— THE COMMISSION RENEWED

TEXT: 3:1-3

- 1 And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying,
- 2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.
- 3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey.

QUERIES

- a. Why was Jonah now ready to go to Nineveh?
- b. What is the meaning of a ". . . city of three days' journey"?

PARAPHRASE

And God's word came to Jonah a second time. God commanded Jonah, Arise and go to Nineveh. I warn you as I did before, Nineveh is a great metropolis, and you are to preach to its inhabitants the message that I alone shall give you to preach. So the converted Jonah arose and journeyed to Nineveh just as the Lord had commanded him. Now Nineveh was such a large metropolis that it would take a man three days to walk all the way across it.

SUMMARY

God gives Jonah another chance to surrender to His will for the prophet's life. Jonah obeys.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . THE WORD OF JEHOVAH CAME UNTO JONAH THE SECOND TIME . . . Jonah has had a conversion experience! He has been raised to a new life. Physically he had come to the point of no return—except by the power of God he had returned! Spiritually he had died to himself and was raised a new spiritual man. John Noble, the American who spent over ten years in Russian prison camps relates a similar conversion experience in his book, *"I Found God In Soviet Russia."*

Mr. Noble, when first imprisoned, was forced to go nine days without even the slightest morsel of food. Here is what he says: "With my last strength, I struggled onto my knees and earnestly asked the Lord simply to close my eyes this night and release me from my mortal suffering. I said, in effect, 'Dear Lord, I give up; I can't go on any longer. I have no way out but through Thee. Lord, close my eyes and take me to Thee, or if it be Thy will that I must go on, give me the strength to do so, and lend me Thy hand to guide me. My will is broken, Thy will be done. Amen.' I committed my soul entirely to the hands of the Lord. Unworthy of His grace though I was, I felt prepared to die. This time, I had not prayed that my will be done but that the Lord's will be done. I was completely submissive to that will . . . By committing my life to Christ without reservation, I had the amazing experience of being born again of the Spirit . . . It was the most wonderful, miraculous sensation I have ever experienced."

This is somewhat the same experience Jonah describes himself feeling in the belly of the great fish when he had no other place to turn than God. After his experience in the sea, he probably preached like one raised from the dead. Macaulay characterized Demosthenes' oratory as "reason made red hot by passion." Jonah's was "the Word of God

made red hot by conversion of the orator." The prophet had died, as it were, and been brought back to life again. It always requires an experience like Jonah's to make a good preacher!

So God called Jonah again to go to Nineveh. God would not suspend His concern for the souls of that great city just because one of His prophets disobeyed. Furthermore God's mercy and love is long-suffering toward the wayward prophet. God is rich in mercy—the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering . . . leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4) if we will but respond.

V. 2 . . . PREACH UNTO IT THE PREACHING THAT I BID THEE . . .

What was the preaching that God bade Jonah preach? At the first command God told the prophet to "preach against" that wicked city. His task was to preach *against wickedness*. Then we learn from 3:4 that he cried, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." All this, of course, was to the end that the people would repent. This message of repentance still needs to be preached today. Jesus referred to Jonah's preaching comparing it to His message, for His message was, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." Peter on the day of Pentecost preached, "Repent and be immersed, everyone of you . . ." Paul, to the philosophers of Athens preached, ". . . now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent . . ." The reason these men preached repentance was they "preached . . . the preaching" that God bade them preach. This is still good advice for all preachers: preach only that which God commands. Preach His Word, from His Book. We live in an age in which society tends to dictate to the preacher, and social pressures and modern theological trends seek to obscure the propositional revelation of God, His Word, the Bible. Peter wrote, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11). Men who do not declare from the pulpit, "Thus saith the Lord," are not fit to stand in that sacred spot.

V. 3 SO JONAH . . . WENT UNTO NINEVEH . . . AN EXCEEDING GREAT CITY, OF THREE DAYS' JOURNEY . . . This time Jonah went "according to the word of the Lord." There is no running away this time. There is not even any reluctance. He has learned his lesson . . . he has a new heart in the matter . . . he is a new man for God.

Because archeologists have not yet found evidence that Nineveh is as extensive a city as three days journey would seem to indicate, some scholars have accused this book of being historically inaccurate. But must we assume that we know all there is to know about the metropolis of Nineveh and pronounce the book of Jonah irrevocably inaccurate?! There are a number of possible answers to this alleged problem; (a) the statement could refer to the circumference of the city; (b) the

statement could mean that journeying leisurely, stopping to preach at likely spots, it would take three days to journey the length or breadth of the city; (c) or, more likely, it could mean that a journey across "greater" Nineveh, including its "suburbs" (of which we spoke on 1:2), would take three days. The city was "great," not because it impressed God by its size or fame, but because God was concerned with the "many" souls in it which were lost and because it would be an almost overwhelming task, in the eyes of Jonah, to preach against it.

QUIZ

1. How had Jonah changed? What experience had he undergone?
2. Why did God not cast Jonah off after one disobedience?
3. What did God bid Jonah preach? Is there a lesson for us in that?
4. Is the note about a city of "three day's journey" inaccurate?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING WITH GOD— THE CRY FOR REPENTANCE

TEXT: 3:4

- 4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

QUERIES

- a. How far did Jonah go into the city in a day?
- b. Why did Jonah give a time limit of forty days?

PARAPHRASE

When Jonah began his day's journey into the city, he found a suitable place and a fitting opportunity for beginning his preaching, so he began to preach, saying, Forty days from now and this great city of Nineveh will be destroyed by Jehovah God!

SUMMARY

Jonah begins his "doom song" to Nineveh.

v. 4 . . . HE CRIED . . . YET FORTY DAYS, AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN. Jonah did not go into the city one full days' journey and then begin to preach. The text definitely indicates that he started on his first days' journey and then sometime during that beginning of the journey he began to preach. The word "overthrown" is from the

Hebrew word which means literally, "destroyed from the very foundations," and is the same word used in speaking of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Lange says of the forty days: "Forty days are here a round number, meaning after a short time, whose term Jonah measures by the period of the deluge." K & D say: "The respite granted is fixed at forty days, according to the number which, even as early as the flood, was taken as the measure for determining the delaying of visitation of God." What purpose God had in assigning exactly 40 days to Nineveh's period of probation it is idle to speculate. He most certainly would extend His grace long enough for all to hear the message and make response, but His grace would not be extended forever. Furthermore, Nineveh's cup of sin was running over—God's cup of wrath was filled to the brim and about to overflow. Nineveh had had many opportunities to know and repent and now their judgment was fixed and announced—if repentance did not come with haste, the sentence would be executed.

QUIZ

1. How far did Jonah go into the city before he began to preach?
2. Why did God assign the time of 40 days for repentance?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING WITH GOD— THE CONSEQUENCE OF REPENTANCE

TEXT: 3:5-10

- 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.
- 6 And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.
- 7 And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water;
- 8 but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from the violence that is in his hands.
- 9 Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

QUERIES

- a. How would the Ninevites know "God" and "to fast?"
- b. Why have the animals fast also?
- c. Does God change His mind (repent)?

PARAPHRASE

When Jonah preached what God said He was going to do to Nineveh, the people of Nineveh believed God. Then they decreed a certain period of abstinence from eating or drinking called a fast. At this time, as a sign of mourning over their sins, they dressed themselves in harsh, irritating garments of haircloth. Even men of luxury, ease and importance did these things, as well as the people of low estate. News of Jonah's preaching and the penitence of the people reached the king of Assyria and he was moved to repentance. He stepped down from his throne, took off his royal robes and dressed in haircloth and sat in ashes, a further act of humiliation to atone for his sins. And the king made an official proclamation, saying, Let no one, not even the animals, eat or drink any thing during this time of fasting. Let this be a time of national penitence. Let everyone, even the animals, be dressed in robes of haircloth manifesting our repentance, and let everyone cry mighty prayers of supplication for forgiveness unto Jehovah God. Let every man and woman stop doing the violent and wicked things they are doing and turn to doing good. Then it may be that Jehovah God will fulfill His promise to be merciful to those who repent and will withhold His fierce wrath—we do not wish to perish. And God took account of their works of repentance as they stopped their wickedness and turned to doing good and He was pleased. Just as He had already decreed from the beginning, God withheld the wrath He said He was going to visit upon Nineveh. Because they repented, God spared them.

SUMMARY

Nineveh's repentance is nationwide, in high and low places, and is manifest in cessation of wickedness as well as in religious acts.

COMMENT

v. 5 . . . AND THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED GOD; AND THEY PROCLAIMED A FAST . . . It is interesting to note that *belief came before repentance* in this case. In fact, it is a scriptural principle taught through-

out the Bible that belief must always precede repentance. How can a man be motivated to perform works of repentance if he does not believe that God is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (cf. Heb. 11:6). Too much of the time preachers are guilty of expecting nominal Christians to lead lives of repentance when their belief is only nominal! Conviction must come before conversion! Persuasion precedes penitence!

After assent comes action. Jonah uses the same word for "believed" that is used to describe Abraham's faith (Gen. 15:6; cp. Ex. 14:31; II Chron. 20:20). It is a word that signifies saying "yea and amen" to God's Word as it is revealed. A fast was declared by all the people of Nineveh. It was a national penitence. Men of fame and importance and wealth mourned their sins, as well as the poor and unknown. The sackcloth was a prickly, coarse garment woven of goats' hair. It was usually worn over other garments but sometimes next to the skin. It was designed to be irritating and afflicting to the flesh.

v. 6 . . . THE KING OF NINEVEH . . . COVERED HIM WITH SACKCLOTH . . . That the mighty king of the mightiest nation on earth would humble himself so is evidence of the tremendous impact of Jonah's work. Fasting is abstinence from food and drink. It is a form of afflicting or chastening the flesh and in this way chastening the soul. The second external sign of repentance was wearing sackcloth. The third sign was the use of ashes. All of these religious acts go back to the time of the patriarchs (cf. Gen. 37:34; Job. 16:15; II Sam. 13:19). Ashes upon the head signified man's recognition of his own insignificance (cf. Gen. 18:27) and was a sign of self-abasement.

It would be well to discuss here the question, in what respect was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites (Luke 11:30)? Jesus said there, "For even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation." The words in the original Greek are somewhat more expressive than the English version. The Lord and Jonah were not merely equally signs to the people among whom respectively they delivered the message of God, but they were "signs of the same kind (*kathos egeneto Ionas*), according as, or in the same manner as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be . . ."

In what respect, then, was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites? We are inclined to agree with Fairbairn, that "Jonah was not simply as the Lord's prophet to the Ninevites, but as himself a wonder in the earth; being one who had, in a manner, tasted of death, and yet had not seen corruption—who had been sent into Sheol because of sin, and now again returned to witness for righteousness among the living, and show them

the way of salvation." We believe that some way or another the people of Nineveh must have had evidence by eyewitnesses (other than Jonah himself) of Jonah's miraculous experience. Fairbairn, again, "Unquestionably if Jonah, in respect to that portion of his history, was appointed to be a sign to the Ninevites (of God's merciful dealing with him after his repentance); then as such, the thing wrought (the miracle) must have been open at least to their inquiries, and capable of being ascertained, so as to produce its due effect upon their minds." We cannot imagine the people of Nineveh (including the king himself) to be motivated to fasting and cessation of violence and wickedness on the mere cry of impending ruin by a stranger, of whom they were totally ignorant! By all the experiences we have had with motivating human belief and conduct we are compelled to suppose that before these Ninevites would make such a thorough-going response they would have investigated the credibility of Jonah's authoritativeness.

Jonah's being a sign of God's punishment of sin on the one hand and God's forgiveness of the sinner on the other hand peculiarly fitted him to be also a type, symbol, sign to a future generation of his own countrymen in respect to the history of the Messiah's work and kingdom. The Lord refers especially to Jonah's humiliation or punishment (being in Sheol for three days and nights) as being the sign like unto which He Himself would be a sign. Jonah, whom they justly revered as a true prophet, had been sent to the depths of Sheol, but the Ninevites did not stumble at his humiliating experience—they listened and obeyed his message. I will suffer a like humiliating experience. I am going in precisely the opposite direction you desire of the Messiah, Jesus tells the Jews of His generation, and you do not receive Me. This is why the Ninevites would stand up and condemn the Jews of Jesus' generation—they repented at Jonah's preaching. Jesus meant to tell them that they were looking in the wrong direction for an undoubted seal of his divine commission—the circumstances and nature of His Messianic work required that he should bear upon him the signs, not of heavenly splendor and power, but of profound humiliation, even to going down into Hades (death).

But there is another aspect to the sign of Jonah—that of his resurrection. And this is intended to be included in the similarity Jesus makes of Himself and Jonah. He was to become to the world the sign that Jonah was to Nineveh only when He exhibited the power of God at the resurrection.

There is manifestly a great difference between Christ and Jonah, as well as a similarity. Christ did what Jonah could not be said to do—

bore, in His humiliation and death, the burden of all men's guilt and condemnation, and by His resurrection justified all who will believe.

So the miracle of Jonah became a sign to his contemporaries of the wrath of God and the power of God and the love of God. He also typified the ultimate sign of God in Jesus Christ of the wrath of God upon all sin; the power of God over death; the love of God for penitent believers.

v. 7-8 AND HE MADE PROCLAMATION . . . LET NEITHER MAN NOR BEAST . . . TASTE ANY THING . . . LET THEM BE COVERED WITH SACK-CLOTH . . . AND . . . CRY MIGHTILY UNTO GOD . . . TURN EVERY ONE FROM THE VIOLENCE THAT IS IN HIS HANDS. Why were animals involved? To show total repentance. The beasts were property and, as such, were considered a part of the person who owned them. Furthermore, animals live with men and are affected by the deeds of men (cf. our comments on Joel 1:18-20). Causing the animals to participate in the time of mourning and repentance is an ancient Asiatic custom. Herodotus relates that the Persians, when mourning for their general, Masistios, who had fallen in the battle at Platea, shaved off the hair from their horses, and adds, "Thus did the barbarians, in their way, mourn for the deceased Masistios." K & D say, "This custom originated in the idea that there is "a biotic rapport" between man and the larger domestic animals . . . the thought is that just as the animals which live with man are drawn into fellowship with his sin (Rom. 8:19-23), so their sufferings might also help to appease the wrath of God." It is evident that withholding food and water from the animals would cause them to groan and cry out to God. This "biotic rapport" is expressed in Joel 1:18ff. The king's order to put sackcloth on the animals shows how intense his desire for total repentance was. One of the most interesting things about the king's decree is that of everyone "turning from the violence that is in his hands." Their repentance was to be made manifest in ceasing to do evil and learning to do good (cf. Isa. 1:16-17; and our comments on Joel 2:12-13). Repentance means a change of life and a change of attitude.

v. 9-10 WHO KNOWETH WHETHER GOD WILL NOT TURN AND REPENT . . . AND GOD REPENTED. We come now to one of the most perplexing problems of the Bible. Does God repent? The words "who knoweth" are not so much a question as they are an expression of hope. The very fact that Jonah, a prophet of Jehovah God, had come to warn Nineveh was an indication there would be hope if they should repent. God *does not* repent or change His mind! His will is immutable (Heb. 6:17; 12:8; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Psa. 33:11, Prov.

19:21; Isa. 14:24; 46:9-10; I Sam. 5:29; Psa. 110:4; Ezek. 24:14; Zech. 8:14, etc.). On the other hand, many scriptures may be cited which speak of God repenting (cf. Gen. 6:6; Ex. 32:14; II Sam. 24:16; Judg. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11, etc.).

In the first place, often in the O.T. we find human characteristics attributed to God. This is called anthropomorphism which means to describe God after the manner of men. For example, we see with our eyes, and since we know that God sees all things, therefore we say God has eyes. This manner of describing God is a condescension or accommodation to our finite incapability of understanding and describing the infinite. This holds true with regard to God *repenting*. God is not ignorant, weak, fallible. He does not make mistakes which He regrets. He does not change His mind. He knows all things and sees all things from the beginning to the end. But events may take place which appear, from man's viewpoint, to be changes in God's mind. When in Genesis 6:6-7 God is represented as repenting that He had made man, does this mean God suddenly decided He had made a mistake in creating man and now regrets it and wishes He had never done so? No! Whatever God does is right and good. When He made man He saw that it was good. But, being a God of love, He made man with a freedom of choice. What pained the heart of God was that man had made the wrong choice.

Man's freedom of choice brings us to the second point in this consideration. God's moral law is immutable and unchangeable. When man abides within the revealed will of God it is God's immutable decree that whatever happens to him will turn out for his blessing. When man, of his own free choice, insists upon rebelling against the will of God it is God's immutable decree that whatever happens to him shall turn out to his condemnation and judgment. The repentance is up to man—it is man's responsibility, yes, PRIVILEGE, to change, so long as God shall grant him life and opportunity to do so! Man may change, but God does not for He is perfect in all His ways. To say that God does not change is not to say that God does not act!

Fairbairn, in pointing out the pronouncement of God upon sin and then His compassion upon repentance, says, ". . . this manifests Him to be unalterably the same. Conducting his administration in righteousness, he must change his procedure toward men when their relation toward Him becomes changed . . . Abraham knew this principle of the Divine government when he said, "That be far from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that righteous should be as the wicked; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25) Ezekiel also, "Hear now, O Israel! Is not my way equal? are not your

ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquities and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." So when Nineveh repented and changed their minds and deeds, for God to have gone ahead and punish them would have displayed Him as a God indifferent to the very basic distinction between right and wrong.

It is in connection with this and other eternal principles of the Righteous, Holy, Just, Compassionate, Longsuffering God that the Bible says God changes not.

Someone will say, "If God does not change, why pray? Prayer is not to tell God what we need—He already knows that! Prayer is not to change the mind of God—He is unchangeable! Then what is prayer for? Prayer is both an inward and an outward manifestation of a dependent love for God. Prayer is an expression of relationship. That relationship is one of faith, trust, surrender, dependence, adoration, gratitude—of abiding in the will of one's Heavenly Father. This is why prayer is of the utmost necessity! Man, being free to choose which relationship he will have toward God, must choose the relationship of abiding in His will in order to receive the blessings God has already determined to give him (cf. I Jn. 5:14-15). God has anticipated our prayers before the foundation of the world. He has built the answer to our prayers into the very providential government and structure of the universe. He knows that we will pray and that we will pray in a spontaneous manner as a helpless child cries to his mother or father. God has put the universe together on a principle of personal relationships in which He answers prayer. Parents know how to answer petitions of children in anticipation. Even with their limited knowledge parents are able to anticipate the future to a certain degree. For example a mother, caring for the fevered little body of a sick child, provides the medicine, the drink of water and other comforts, before the night comes on, knowing that there will be a cry in the night. When the little one cries out in helpless dependence, the mother has planned the answer.

It is interesting to note in verse 10 that "God saw their works." It was not until the repentance of the Ninevites was manifested through works that their salvation was effected by God! Works are both necessary for salvation and a result of salvation. This is a very plain doctrine of both the Old and New Testaments. Even belief is said to be a "work" by the Lord Himself (cf. Jn. 6:29 and see comments in *The Gospel of John*, Vol. 1, pg. 238, by Paul T. Butler—College Press).

QUIZ

1. What personal response of the Ninevites toward God preceded their repentance?
2. How did the Ninevites manifest their penitent attitude?
3. How was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites?
4. How was Jonah a sign to the Jews of Jesus' day?
5. Why did the king of Nineveh decree that the animals should wear sackcloth?
6. Does God repent? Explain!
7. Why pray?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD—THE DISPLEASURE OF JONAH

TEXT: 4:1-3

- 1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.
- 2 And he prayed unto Jehovah, and said, I pray thee, O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hastened to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil.
- 3 Therefore now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

QUERIES

- a. Why would Jonah be displeased that thousands of people were saved?
- b. Why would the graciousness of God lead him to flee to Tarshish?
- c. Why did he think it better to die than to live?

PARAPHRASE

But God's withholding of His wrath against Nineveh was very displeasing to Jonah. Jonah was grieved and vexed and prayed, saying, Lord! isn't this what I said back in Palestine before I ever came to Nineveh? This is exactly why I ran off toward Tarshish—I knew that You are gracious, merciful, longsuffering, overflowing in Your lovingkindness and that you would forgive and withhold Your punishment. On account of this, O Lord, I beg You, take my life. Because my mission is a failure, I would rather be dead than alive.

SUMMARY

Jonah feels his mission is a failure when Nineveh is not destroyed. He cannot go back and preach to his wicked countrymen with any forcefulness because God is merciful. Jonah would rather be dead.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 . . . IT DISPLEASED JONAH EXCEEDINGLY . . . THEREFORE . . . TAKE . . . MY LIFE FROM ME . . . There are about as many different opinions as to the cause of Jonah's anger as there are commentators. We prefer Professor Fairbairn's evaluation. We just cannot bring ourselves to characterize Jonah as a man so full of hate that his primary vexation is due to a cold-blooded desire to see hundreds of thousands of heathen slain. Fairbairn says, "Jonah was disconcerted and downcast because the example of severity had been withheld, which he thought would operate so beneficially upon the minds of his countrymen and without which he seemed to have no means of attaining the great end and object of his life." Hugh Martin, in *The Prophet Jonah*, says, "In Jonah's judgement the sparing of Nineveh would eclipse the honor of God, destroy the credit of his ministry, and harden the hearts of his countrymen."

The people of Israel in Jonah's day were in a state of terrible degeneracy and profligacy. All the efforts of God, sending them prophets, had thus far failed to bring them to their senses and repentance. So the Lord, before abandoning them finally to their fate, sought once more to move them from their downward plunge, by working upon them through feelings of jealousy and shame while at the same time giving them an example of His mercy and lovingkindness when repentance is shown. For this purpose God did with Nineveh what He did not usually do with other heathen nations. Living in the age of ease, comfort, luxury, during national ascendancy of Jeroboam II when the people were almost totally libertine, Jonah preached in vain month after month, year after year. All the while his own countrymen and neighbors despised everything he was attempting to do on their behalf. It is no wonder Jonah, like Elijah of old, after waiting month after month for some fearful, sudden, decisive turning-point to come in the form of wrath from the Lord, would feel discouraged by the thought of the Lord's mercy. When he thought of this at his first call it would cause him to despair of any thing effectual being accomplished toward bringing his own countrymen to their senses. Then after his own experience in the sea monster's belly, he might stand in the midst of Nineveh and imagine that in forty days he would at last obtain the very example of the wrath of God upon sin

that he hoped would come and that he could take back to Israel and persuade them to turn from their sin.

It requires no stretch of the imagination, then, to see what a disappointment it was for him to see Nineveh spared, and the very weapon snatched from his hand by which he hoped to prevail against the sin of his countrymen. Jonah was not so much concerned with his own reputation nor so full of hate and vengeance that he would have taken some fiendish delight in the slaying of thousands of people; but he loved his own people so intensely, and was so firmly persuaded that an act of severity was required to shake them from their false security he was grieved and frustrated. Instead of having the vantage point of a tremendous illustration of God's wrath upon sin he felt his whole purpose in life had been defeated and there was nothing left for him but to die.

Neither Jonah nor Elijah were right. Both of them were out of harmony with God's will. Both of them misunderstood God's plan and had only a partial view of His purposes and therefore made hasty, carnal judgements as to how God should govern. The lesson for us is that God's way is still the best; for He sees the end from the beginning, and directs all with infinite skill and unerring wisdom. If we *could* alter the plan of God it would not be for the better but for the worse. We must take the attitude of Habakkuk who, when he could not understand why God would use a heathen nation to punish the covenant people, said, "I will take my stand to watch, and station myself on the tower, and look forth to see what he will say to me . . . behold . . . the righteous shall live by faith."

QUIZ

1. Why do you think Jonah was displeased with God's mercy on Nineveh?
2. What other prophet had the same concept of how God should govern?
3. What lesson should we learn from this?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD—THE DEMONSTRATION BY JEHOVAH

TEXT: 4:4-10

- 4 And Jehovah said, Doest thou well to be angry?
- 5 Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.

- 6 And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to deliver him from his evil case. So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd.
- 7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered.
- 8 And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.
- 9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.
- 10 And Jehovah said, Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

QUERIES

- a. Why does God ask Jonah twice if he does well to be angry?
- b. What kind of "booth" did Jonah prepare for himself and why?
- c. What is the lesson to be learned from the gourd?

PARAPHRASE

And God said to Jonah, Are you right in being grieved because I have spared Nineveh? But Jonah went out and built a little lean-to on the east side of the city and camped under its shade. He wanted to wait to see if God would not bring judgement upon Nineveh after all. And when the leaves of the little shelter withered in the heat, the Lord prepared a gourd vine to grow up quickly and spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head to shade him. Jonah was very happy that the vine was there to shade him from the hot sun. God also prepared a worm! And the next morning the worm killed the gourd vine and it withered and dried up and gave shade to Jonah no longer. So when the sun began to bear down in the heat of the day God also caused a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah and he grew so hot he became very weak to the point of fainting and actually wished to die. He said, Death is better than this! But God said again to Jonah, Are you right in being so grieved over the withering of the gourd? Jonah replied, Yes, I am right in being grieved enough to die. And God said, You are grieved in your soul over the gourd vine because you had need of it in the direst way. You cannot claim the gourd as your right because you did not create it, or plant it, or cultivate it. And the gourd vine is, at best, only a plant which has withered and died.

JONAH
SUMMARY

Jonah succumbs to discouragement. God gives him an object lesson. God is about to show Jonah how inconsistent his thinking is.

COMMENT

v. 4-5 . . . DOEST THOU WELL TO BE ANGRY? . . . JONAH WENT OUT OF THE CITY . . . TILL HE MIGHT SEE WHAT WOULD BECOME OF THE CITY. God asks, Are you certain that your concept of how I should deal with the Ninevites is correct? are you certain that My dealing with them as I have is grievous? It would seem that God is giving Jonah opportunity to *think*, perhaps to pray, and learn a new lesson about God's purposes and ways. The Lord plants the idea in Jonah's heart that he may not be doing well in being grieved.

But Jonah could not yet believe that the Ninevites would be allowed to resume their former course of peace and prosperity without a strong demonstration of God's wrath. And, as we have said before, this lingering concept in the mind of Jonah was not due to any maliciousness or bloodthirstiness. Even when he knew the people had repented he might have considered some form of punishment still perfectly compatible with God's righteousness and justice. Many have still felt the consequences of their sins long after they have repented (cf. David, Moses, etc.). After all, Jonah took his revelation of God's nature from the Old Testament and not from the New. And there is a difference! Fairbairn says, "These considerations appear to me perfectly sufficient to account for a state of mind in Jonah such as might induce him, without any disobedience to the will of God, so far as that had yet been made known to him, to go and erect a booth at some distance from the city, where he might wait in anxious expectation to see what would become of it." All of Jonah's knowledge of how God dealt with sin, especially heathen wickedness, was learned from the O. T. What Jonah needed still to learn, and what God had not yet shown him, was the largeness of the mercy to be extended to Nineveh—that it amounted to an *entire remission* of the threatened penalty. To teach him this, to show him it was reasonable and just on the part of God, yea, even of urgent necessity in the best interests of those whom Jonah loved so dearly, his own countrymen, Jonah's temporary shelter from the burning sun was turned into a school of discipline.

This "booth" which Jonah built was a temporary, small, lean-to affair, built usually of palm leaves, or at other times with any type of leafy tree branch, which would afford shade from the searing desert sun.

v. 6-8 . . . JEHOVAH PREPARED A GOURD . . . JONAH WAS EXCEEDING GLAD . . . BUT GOD PREPARED A WORM . . . AND IT SMOTE THE GOURD, THAT IT WITHERED . . . GOD PREPARED A SULTRY EAST WIND . . . JONAH . . . FAINTED, AND REQUESTED . . . THAT HE MIGHT DIE . . . God knows exactly how to correct Jonah's mistaken concept of the Divine purpose for Nineveh's salvation. Jonah needed something that would graphically turn his thoughts from the channel they were in to ideas of God's purpose which had never entered his imagination. For this purpose God permitted him to go construct his frail booth near the city and to experience there for a time inconvenience and discomfort. Then suddenly God brought over Jonah, without any exertion on the part of Jonah at all, the shadow of a broad foliage by the growth of the gourd vine. Then, just as suddenly, God made him feel again, in an even more intense way, the scorching sun and parching wind, by causing a worm to destroy the gourd vine. Jonah suffered a mild sunstroke and fainted from the exposure and said he would have found death itself a happy release.

v. 9-10 . . . DOEST THOU WELL TO BE ANGRY FOR THE GOURD? . . . THOU HAST REGARD FOR THE GOURD, FOR WHICH THOU HAST NOT LABORED . . . God is leading him slowly but surely to an ever higher plan concerning the Divine behavior. In other circumstances it would have been a matter of little significance to Jonah what happened to the gourd vine. Situated as he was, however, depending for his comfort, and in a sense, also for his life on its ample foliage, its sudden destruction necessarily came upon him as a terrible tragedy—a calamity. This is exactly the relationship God would have him consider concerning Nineveh. Nineveh, a city that feared the name and obeyed the voice of God, God had need of it in this time of extreme necessity in the case of Israel. God's cause would suffer by its annihilation.

If there had been any hope of the people in Israel being still brought permanently to repentance by some great example of the wrath of God, God would have known it and brought it to pass. But this hope could no longer be entertained. Everything of this sort had already been tried with Israel and still their hearts waxed hard and cold.

QUIZ

1. Why did God allow Jonah to leave the city and sit and wait?
2. Why might Jonah still cling to the hope that the city would be destroyed?
3. What was God's purpose in shading Jonah with a gourd vine and then taking it away?

GOD'S MESSENGER RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD—THE DECLARATION OF JEHOVAH

TEXT: 4:11

11 and should I not have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

QUERIES

- a. Why would God want to have regard for wicked Nineveh?
- b. What is the meaning, "cannot discern between right and left hand?"
- c. Why mention cattle?

PARAPHRASE

And God said, Should I not then be just as concerned for the preservation of Nineveh as you were for the gourd vine. You needed the vine and I have urgent need for Nineveh to be preserved. In addition to this there are more than 120,000 innocent children and dumb animals abiding in that city.

SUMMARY

God reveals to Jonah His purpose in sparing Nineveh.

COMMENT

v. 11 . . . SHOULD I NOT HAVE REGARD FOR NINEVEH . . . God must use other means than a demonstration of His wrath upon Nineveh if He is to bring any heartfelt repentance to the calloused Israelites of Jeroboam's day. *He must call their jealousy into action*, (cf. comments on 1:1-2). God seeks to arouse Israel, by the example of this heathen nation spared due to repentance, to the startling consideration that the favor of God was bestowed on those of every race who work righteousness—and *of the possibility* that the kingdom of heaven might be transplanted to a people more spiritually prepared to receive it! Yes, the Lord at this time peculiarly had *need* of Nineveh in its penitent state; "the cause of righteousness in the earth could ill afford to spare so singular a witness to the truth; the spiritual good of Israel itself in particular required it."

MESSENGER RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD

This singular demonstration of God's mercy and forgiveness and salvation would also furnish hope for the faithful remnant later in captivity. This concept which the Lord sought to impress even on Jonah personally in his own experience in the sea, and which was taught again in the experience of the gourd, provided for all the faithful among the future exiles a sure ground of consolation and hope. There would be hope for them even in what might seem to be despair and grief.

And so ends this remarkable history of a remarkable prophet of God. There are some significant lessons to be learned from this account.

1. Beware of letting our ideas of the results of God's work interfere with carrying out His present will for our lives.
2. Beware lest we belittle what can be or what is accomplished for God by our ideas of the significance or insignificance of the place of service.
3. Wherever and whenever God is pleased to manifest His grace and goodness it is our obligation and privilege to acknowledge and rejoice in that manifestation.
4. God's ways are not our ways. God does not change; man must change!

QUIZ

1. What was the ultimate purpose in sparing Nineveh?
2. What hope would the sparing of Nineveh give to the Israelites of the captivity?
3. How did God compare Jonah's grief for the gourd to His concern for Nineveh?

JONAH
EXAMINATION

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Why would God send a prophet of Israel to a great heathen city like Nineveh?
2. Do you think the literal meaning of Jonah's name, "dove," has any symbolical significance concerning his mission?
3. Is there sufficient evidence to establish the historicity of the experience of Jonah? What is the evidence?

ASSOCIATIONS

Associate the persons or events of column one with the correct person or event of column two.

1	2
Jeroboam II	capital of Assyria
Jonah	where Jonah was headed
Nineveh	coastal city of Palestine
Gath-hepher	the Pit
Tarshish	Jonah's home town
Joppa	king of Israel
Amittai	dove
Sheol	father of Jonah

MEMORIZATIONS

"Arise, go to _____, that great city, and _____ against it; for their _____ is come up before me."

"And God saw their _____, that they turned from their _____ way; and God _____ of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not."

CONTEMPLATIONS

1. Why would God be concerned with the wickedness of Nineveh?
2. Did Jonah really think he could get away from Jehovah by going to Tarshish?
3. Why did God cause the storm?
4. Were the heathen sailors really converted to God?
5. Is it possible for a man to survive being swallowed by a fish?
6. How did the fish transport Jonah to Nineveh, an inland city?
7. Why did Jonah attempt to run away? How did he explain it himself?
8. Why was Jonah angry when God did not destroy Nineveh?
10. How is Jonah a type of Christ?

SERMON FROM JONAH

“IN EVERY NATION”

SERMON ON JONAH

“Truly I perceive that God shows not partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” Acts 10:34-35

INTRODUCTION

I. WHO WAS JONAH?

- A. His name means, literally, “a dove.” He preached God’s peace to the Ninevites
- B. Jonah was a citizen of the northern kingdom, Israel. He lived in Gath-heper in the days of Jeroboam II
- C. Israel was, in spite of its affluence, corrupt and decadent and ripe for the judgment of God
- D. Jonah was a prophet of God; sent by God to preach to Israel (II Kings 14:25); a contemporary perhaps of Elisha, Joel and Amos

II. WHAT WAS JONAH’S MISSION?

- A. Jonah was, we believe, to preach God’s judgment upon the wickedness of Nineveh, and upon Nineveh’s repentance and God’s salvation, they became an object lesson for Israel, that, “. . . in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.”
- B. THIS IS THE MESSAGE JONAH BRINGS TO US TODAY
 - 1. God is no respecter of person
 - 2. He hates and will punish wickedness wherever it is found
 - 3. He loves and will reward righteousness wherever it is found
 - 4. This three-fold message is to be delivered to the whole world through preachers
- C. Jonah’s experience became a prophetic type of the work of the Messiah in suffering death for sin—raised from the dead to bring salvation to the world

III. JONAH’S EXPERIENCE HAS ANOTHER LESSON FOR US

- A. God says “Go!”
- B. Man says “No!”
- C. The World, His Word can know

JONAH
DISCUSSION

I. GOD SAYS, "GO!"

A. Through His word (Revealed Commands)

1. God's word came to Jonah, how, we know not, probably directly
 - a. God's word had come to the Jews as a nation, earlier, that they were to be witnesses to the nations round about them of the one true God (cf. Deut. 26:19; 28:1, 9, 10)
 - b. But in Jonah's day the Israelites were so much like their heathen neighbors God commanded Jonah to go bring the nations to repentance as a lesson for Israel
 - c. Jonah was commanded to go into urban evangelism in a foreign country! Nineveh was about the size of St. Louis (600,000 pop.; approx. 18 sq. miles in size); its inhabitants noted for their cruelty against enemies, culturally sophisticated.
 - d. There was no doubt in Jonah's mind that God had called him. It was not an emotional experience Jonah had to wonder about.
 - e. GOD DID NOT LEAVE ANY PROPHET IN DOUBT WHEN HE CALLED THEM THROUGH HIS WORD! GOD'S COMMAND TO "GO" IS UNEQUIVOCALLY PLAIN AND IMPERATIVE!
2. God's word comes to every Christian whose heart is sensitive and fully surrendered to His will, saying, "Go!"
 - a. "Go . . . and make disciples of all nations . . ." Matt. 28:19-20
 - b. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," Mk. 16:16 ff
 - c. ". . . what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. 2:2
 - d. GOD'S COMMAND TO "GO" IS UNEQUIVOCALLY PLAIN AND IMPERATIVE IN THE N.T. Men today are called through the gospel . . . God does not single out individuals today and speak to them audibly as He did to Moses, Isaiah, etc. BUT ALL CHRISTIANS ARE ENTREATED TO "GO" SOMEWHERE WITH THE GOSPEL!

B. God says, "Go" Through His Ways

1. God said "Go" to Jonah through the storm, the testimony of the heathen sailors, the 3 days and nights in the belly of the great fish.

SERMON FROM JONAH

2. Sometimes God does not get our attention until He hits us between the eyes with the proverbial two-by-four of trial and tribulation.
 3. It was Paul's blindness on the Damascus road that called him to hear God's voice; it was Paul despairing of life that made him trust in God (II Cor. 1:3-11), and his thorn in the flesh that kept him from boasting (II Cor. 12:7-10).
 4. Alexander Campbell and other great Restoration preachers were called by God through trying experiences
 5. Wes Tuttle and wife directed to God's call to evangelize through tragedy in the family; Roy Rogers and his wife
 6. When such a call comes through providential working of God in our lives, whether we answer correctly or not depends upon whether we know, understand and are willing to acknowledge that God does call in such a way!
 7. Some recruits to specialized service find many trials in their way before they finally get to the place they have chosen to serve . . . BUT DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED, THIS IS GOD CALLING YOU IN HIS OWN WAY!
- C. God says, "Go" Through His Whispers to your Conscience
1. In a report by W. A. Cunningham, Eastern Christian College a few years ago, listing a report from every country in the world, there are 35 countries which would welcome U.S. missionaries, many of them where no missionaries have yet gone!
 2. The longer we wait the more difficult it will be. Did you know that 19 of every 20 who become Christians do so before they reach the age of 25; after 55, only one in 300,000! YOUTH MUST BE WON!
 3. Did you know 40 million people die each year—HOW MANY ARE LOST TO AN ETERNAL HELL?! Will God require their blood at your hands? 80 people die every 60 seconds! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO SAVE THEM! ABOUT ONE HALF OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION HAVE NEVER HEARD OF JESUS!
 4. 1,000,000 Christians serve 100,000 churches of the 180,000,000 people in the U.S.; 27,000 missionaries work among the other 2.5 billion in the world; 91% of the population of the world has only 6% of the full-time workers for the Lord!

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5. WHAT DOES YOUR CONSCIENCE TELL YOU NOW! LISTEN TO IT! IT IS SAYING, "WOE IS ME IF I PREACH NOT THE GOSPEL!"

II. MEN SAY, "NO!"

A. Men say, "Send someone else—not me!" Whether Jonah said, "Why me?" or not, we can only guess.

1. But whom else would God have sent in Jonah's day—Jero-boam II? the heathen sailors? THERE WAS ONLY ONE MAN FOR THE JOB, JONAH! JONAH PUT HIMSELF ON GOD'S LIST OF AVAILABLES WHEN HE ACCEPTED THE LORD AS HIS SAVIOUR!
2. Who else will God send today? The bartender? other non-Christians? nominal, worldly-minded Christians? JUST AS HE ASKED IN ISAIAH'S DAY, GOD ASKS TODAY, WHOM SHALL I SEND, WHO WILL GO FOR ME? The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are so few!
3. Even so, my friend, THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN FOR THE JOB, YOU! YOU PUT YOURSELF ON GOD'S AVAILABILITY LIST WHEN YOU ACCEPTED HIS SON AS YOUR LORD! Do not say, "Send someone else," YOU DECIDED TO "GO" FOR HIM WHEN YOU CAME UNTO HIM!
4. Young people who have had all the opportunities of Chris-tain training in their homes are the ones who cannot say, "Send someone else!"
5. Parents, whose children want to go, dare not say, "Send someone else."

B. Men say, "Don't send me there, send me somewhere else!" One thing is certain about Jonah, he did not want to go to Nineveh!

1. But God knew best—God knew Jonah and God knew Nineveh, and God knew that Nineveh would repent at the preaching of Jonah
2. It was a case of "running away from God."
3. Men, even Christian men, want to do everything else under the sun, but preach the gospel.
4. Men, even Christian men, want to go everywhere except the place they are best suited for and where God is evi-dently leading them
5. Why? Selfishness! Laziness! MANY WILL NEVER HEAR THE GOSPEL BECAUSE MEN DECIDE AGAINST GOING TO

SERMON FROM JONAH

THEM WHEN THE TASK APPEARS TOO DIFFICULT . . . THERE ARE NO CONVENIENCES THERE . . . THE PEOPLE WOULD BE UNRECEPTIVE

6. Peter said, "Don't send me to the Gentiles," but God sent him and a great victory was won!
 7. Paul said, "Don't send me to *Troas*," but God did and a great victory was won!
 8. God sent St. Patrick to Ireland as a slave-boy to prepare him for later missionary work there
 9. Christ said "Don't send me to the Cross," but God did, and your salvation was wrought
- C. Men say, "Don't send me now, send me some other time" Perhaps Jonah rationalized with himself, "If God would only wait, I would go to Nineveh some day!" BUT GOD SAID, NOW!
1. Moses said, "Wait, God, I'm not eloquent" But God said, NOW, MOSES!
 2. Jeremiah said, "Wait, God, I am but a youth," But God said, NOW, JEREMIAH!
 3. Esther said, "Wait, God, for a more opportuune time," But God said, NOW, ESTHER!
 4. GOD'S TIME IS ALWAYS NOW . . . GOD'S DAY IS ALWAYS TODAY
 5. This does not mean that we should forget preparation to preach the gospel . . . it does mean that we must go somewhere, everywhere opportunity permits, even while preparing for some particular field. WE CAN PREPARE AS WE GO AND WE CAN GO AS WE PREPARE!
 6. God will not wait—if you resist and refuse His call, you will be lost, like king Saul, or like Baalam, or the rich young ruler.

SAY "NO!" TO THE WORLD; SAY "NO!" TO SATAN'S ENTICING WHISPERS; SAY "NO!" TO SELF; BUT FOR THE SAKE OF MILLIONS OF LOST SOULS, DON'T SAY "NO!" TO GOD!

III. THE WORLD, HIS WORD CAN KNOW

A. Many will be Receptive:

1. Jonah probably reasoned on the docks of Joppa: "I have preached for years in Israel with no success in getting my own countrymen to repent, how does God expect me to reach foreigners!"

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2. But Jonah was in for a big surprise! The whole city received his message from the king down to the lowliest slave.
3. Why? Probably two reasons: First, they were probably thoroughly disillusioned with their own sinful lives and ready for a message of hope; second, there was evidence in the person of Jonah himself of the truth of his message!
4. Thousands upon thousands received the gospel in the first century for the same two basic reasons
5. Thousands upon thousands are ready to receive the gospel today, I am convinced, because of the first reason, but they have not accepted it yet, because it has not yet been *evidentially* presented to them. Jonah did not play upon the emotions of the Ninevites—he appealed to the evidences available! Jonah knew why he believed and was able to tell the Ninevites why they should believe!
6. Campus ministers are finding many disillusioned young people who want something solid, true, abiding, factual. This has been the experience of Roy Weece at University of Missouri; of Alan Bemo with Chinese students on Taiwan; of Gordon Souder in Canada—all over the world.
7. There is a constant barrage of requests coming to Ozark Bible College, and of other Bible Colleges I'm sure, for trained young people, both men and women, to go to the far-flung limits of our globe. Requests from other missionaries; requests from the peoples of other nations.

B. Many will Repent

1. “. . . the king arose from his throne, removed his robe, and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes . . .” and decreed that the whole city should do likewise
2. “When God saw . . . how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it.”
3. Almost whole cities repented when Paul preached
4. Millions were saved from the apostate Roman church by the courageous preaching of Martin Luther
5. Millions have been brought back to Biblical Christianity as a result of the faithful, sacrificial work of Restoration pioneers
6. Thousands have been won to Christ just recently by dedicated young people; Joe Garman, graduate of OBC in

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Korean evangelistic crusades won thousands to Christ; the Reggie Thomas team in Africa including 4 OBC students) won thousands to Christ in just the summer months of school vacation.

7. Ted Hurlburt, in a very candid article about Bible College training, entitled "What About the Preacher Shortage?" Christian Standard, Feb. 3, 1968, writes: "Young people, the fields are white unto the harvest! The message of Christ will still be valid after the last 'hippie' has had his long hair cut and after any other new fad has lost its momentary popularity . . . Bible Colleges need more students—students longing to have their convictions of a saving Christ developed so as to effectively communicate His salvation to a dead, doomed, and damned world."

8. The Lord says to you as he did to Paul at Corinth: "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent, for I am with you, . . . for I have many people in this city." Acts 18:9-10

9. Yes, even the intelligentsia, the sophisticated-set, need the gospel and are willing to hear and repent

Joplin Globe, Dec. 2, 1967, "Pastor Preaches Gospel to Moonport Congregation." "After extensive intimate talks with members of his 'moonport' congregation . . . he concluded, 'from what they told me that they needed basic, simple' exposition of Christian doctrine. While they were highly educated in electronics, etc., . . . they were 'biblically and theologically illiterate.' They wanted help in understanding the 'person and nature of God' and in relating 'His teachings and purpose to their own daily lives . . .' After five years at the Cocoa Beach church . . . he says he has found that the gist of his message needs to be the straight 'good news of the gospel.' "

C. Many will reject

1. The Bible is a book of history. It is candid, frank, accurate and realistic. It is not a philosophical-idealistic book of theories
2. Nineveh repented, but Jonah's own people, Israel, went stupidly, blindly, rebelliously on its merry way to destruction.
3. This is what discouraged Jonah. Jonah was not a sadistic cold-blooded, monster whose consuming passion was to see innocent women and children slain by God. Fairbairn says, "Jonah was downcast because the example of severity had

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been withheld, which he thought would operate so beneficially upon the minds of his countrymen and without which he seemed to have no means to attaining the great end and object of his life."

All of God's efforts to bring Israel had failed thus far. Now God sought once more to move them from their downward plunge by working upon them through jealousy and shame while at the same time giving them an example of His mercy and love when repentance is shown. Jonah, like Elijah of old, was waiting for God to speak out of a whirlwind or with fire, but God spoke in a still small voice of forgiveness. The Jews expected Jesus to speak with judgment upon the Gentiles if He were the Messiah . . .

PREACHERS HAVE A REPUTATION OF THINKING THEY KNOW BETTER HOW TO DO THINGS THAN GOD DOES!

4. So God teaches Jonah a lesson with the gourd. Jonah was distressed when it died because he needed it for shade. So, God needed to save Nineveh as an example of what He would do for Israel if she repented. God's cause would suffer if Nineveh should be destroyed. **SO, IN SPITE OF ALL MAN CAN DO AND IN SPITE OF ALL GOD DOES, MANY WILL REJECT.** "Many are called, but few are chosen."
5. Isaiah was told, when he had asked, "How long, O Lord," "Until cities lie waste and without inhabitant . . ." Very few paid attention to Isaiah.
6. Jeremiah was so discouraged, he wished he had never been born, but there was a fire in his bones and he could not quit.
7. Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Peter and Paul . . . all had their moments of discouragement, their failures, their enemies, **BUT THEIR VICTORIES FAR OUTWEIGHED THEIR DEFEATS, AND THEY KNEW THAT ULTIMATE VICTORY WAS ASSURED!** They may lose a battle here and there but the war would be won!
8. Bill Junkins, former President of Midwest Christian College, writing about having left the ministry from discouragement and returning to the ministry wrote, "Love your calling as a ministry sent to you by the Lord himself. It is the highest calling on earth. It is an invitation and challenge to walk with God where God walked when he visited our planet as our loving, serving, suffering Savior."

SERMON FROM JONAH

CONCLUSION

I. JONAH, THE RELUCTANT PROPHET, TEACHES US:

- A. God Says, "Go!"
- B. Men say, "No!"
- C. The World, His Word Can Know

II. LET THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAK TO YOU THROUGH THESE WORDS OF HIS:

- A. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14)
- B. "For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." (I Cor. 1:21)
- C. "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men . . . For the love of Christ constrains us . . . So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us . . ." (II Cor. 5:11, 14, 20)

MY FRIEND, THERE SIMPLY IS NO WAY FOR THE BILLIONS DOOMED TO AN ETERNAL HELL TO KNOW GOD AND BE SAVED, EXCEPT YOU BECOME A PREACHER AND TELL AS MANY AS YOU CAN!

THE WHITE MAN'S BOOK OF HEAVEN

In the fall of 1832 five Indians traveled to St. Louis—in search of the White Man's Book of Heaven. They had heard about it from explorers and traders. It took them seven months to reach their destination.

When they arrived they were received by General Clark and entertained for the winter. However, two others died during the winter months, leaving only two of the original five.

In the spring, when they were ready to leave, General Clark gave them a banquet. During the banquet one of them gave a farewell address. Finally, the two survivors started back to their tribe, but one perished on the way and only one of the five ever saw his tribe again. Following is the touching speech that was made at the banquet by the Indian who had traveled so far in search of the White Man's Book of Heaven, *only to be shown images and burning candles and never once a copy of the Bible.*

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"I came to you over the trail of many moons, from the setting sun. You were the friends of my fathers, who have all gone the long way. I came with an eye partly open for my people who sit in darkness. I go back blind to my blind people.

"I made my way to you with strong arms through many enemies and strange lands that I might carry much back to them. I go with both arms broken and empty. Two fathers came with us. They were the braves of many winters and wars. We leave them asleep here by your great water and wigwams.

"My people sent me for 'The White Man's Book of Heaven.' You took me to where they worship the great Spirit with candles, but the Book was not there. You showed me the images of the Great Spirit and the pictures of the good lands beyond, but the Book was not among them to tell us the way.

"I am going back to my people in the dark land. You make my feet heavy with gifts, and my moccasins will grow old with carrying them, and yet the Book is not among them. When I tell my poor, blind people, after the more snow, in the Big Council that I did not bring the Book, no word will be spoken by our old men or by our young braves. One by one they will rise up and go out in darkness and they will go a long path to other hunting grounds. No white man will go with them and no White Man's Book of Heaven will make the way plain. I have no more words."

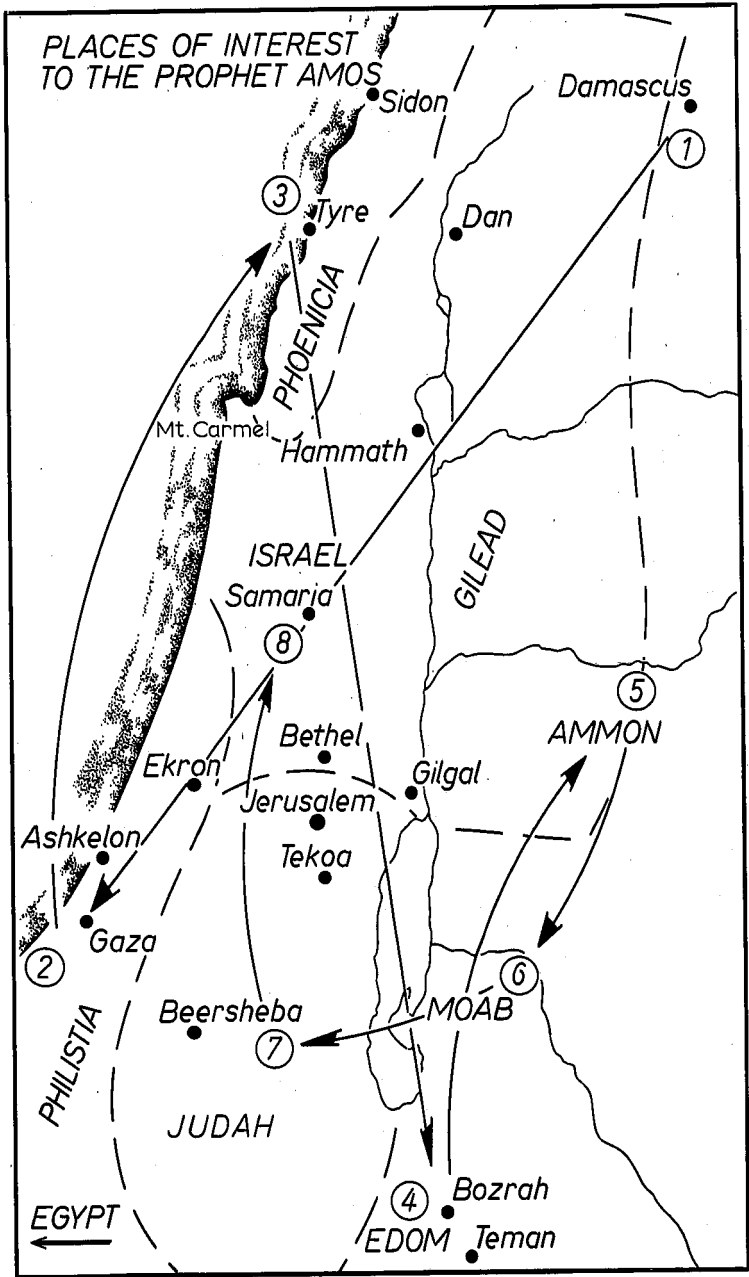
What a fearful catastrophe! What a terrible denunciation! Would to God there had been a Christian with a copy of the Bible, who could have met the need of the Indians, sent as they were by the Spirit of God. What, I wonder, will the people of St. Louis of that day have to say when they stand before God?

But now may God speak to our hearts, lest we, too, fail Him. May we do what we can to give The Book of Heaven to those who do not have it. Remember, a thousand tribes still wait in darkness and midnight gloom for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. How will we excuse ourselves if we, too, fail Him in this dark day and hour?



"But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel . . . and they shall afflict you" (Amos 6: 14). With the Assyrian campaigns into the west under their king, Shalmaneser III (859-824 B. C.)—whose commanding figure we see here—disaster loomed ahead for Israel and Judah. "I set out from Nineveh and crossed the Tigris" is how this monarch begins his account of his first campaign against Damascus. In the fighting which led up to the Battle of Karkar in 853 B. C. King Ahab of Israel, who took part in the Syrian coalition against Assyria, had his first encounter with Assyrian troops.

MINOR PROPHETS



AMOS

INTRODUCTION

Author: The name Amos, *hamos*, means literally, *Bearer, Burden* or *Heavy*. This may indeed be providential inasmuch as Amos bore a heavy burden for the Lord. Amos was a herdsman of an ugly, stunted, fine-wooled sheep called *noked* in Hebrew, but highly esteemed on account of their wool. He was a farmer. Certain seasons out of the year he migrated either into the coastal plain or to the Jordan valley to tend sycamore trees which in Palestine produce a sort of fruit that must be pierced to ripen. He lived in or near Tekoa. Tekoa is in a desolate region, too dry in the summer for raising grain. It is 2700 feet above sea level, and only 18 miles from that great "hole" known as the Dead Sea basin. Tekoa was a town which belonged to the tribe of Judah (cf. II Sam. 14:2; II Chron. 11:6; 20:20; Jer. 6:1). He would have lived a kind of life in practically the same region as the young David. Close to nature, out breathing the fresh clean air of the desert, where wild beasts lurked, often studying the wonders of God's creation by day and the stars by night. His occupation naturally carried him to the wool markets of the northern cities. There he would become acquainted with the life and religion of the people of his day. G. L. Robinson, in *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, says, ". . . he was both the product and representative of his age. Stern, fearless, self-contained, a man of granite-make, he possessed a powerful well-knit mind and a vivid imagination, and is one of the most arresting figures ever on the stage of Hebrew history." One only has to become familiar with Amos' writing to agree with that evaluation. Because his father's name is nowhere mentioned, it is inferred that he probably was from a poor and obscure family. Amos had no special profession (Ezekiel was a priest; Isaiah was a statesman and advisor to kings; so was Daniel) or formal preparation to preach, but being a shepherd he was almost a natural-born preacher! Amos did have a direct call from God (Amos 7:14-15) to go to the Northern Kingdom, Israel, and prophesy against Israel. In exactly what manner this call came we are not told. But accordingly, he went to Bethel, 12 miles north of Jerusalem, and there under the very shadow of the royal palace lifted up his voice in a vigorous and impassioned cry for justice.

Date: Amos settles the question of date with as much exactness as any book of the Old Testament. The book itself names Jeroboam II as the king under whom Amos prophesied in Bethel. Jeroboam was 14 years contemporary with Amaziah and 27 years contemporary with Uzziah, both kings of Judah. Another chronological peg is "two years before

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the earthquake" (1:1). However the date of this earthquake is uncertain. It is undoubtedly the same earthquake alluded to by Zechariah (Zech. 14:5). Josephus informs us (Ant. 9.10.4) that this earthquake took place in connection with Uzziah's trespass (reported in II Chron. 26:18-21). A total eclipse of the sun was supposed to have accompanied this quake (supposed to be referred to by Amos in 8:9), which astronomers have calculated as having taken place June 15, 763 B.C. This would fix the date of Amos' prophecy somewhere around 760 B.C. Jeroboam ruled 786-746 B.C.; Uzziah ruled 783-742 B.C. Amos was somewhere within those three decades—most likely 760 B.C. He prophesied somewhat earlier than Hosea, but still Hosea was a young contemporary of Amos. Amos was later than Joel. Both Amos and Hosea were older contemporaries of Isaiah.

Background: Robinson says, "This was the golden age of North Israel, the high water mark of their national prosperity." Unfortunately, though there was much prosperity, there was little wisdom and righteousness. Gluttonous feasting took the place of religious service. Greed permeated the whole society. Corruption of justice was a commonly accepted rule of life. Might became right! Land-grabbing became an everyday crime. The rich owners had bribed the legal machinery until they controlled it. The rich became richer and the poor became destitute. Men lived in haughty indifference to God and were "at ease in Zion. (6:1)" The love of luxury and indulgence prevailed much like it did in the decadent days of the Roman Empire. Religion lost all its vitality and became ritualistic, syncretistic, paganistic and had no bearing on morals or life at all. Insincerity and dishonesty, corruption and licentiousness, criminal extravagance and blind assurance took such a firm hold of the wealthy, arrogant upper-class that they became heathen in everything but name. No wonder the shepherd farmer prophet was outraged and shocked at the profligacy he saw—no wonder that the God of all holiness and righteousness spoke through him so bluntly and angrily! We need Amoses today by the hundreds to speak the warnings and promises of God in the New Testament to a profligate society which is world-wide!

Purpose and Theme: Amos has been called, "God's Angry Man." Lange says, ". . . we have a prophetic writing in nine chapters, containing chiefly threatenings against the kingdom of Israel . . . it begins with threats upon the surrounding heathen, and then, like a genuine prophetic book, concludes with the promise of a new deliverance for Israel . . ." We believe the best statement of the theme of Amos is "The Sovereignty of God Over All." This universal sovereignty of Jehovah—the responsi-

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bility of all men everywhere and all nations to morality and justice—is Amos' central doctrine. "The condemnation of the heathen nations implies that even the heathen possessed some knowledge of right, which carried with it a corresponding degree of moral responsibility," says Kirkpatrick. With the covenant people of both nations Amos goes to the root of the matter and deals with the attitude of the people's heart and will towards Jehovah. He wants them to know that their worship is vain—an abomination to the Lord—because their hands are stained by sin and their hearts are indifferent to the Law of God and the common dictates of social justice and morality. He has been called "The Prophet of Justice" and "The Prophet of Repentance and Judgement." Amos shows himself to be a true preacher proclaiming the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man! The book of Amos is one of the most helpful of the prophetic books. It is a practical work, for it points out sin clearly and exalts at the same time the purity of God. He shows that God is no respecter of persons. If Israelites sin against Him, He will condemn them as readily as other nations. He shows that God hates hypocrisy. He shows that there can never be a divorce between doctrine on the one hand and ethics on the other. The eschatology of Amos is of the simplest character. The picture of Israel's future which he draws in the concluding verses of the book is, like that of Joel (cf. Amos 9:13 with Joel 3:18), a picture of purely temporal blessing while the New Testament interpretation of it (Acts 15:12-21) shows it was intended to be ultimately fulfilled in a spiritual kingdom. Amos has no prediction of a personal Messiah, but he does connect the hope of the future for the covenant people with the house of David.

Sermonic outline of the book of Amos:

Theme: The Sovereignty of God & Responsibility of Man

- I Punishment Promised, Chapters 1-2
 - A The Heathen nations, 1:1—2:3
 - 1. Damascus 1:1-5
 - 2. Gaza and Tyre 1:6-10
 - 3. Edom and Ammon 1:11-15
 - 4. Moab 2:1-3
 - B. The covenant nations, 2:4—2:16
 - 1. Judah 2:4-5
 - 2. Israel 2:6-8
 - 3. Israel 2:9-12
 - 4. Israel 2:13-16

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II Penitence Promoted, Chapters 3-6

- A. Reason should call for repentance, 3:1—4:11
 - 1. The Lord does not roar vengeance without a cause, 3:1-8
 - 2. Their sins astonish even the heathen, 3:9-15
 - 3. The holiness of the Lord demands punishment for evil, 4:1-5
 - 4. Their past chastenings should make them think, 4:6-11
- B. Revelation should call for repentance, 4:12—5:13
 - 1. God has revealed His character and will, 4:12-13
 - 2. Hear God's word against you, 5:1-5
 - 3. The omnipotence and omniscience of God, 5:6-13
- C. Righteousness demands repentance, 5:14—6:14
 - 1. Hate evil and love good, 5:14-20
 - 2. Rid your religion of its hypocrisy, 5:21-27
 - 3. Luxury and ease leads to indolence, 5:1-8
 - 4. False pride turns righteousness to bitterness, 6:9-14

III Prophecies Presented, Chapters 7-9

- A. Causes of Judgment Prophesied, 7:1—8:6
 - 1. Out of line with God's standard (the plumbline) 7:1-9
 - 2. Corrupt Religious Leaders (Amaziah) 7:10-17
 - 3. God's Longsuffering Has Expired (basket of summer fruit) 8:1-6
- B. Description of Judgments Prophesied, 8:7—9:10
 - 1. A time of bitter mourning, 8:7-10
 - 2. A time of spiritual famine, 8:11-14
 - 3. Thorough and Inescapable 9:1-6
 - 4. A time of disruption and dispersion, 9:7-10
- C. Results of Judgment Prophesied, 9:11-15
 - 1. David's throne and dominion restored, 9:11-12
 - 2. Fruitfulness and prosperity restored, 9:13-14
 - 3. Security, peace and protection restored, 9:15

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—DAMASCUS

TEXT: 1:1-5

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.

2. And he said, Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.
3. Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:
4. but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.
5. And I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden; and the people of Syria shall go into captivity into Kir, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why would God send a man from Judah to prophesy to Israel?
- b. How does Jehovah "roar" from Zion?
- c. Where is Kir?

PARAPHRASE

These are words of Amos who was a herdsman living in the village of Tekoa. One day, in a vision, God told him some of the things which were going to happen to the northern kingdom, Israel. This vision came to him at the time Uzziah was king of Judah, and while Jeroboam, (son of Joash), was king of Israel—two years before the great earthquake. Amos said, The Lord, like a ferocious lion, roars His warning from His dwelling place in Jerusalem, the city of Zion. The lush pastures wither from the top of Mount Carmel to the plains.

This the Lord's word: Because of sin after sin committed by Damascus I will not leave her unpunished. Because these Syrians crushed the prisoners of my people to death with iron threshing machines of war I will punish them. I will burn down the palaces of Hazael and Benhadad. I will tear down the defenses of the capital city Damascus and slaughter the inhabitants of Syria's major cities, even the potentates of these cities will I slaughter. Those who are left of Syria I will send into captivity into the land of Elam.

SUMMARY

The Lord roars His warnings like a lion from its lair. He begins with Damascus, or Syria. The heathen are responsible to God for their injustices and immoralities.

COMMENT

v. 1. THE WORDS OF AMOS . . . OF TEKOA . . . CONCERNING ISRAEL . . . We do not know exactly why God chose a man of the southern kingdom, Judah, to send with His message to the northern kingdom, Israel. The fact that God's presence remained in the Temple which was in Jerusalem, the southern kingdom, may have had something to do with it. However, Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos, prophet to Israel, was from Israel. All we need to know is that God selected the right man at the right time to do the right job. We have already discussed the date of Amos' prophecy and his place of birth in the Introduction of this book. It should be remembered that he preached his messages of denunciation and doom in an atmosphere of unprecedented material prosperity which was being accompanied by a widespread decay of moral values and a wicked oppression of the poor. Disaster seemed most unlikely. Amos and his message were extremely unpopular. Yet within a very few years four kings of Israel had been assassinated, then Hoshea was deposed and imprisoned and Israel ceased to be a nation in 722-721 B.C. at the Assyrian captivity. Though he was a shepherd, Amos is the author of the purest and most classical Hebrew in the entire Old Testament. His style is grave, measured, and rhetorical—Amos was an orator. He uses brief, uninvolved sentences. His vocabulary and style are conspicuously those of Semetic homeliness, especially of a man of the wilderness.

v. 2 JEHOVAH WILL ROAR FROM ZION . . . PASTURES SHALL MOURN . . . AND THE TOP OF CARMEL . . . WITHER . . . How often Amos had probably heard the wild lion of the mountainous regions around Tekoa roar its warning from its lair. The Hebrew people were very familiar with lions and many books in the Bible mention them. The Lord Jesus Christ is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. A number of instances are mentioned where a man of Palestine killed a lion in a single-handed encounter (Judg. 14:5-8; I Sam. 17:36-37). See our comments on Joel 3:16 also. Zion is *tsiyon* in Hebrew and probably means *citadel*. It is the name of one of the hills or mountains on which Jerusalem stood. It is first mentioned in the O.T. as a Jebusite fortress (II Sam. 5:6-9), but David captured it and called it the city of David. It is used figuratively for the covenant people of God both of O.T. times and N.T. times (cf. Isa. 33:14; 34:8; 49:14, etc. for O.T. covenant people; cf. Heb. 12:22 for N.T. usage which also indicates some O.T. usage of Zion was prophetic of the N.T. church). In this case Zion means the city of God, Jerusalem (as evidenced by the parallelism

here), where God's presence dwells. It would be a subtle reminder to the northern kingdom that God was to be worshiped only at Jerusalem! (cf. Ex. 25:21-22; 29:42-43; 40:33-38; Num. 7:89; Lev. 1:1; I Kings 8:10-11).

Amos reveals that the Sovereign God will bring His judgment upon Israel first through a drought. God will wither the pasture land from the top of forest-crowned Mt. Carmel, the mountain at the mouth of the Kishon river, to the verdant plains of the lowlands. The shepherd's heart of Amos could picture no greater display of God's judgment than the burning and withering of the fresh green pasture lands so urgently necessary to the life of this farming, shepherding people. *Carmel* means "garden." Mt. Carmel was an especially verdant place for grazing sheep. Its perennial springs outlasted even the three years and six months of drought in Elijah's days (cf. I Kings 17 & 18). If this pasture-land should wither it would be manifestly at the command of God. Practically every prophet reveals Jehovah God as the Sovereign of nature—the Creator, Sustainer and User of Nature. He sustains nature under certain laws inviolable only until He deems it necessary to manipulate or contravene them to serve His omnipotent and omniscient purposes.

v. 3 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF DAMASCUS . . . FOR FOUR . . . I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT . . . THEY HAVE THRESHED GILEAD WITH THRESHING INSTRUMENTS OF IRON . . . K & D say, ". . . the numbers merely serve to denote the multiplicity of the sins, the exact number of which has no bearing upon the matter." It is a Hebrew idiom expressing fulness. J. B. Phillips, in *Four Prophets*, translates it, "Because of outrage after outrage committed by Damascus . . ." The Syrians have filled their cup of wickedness full to overflowing. God will not relent! He is going to punish them. Their one greatest sin has been to cruelly crush the Gileadites (a territory east of the Jordan allocated to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh) with iron threshing carts. Hazael the Syrian king did this when he conquered that territory during the reign of Jehu (II Kings 10:32-33; 13:7; cf. also II Sam. 12:31). The threshing cart was a sort of a cart with toothed iron wheels underneath, which was driven about to crush the straw in the threshing-floors after the grain had been beaten out. They have despoiled God's possession—they have violated, and that in the cruelest fashion, the most basic law of God—the sanctity of human life. But even worse, they have done despite to the covenant people of God (cf. our comments on Obadiah). To attack God's people is to attack God!

v. 4-5 . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE INTO THE HOUSE OF HAZAEL . . . BREAK THE BAR OF DAMASCUS . . . AND THE PEOPLE OF SYRIA SHALL

GO INTO CAPTIVITY INTO KIR . . . Hazael was the murderer of Benhadad I, to whom the prophet Elisha foretold that he would reign over Syria, and predicted the cruelties that he would practice towards Israel (II Kings 8:7ff). An inscription of Shalmaneser III states that Benhadad perished and "Hazael, a son of nobody, (meaning not of royal lineage), seized the throne." Shalmaneser III also records two attacks on Hazael in which he claims great victories for Assyria with severe damage to the Syrian countryside. Hazael reigned for at least 43 years and perhaps longer, and he oppressed Israel all the days of his reign. In 732 Tiglathpileser III subdued the city of Damascus and brought an end to the Aramaean state.

To break the bar of Damascus would mean to "break the bolt of the gate." Literally, to destroy the city's defenses and overcome it. To "cut off the inhabitant" is to slaughter him. Those who were not slaughtered, God would cause to be taken into captivity to Kir. Kir (cf. Isa. 22:6) the territory in ancient Elam east of the Persian Gulf, on the banks of the river *Kur*, from which, according to Amos 9:7, the Syrians originally emigrated. Many of the Syrians were taken captive in Tiglathpileser's conquest in 732 B.C.

Jehovah God, all-sovereign Creator of the universe, orders the migrations and national boundaries of the nations (Acts. 17:26), and cares for their welfare (Acts 14:15-18). He brought up the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir (Amos 9:7). He has the right and the power to punish them for their sins. And what are the sins of which they are guilty? As we have mentioned before, they are guilty of desecrating God's holy people. But in the main their sin is simply *inhumanity*. They have broken those most basic laws of God written on the heart and conscience of all mankind by which the relation of man to man and nation to nation ought to be governed. They are capable of exercising moral judgments. Therefore the violation of the natural laws of humanity written on their consciences demands punishment.

QUIZ

1. Why was Amos' message so unpopular in his day?
2. What is the figure of God "roaring" referring to?
3. Why be so specific that God's warning would come from Zion?
4. How does God use nature to serve His purposes?
5. How did the Syrians thresh the people of Gilead?
6. Who was Hazael and when did he live and what kind of a person was he?
7. What do we learn from God's message to the heathen here?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—GAZA AND TYRE

TEXT: 1:6-10

- 6 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Gaza, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole people, to deliver them up to Edom:
- 7 but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.
- 8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn my hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord Jehovah.
- 9 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions, of Tyre, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they delivered up the whole people to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:
- 10 but I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

QUERIES

- a. Where are Gaza, Ashdod and Ekron, and for what does God hold them responsible?
- b. Where is Tyre?
- c. What is the "brotherly covenant?"

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Gaza, I will not leave her unpunished. Because these Philistines captured whole cities and areas of My holy land and people and sold every last one of them into slavery to the Edomites I will consume them in the fires of judgment. I will slaughter the inhabitants of the major cities of Philistia even the potentates of these cities I will slaughter. The very last people of the Philistine race I will cause to perish.

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Tyre, I will not leave her unpunished. Because of their slave-trade with Edom and because they forgot the peaceful alliances and behavior of My covenant people toward them, I will consume the cities and peoples of Phoenicia in the fires of judgment.

SUMMARY

Philistia and Phoenicia are "roared" at by the Lord. They have captured whole cities of the covenant people and sold them into slavery.

COMMENT

v. 6 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF GAZA . . . BECAUSE THEY CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE THE WHOLE PEOPLE . . . By mentioning most of the principal cities of Philistia, Amos means to include the whole nation under the judgment of God. The book of Judges mentions the Philistines as a major contender against the Hebrews for the possession of Palestine. When David united all Israel under his rule, he decisively defeated the Philistines in two major battles (II Sam. 5:17-25) and from this time on, the Philistine grip was broken until after the death of Solomon. Then at the division of the kingdom the Philistines reasserted the independence they had lost to David and captured whole cities selling the people into slavery. Sargon (722-705 B.C.) captured the Philistine cities, deported some of the inhabitants and set over them an Assyrian governor. The later struggles between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids (Egypt and Syria), prophesied by Daniel 11, caused great suffering and devastation to the Philistine cities. This practically closes their history as strictly Philistinian. They continued in N.T. times as non-Jewish centers, becoming Hellenistic cities.

Amos has in mind such carrying away of captives as occurred in II Chron. 21:16 (cf. Joel 3:3-4). These Philistines captured whole cities and areas of Hebrew people and sold them to Edomites and to the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians probably sold them, in turn, to the Greeks (cf. Joel 3:6).

v. 7 . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE ON THE WALL OF GAZA . . . It could be that Amos meant literal fire would destroy these heathen cities since the destructive forces of fire have always been a major result of warfare in every age. But it most probably is a figure of the judgment of God. (cf. Matt. 3:12; John 15:6, etc.).

v. 8 . . . I WILL CUT OFF THE INHABITANT FROM ASHDOD . . . ASHKELON . . . EKRON . . . AND THE REMNANT OF THE PHILISTINES SHALL PERISH . . . Three more of the principal cities of Philistia are here mentioned, only Gath is left out, and this not because it was not to be judged. It is clear that God means the Philistines as a nation or race shall perish. And so it is true today, Philistia is no longer a nation and the Philistines are no longer a people. All of these cities were located in the plain of Philistia, a part of which is now known as the Gaza

Strip. Egypt and the Jews are still fighting over this territory. Its former glory and power has long since melted into the dust of antiquity . . . but the Word of God stands as firmly as ever today!

v. 9-10 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF TYRE . . . BECAUSE THEY DELIVERED UP THE WHOLE PEOPLE TO EDMOM, AND REMEMBERED NOT THE BROTHERLY COVENANT . . . Tyre was the capital of Phoenicia. It was north of Mt. Carmel and south of Sidon. The people were seafaring people. Tyre was one of the principal seaports of that entire territory bounded by the Mediterranean coast. They imported and exported many different things among which were slaves—men, women and children often Hebrew captives of raids by the Philistines, and the Syrians. David and Solomon had entered into a friendly alliance with the king of Tyre (II Sam. 5:11; I Kings 5:15ff) but the people of Tyre of Amos' generation had forgotten that. Furthermore they were not mindful of the fact that no king of Israel or Judah had ever made war on Phoenicia. Their indifference and cruelty to the covenant people of God through their slave-trading was wholly unjustifiable and God announces that He will visit them with His judgment.

In 322 B.C. in the course of his conquest of the East, Alexander the Great appeared before Tyre. The island stronghold (where the people of the old city of Tyre had fled at the siege of Nebuchadnezzar almost 300 years earlier) closed her gates, and Alexander was forced to build a causeway, and after long months of frustration and vast penetration, take the city by costly storming. Alexander built the causeway out of the timbers and stones of the old city of Tyre by scraping its site "flat like the top of a rock." Tyre was broken, and the causeway still remains, a place, as Ezekiel foretold, on which fishermen might dry their nets (cf. Ezek. 26:5-14; 47:10; cf. also Isa. 23; Zech. 9). Tyre made a measure of political recovery and for a period functioned as a republic. She struck an early treaty with Rome, and her independence was respected until 20 B.C. when Augustus withdrew it. The remaining history of Tyre is without significance. The ancient city of Tyre on the mainland has never been rebuilt!

QUIZ

1. Tell of the history of Philistia. What of the people of Philistia today?
2. What does Amos mean by speaking of "fire" upon each of these cities?
3. Tell of the history of Tyre. What of the people of Tyre today?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—EDOM AND MOAB

TEXT: 1:11-15

- 11 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Edom, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:
- 12 but I will send a fire upon Teman, and it shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.
- 13 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the woman with child of Gilead, that they may enlarge their border:
- 14 but I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind;
- 15 and their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Who was the Edomite's brother whom he pursued with the sword?
- b. Did the Ammonites actually butcher pregnant women?
- c. Did the king of Ammon go away into captivity?

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Edom, I will not leave him unpunished. Because these Edomites have chased their brethren, the Israelites, with the sword to make them prisoners and slaves and because these Edomites were pitiless, relentless in their anger and continually full of wrath, I will consume the whole nation, from Teman in the north to Bozrah in the south, in the fires of My judgment.

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Ammon, I will not leave him unpunished. In their wars to extend the borders of their country these Ammonites committed cruel crimes, ripping open pregnant women with their swords. Because they have done these things I will consume them with the fire of My judgment and they shall go down with shouting and the battle will roar like a whirlwind in a mighty storm. Their king and princes will be taken captive into exile together, says the Lord.

SUMMARY

Edom and Ammon were related by blood to Israel yet they committed some of the most inhumane cruelties toward Israel. For these the Lord promises punishment.

COMMENT

v. 11-12. . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF EDMOM . . . HE DID PURSUE HIS BROTHER WITH THE SWORD . . . CAST OFF ALL PITY . . . HIS ANGER DID TEAR PERPETUALLY . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE UPON TEMAN . . . The Edomites were descendants of Esau, brother of Jacob (Israel). Edom became the relentless enemy of Israel constantly cultivating an implacable, mortal hatred towards the Israelites, which broke out into acts of cruelty at every possible opportunity. The Edomites were always busy raiding the cities and villages of Palestine, taking captives and using or selling them for slaves. God pronounces His judgment upon Teman and Bozrah which represent the extreme north and south, respectively, of the nation of Edom. Thus God says He will judge the whole nation. Be sure to refer to our comments on the book of Obadiah for Edom's relation to Israel.

v. 13-15 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF THE CHILDREN OF AMMON . . . THEY HAVE RIPPED UP WOMEN WITH CHILD OF GILEAD, THAT THEY MAY ENLARGE THEIR BORDER . . . BUT I WILL KINDLE A FIRE IN THE WALL OF RABBAH . . . AND THEIR KING SHALL GO INTO CAPTIVITY . . . The Ammonites (descendants of Ben-ammi) were related to the Moabites and Israelites through Lot (cf. Gen. 19:38). The Israelites were told by the Lord not to enter into battle with them as they journeyed toward the land of Promise (Deut. 2:19). Their nation was supposed to be just east of Moab stretching to the north as far as the Jabbok River and on the south to the hills of Edom but the Ammonites were continually trying to extend the borders of their land. They were a fierce people by nature, rebellious against Israel and idolatrous in their religious practices. They thrust out the right eye of all in Jabesh Gilead (1 Sam. 11:2). They were given to cruel atrocities (Jer. 40:14; 41:5-7; Amos 1:14). Though related to Israel, they refused to help them when asked (Deut. 23:4) and they joined with Moab in securing Balaam to curse them (Deut. 23:3-4). Later on in Israel's history they united with Sanballat to oppose the work of Nehemiah in restoring the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:10-19). The chief god of the fierce Ammon was Milchom, the principle of destruction, who was

appeared with sacrifices of living children, given to the fire to devour, (I Kings 11:7). Because of their sins and especially because they constantly opposed Israel, Ezekiel predicted their complete destruction (Ezek. 25:1-7). Their last stand seems to have been against Judas Maccabeus (I Macc. 5:6).

The occasion on which the Ammonites were guilty of ripping up pregnant women is not recorded in the O.T. They probably joined with Hazael (of whom it is also prophesied by Elisha, II Kings 8:12) when that Syrian king was at war with Israel. The Ammonites then would have availed themselves of the opportunity to widen their territory by conquering back the land which had been taken from them by Sihon, king of the Amorites, and was in turn taken possession of by the Israelites.

Greedy, heartless, inhuman rulers and peoples have committed the same (and often times worse) atrocities for the same aggrandizing purposes. And the same God who held the Ammonites accountable for their cruelties holds such nations today accountable with the same omniscient justice and holiness and power! Especially does God find it necessary to condemn those who make war on His saints!

QUIZ

1. Who were the Edomites and why did God hold them under condemnation?
2. Who were the Ammonites and why did God hold them under condemnation?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE HEATHEN NATIONS—MOAB

TEXT: 2:1-3

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Moab, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:
- 2 but I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet;
- 3 and I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Who were the Moabites?
- b. Why is God concerned that the king of Edom's bones were burned?

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Moab, I will not leave her unpunished. Because these Moabites have in their proud arrogance burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime and have thus vented a depraved wrath upon one who at this time stands for Jehovah, I will consume Moab with the fire of My judgment and he shall die midst the shouting of warriors and blare of battle trumpets. I will slaughter Moab's king and other royal princes with him, says the Lord.

SUMMARY

For her unnatural hate and arrogance toward God, Moab will die as a nation.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF MOAB . . . BECAUSE HE BURNED THE BONES OF THE KING OF EDOM INTO LIME . . . I WILL SEND A FIRE UPON MOAB . . . AND MOAB SHALL DIE WITH TUMULT . . . AND I WILL CUT OFF THE JUDGE . . . Moab was a son of Lot (as was Ammon) (cf. Gen. 19:38). Moses and the Israelites had a run-in with the Moabites in their journey to the land of Promise (cf. Num. 22-24). Balaam advised Balak to seduce the men of Israel by sending the Moabite girls into the camp of Israel (cf. Num. 31:16; 25:1-9). The Moabites oppressed Israel for 18 years (Judg. 3:12-14). When Israel repented God sent Ehud to deliver them from Moabite oppression. Ruth, the Moabitess came to Israel with Naomi, married Boaz and became an ancestress of David and consequently an ancestress of Jesus Christ, the Son of David according to the flesh.

Along with Amos' death sentence upon Moab are those of Isaiah 15-16; Ezekiel 25:8-11; Jeremiah 48; Zephaniah 2:8-11. Isaiah 16:6 says, "We have heard of the pride of Moab, that he is very proud; even of his arrogancy, and his pride and his wrath." The death knell of Isaiah upon Moab is fulfilled by Shalmanezar of Assyria or by his successor Sargon. From then on a succession of world conquerors subdued and, in the process, annihilated Moab as a nation. The land of Moab was

bounded on the west by the Dead Sea, on the east by the desert, on the north by the Arnon, and on the south by Edom. It is about 3200 feet above the level of the sea, and is chiefly rolling, mountainous country

In Ezekiel 28:8-11 we are told that Moab and Seir are to be punished for likening the house of Judah to the other nations. Amos localizes his accusation against her by telling of an incident not recorded anywhere else in the O.T. K & D say, ". . . no doubt it was connected with the war referred to in II Kings 3, which Joram of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah waged against the Moabites in company with the king of Edom. Here the king of Edom was found on the side of the covenant people and when the king of Moab gained supremacy over Edom later, he burned the king of Edom's body until the bones turned into lime. It illustrates the depths of depravity to which a highly cultured people can descend if they reject the revelation of God (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). Pusey says, "The soul being, after death, beyond man's reach, the hatred, vented upon his remains, is a sort of impotent grasping at eternal vengeance. It wreaks on what it knows to be insensible, the hatred with which it would pursue, if it could, the living being who is beyond it . . . Hatred, which death cannot extinguish, is the beginning of the eternal hate in hell. With this hatred Moab hated the king of Edom, seemingly because he had been . . . on the side of the people of God. It was then sin against the love of God, and directed against God Himself." This reminds us of Wycliffe who was the first to translate the Bible into the English language. The Roman pope of that day excommunicated him and ordered that Wycliffe's bones be dug up, burned, and cast into the river.

Kerioth is probably the capital city of Moab. It is not to be confused with the Kerioth in the south of Judah (Josh. 15:25) and otherwise known as Hazor. Some say the city lay in what is now Jebel Druz, nearly south of Damascus and in high country. Some have thought that Moab had no king at this time since Amos mentions a "judge" as the potentate. But there is no notice in the history of that time of any other type of potentate than a monarch. "Judge" is probably nothing more than a rhetorical expression applied to the king and used simply for the sake of poetic variety.

QUIZ

1. Who were the Moabites and where was their country?
2. What is evidenced of their character in the burning of the king of Edom's bones?

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE COVENANT NATIONS—JUDAH

TEXT: 2:4-5

- 4 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Judah, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have rejected the law of Jehovah, and have not kept his statutes, and their lies have caused them to err, after which their fathers did walk:
5 but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

QUERIES

- a. To what extent had Judah rejected the law of Jehovah?
- b. What "lies" caused them to err?

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Judah, I will not leave her unpunished. Because they have spurned the law of Jehovah and have refused to keep His commandments, and because they have walked after lying idols just as their fathers did, I will send down upon them the fires of My judgment and this judgment shall consume even the great buildings of Jerusalem.

SUMMARY

Just as the heathen did not live up to their revelation, neither did Judah and although elected by God for a special mission they need not think God is a respecter of persons. They are to be judged for indifference to God's commandments and for idolatry.

COMMENT

v. 4-5 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF JUDAH . . . BECAUSE THEY HAVE REJECTED THE LAW OF JEHOVAH . . . AND THEIR LIES HAVE CAUSED THEM TO ERR . . . Amos may have been a shepherd and a farmer but he was a student of human nature and a master psychologist. His homiletical approach to the central application he made was excellent. In a series of concentric circles Amos denounced the sins

of men against Jehovah. Beginning with a great encircling movement that included Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab; he identified the rebellion against God with those outside God's special covenant. Then, shrinking to a smaller circle, a similar rebellion was placed squarely upon the shoulders of Judah. One can almost hear the people of the northern kingdom, Israel, giving ready "Amens" to Amos' preaching against their neighbors! Yes, there were many in Israel who probably still held grudges against Judah and so when Amos pointed out the sins of Judah they were in full agreement. Then after this announcement, Amos immediately thrust into the very heart of Israel the sword of the Spirit, the word of God's judgments against her! If it was true that the nations outside the covenant were accountable, if Judah, in the covenant were accountable, then it logically followed that Israel could not escape accountability.

We find Judah, not being judged for the wild excesses of the heathen, but for rejection of the law of God. Judah stood in greater responsibility than the heathen for she had been blessed to know the law of God, had been blessed with a succession of teachers and religious leaders to instruct her in the law and so her's was an even more heinous sin against God! Greater privilege brings greater responsibility (Lk. 12:48). Judah is not immune to judgment because they are God's elect. Indeed, their judgement is greater because they are His; and being His they chose to rebel against His law.

"Walking after" is the standard expression for idolatry. Their fathers before them "walked after" false gods. These false gods were impotent, dumb, vain and deceitful. So their "lies" are their "idols," (cf. Isa. 44:9-20)! The law of God embraces far more than just a legal codification of certain statutes. It included the totality of all instruction, civil, religious, moral—the total revelation of God. Instead they followed falsehood, deception, immorality and rebellion—an inevitable consequence of idolatry. Society is little better today, even in so-called Christian cultures. Men have deified science, philosophy, flesh, government and *self*. To worship any of these is hardly more intelligent than the idolatry of 2700 years ago. Rejection of divine revelation and substitution of any pantheon of gods—ancient or modern—brings the same inevitable consequences! Man without God becomes autonomous which leads inevitably to anarchy in society—both political and ethical. This is exactly what it led to in Judah (read the book of Jeremiah and II Kings) just before the awful judgment of God fell by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

QUIZ

1. How was Amos' preaching of the judgments of God a homiletical masterpiece?
2. Why was Judah held accountable to a greater degree than the heathen?
3. What were the "lies" Judah was caused to err in?
4. What is the inevitable result of rejecting divine revelation?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE COVENANT
NATIONS—ISRAEL

TEXT: 2:6-8

- 6 Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes;
- 7 they that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father go unto the same maiden, to profane my holy name:
- 8 and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink the wine of such as have been fined.

QUERIES

- a. How sell "the righteous for silver . . . needy for a pair of shoes?"
- b. How "pant after the dust of the earth . . . ?"
- c. What was involved in father and son going to the same harlot?

PARAPHRASE

This is the Lord's word: For sin after sin of Israel, I will not leave her unpunished. Because they have for mere trifles given debtors over to their creditors as slaves; because they long eagerly to bring the poor into a state of misery and destitution that they scatter dust upon their heads; because father and son shamelessly and intentionally profane the name of God by committing incest when they both go in unto the same maiden; because they take the garments of the poor for which they have loaned the poor money and use them as bedding before the very altar of God at His feasts; because in the places they where they worship Jehovah they carouse with the wine bought with the fines they have taken from the poor they have prosecuted—because of all these sins I will not turn away from punishing Israel.

SUMMARY

Five specific charges Amos brings against Israel in this section. Every charge has to do with injustice against the poor.

COMMENT

v. 618 . . . FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF ISRAEL . . . SOLD . . . THE NEEDY FOR A PAIR OF SHOES . . . TURN ASIDE THE WAY OF THE MEEK . . . PROFANE MY HOLY NAME . . . IN THE HOUSE OF . . . GOD . . . DRINK . . . WINE . . . Now Amos lets loose all the stormy fury of God's anger where it is needed most imperatively! Israel is on the brink of disaster. God has called them time and time again. He has sent prophet after prophet—natural calamity after natural calamity, but unable to see through the veneer of a superficial prosperity (much like people today), Israel is "at ease in Bethel!"

"Selling the righteous for silver," refers to the judges who were bribed to pronounce a man guilty of some crime of which he was accused while in reality he was innocent of the accusation. "Selling the needy for a pair of shoes" does not mean that some slave was sold by someone else merely to obtain a pair of shoes; but some rich creditor would bribe a judge with a bribe as trifling as the price of a pair of shoes and the judge would then sentence the poor man in debt to become a slave to his creditor. This was done by perverting the statute in Lev. 25:39 (cf. also II Kings 4:1). The word translated "pant" means "to gasp, to long eagerly for." The greedy rich desired eagerly to bring the poor into such a state of poverty and misery as to cause the poor to scatter dust (a symbol of sorrow and distress, Josh. 7:6; Ezek. 27:30; Job 2:12; Lam. 2:10) upon their heads. To this end they seek to "bend" the way of the meek. They long to trap the poor and cast them headlong into destruction by placing stumbling-blocks in their path. For themselves the rich seek gold and silver and luxury; for others dust and ashes, poverty and sorrow!

Father and son seek the same maiden for fornication. Actually the law calls it incest (Lev. 18:7, 15; 20:11), a crime punishable by death. This was done not so much out of passion as it was in deliberate revolt against God's law. K & D put it, "in daring contempt of the commandments of God . . . the profanation of the holy name of God is represented as intentional, to bring out the daring character of the sin, and to show that it did not arise from weakness or ignorance, but was practiced with studious contempt of the holy God."

They literally defied God or man to punish them! Pusey says, "Men, satiated with ordinary sin seek incitement to sin, in its very horrors . . . Oppression of the poor, wronging the righteous, perverting the way of the meek, laid the soul open for any abomination." The truth of this has been exemplified in every generation (cf. Rom. 1:18ff) and is no less true in our own generation!

The rich men were taking the poor men's cloaks as collateral on loans. The cloak as a pledge was to be returned to the pledger before nightfall (Ex. 22:25) and a garment so taken was not to be slept upon (cf. Deut. 24:12-13). But the godless rich money lenders kept the cloaks of the poor and used them as blankets upon which they lay to rest at the feasts; and this they did by every altar, at sacrificial meals, in contempt of God and His law! Then, in further contempt of God and their fellow man they debauched themselves in drunken revelry, drinking wine they purchased from the fines collected from the poor; and this in the place where they claimed to worship God. Pusey sums it all up: "What hardheartedness to the willfully forgotten poor is compensated by a little churchgoing." They did all these things but they also went through certain religious rituals and so they eased their consciences. The nature of this conduct which is terrifying to anyone of moral conscience at all is its "intentional, daring, studious contempt of the holy God!" Most of it done in the name of religion and in the very buildings hallowed for worshipping the Deity! Is it any wonder that Amos was so vituperative and vitriolic in preaching the warnings of God to these indolent near-incorrigibles. There are centers of government and religion equally as corrupt today as in Amos' day. Let us know assuredly that God's wrath upon such rebellion has not changed. Amos' preaching is as contemporary as today's newspaper!

QUIZ

1. Why does Amos save Israel until last in announcing the warnings of God?
2. What is "selling the righteous for silver?"
3. What is "selling the needy for a pair of shoes?"
4. What is the meaning of "dust of the earth on the head of the poor?"
5. What is the nature of the sin in which father and son go into the same maiden?
6. What is wrong with some lying on clothes taken in pledge?
7. Could the preaching of Amos be used today? Where? How?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE COVENANT NATIONS—ISRAEL

TEXT: 2:9-12

- 9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.
- 10 Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.
- 11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah.
- 12 But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Phophesy not.

QUERIES

- a. Who were the Amorites and why refer to their height?
- b. Why mention the prophets and Nazirites?

PARAPHRASE

I remind you that it was I who cleared the promised land of the giant Amorites for you would not have been able to possess the land had I not done so. These Amorites, by your own admission, were too strong for you to overcome by yourself, yet I utterly exterminated this nation for you. I remind you that it was I who delivered you from your slavery in Egypt and sustained you forty years in the wilderness and gave you the land of the Amorite as your possession. I remind you that it was I who raised up some of your sons as My special messengers, prophets, who were empowered by My Spirit to reveal My word to you; and I raised up some of your sons to become Nazirites, especially holy men, to set before your eyes an example of your holy calling and to show you that I am able to give men the power to live holy lives. Is this not true, You children of the covenant? says the Lord. But instead of giving heed to these manifestations and examples of My holy will you held my word in contempt and caused the Nazirites to sin by tempting them to drink wine and you commanded My prophets to refrain from declaring My word!

SUMMARY

Amos makes a vivid contrast between the faithfulness of God toward Israel and Israel's unfaithful contempt of God's grace toward them.

COMMENT

v. 9 . . . DESTROYED I THE AMORITE BEFORE THEM . . . LIKE THE HEIGHT OF THE CEDARS . . . God delivered, led, sustained and fought for Israel. When Israel came to the borders of the Promised Land and sent men in to spy out the land the report came back that the people were as giants and the Israelites were like grasshoppers in comparison (cf. Num. 13:32-33) but God gave Israel victory and so completely overthrew the Amorites that they were eradicated. God removed them so thoroughly that they never were a nation again.

v. 10 ALSO I BROUGHT YOU UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND LED YOU FORTY YEARS . . . God nurtured Israel like a father and mother nurtures a child (cf. Hosea 11:1-4; Ezek. 16:4-8). When Israel was an unpitied, disorganized, unloved, nomadic tribe of slaves in Egypt, Jehovah God took them and pitied them, delivered them from their slavery, fed them, clothed them, protected them, gave them a Land, blessed them, and still they held Him in contempt. They forgot what they were before He blessed them! They took Him for granted! They became ungrateful, exactly as Moses warned them not to do (be sure to read the entire 8th chapter of Deuteronomy in this connection)! Ingratitude is, like its sister pride, one of the worst of sins!

v. 11-12 . . . I RAISED UP . . . PROPHETS . . . AND NAZIRITES . . . BUT YE GAVE THE NAZIRITES WINE TO DRINK . . . AND COMMANDED THE PROPHETS . . . PROPHECY NOT . . . Nothing demonstrated the grace of God so well as the fact that God raised up some men from among the covenant people to be His prophets, to deliver to the people the Light of Life, the Bread of Life, the Word of God. The patience and longsuffering of God waited upon the people through the prophets as He sent them to turn the prodigal nation from its rebellion, but the people would not! They commanded the prophets to cease their preaching (cf. Amos 7:12; I Kings 18:17; 19:1-3).

The verb *nazar* is used "to dedicate, consecrate, separate." The word *nazir*, translated Nazirite, is literally "one consecrated, devoted." This was the primary mission of the Nazirite—consecration—and to that end he dedicated himself either for life or for a brief period of time. Samson is an example of a man used by God in such a life. The pri-

mary concern of the Nazirite was to manifest his consecration to God by a particular manner of life, (cf. Num. 6:1-21). This life consisted of: (a) totally abstaining from products of the vine and all intoxicants; (b) refusing to cut their hair lest a man-made tool profane this god-given growth; (c) avoiding contact with the dead; and (d) declining unclean . . . food. So the Nazirite was given to the people to demonstrate by holy living what the prophet taught in precept. This does not mean, however, that the prophets themselves did not live godly lives—for they did. The Nazirite was to "set before the eyes of the people the object of their divine calling . . . to show them how the Lord wants them to be a holy people . . . also to show them how the Lord bestowed the power to carry out this object" (K & D). It was in the contempt and abuse of these gifts of grace that the ingratitude of Israel was shown in its worst light. Instead of listening to the prophets and living like the Nazirites and becoming the holy people God desired them to be, they tempted the Nazirites to break their vows and drink wine and they forbade the prophets to preach! Open, flagrant, impudent rebellion, this is sinning against knowledge, sinning "with a high hand," (cf. Num. 15:30-31); this is shaking the first against the Heavenly throne.

QUIZ

1. Why does Amos speak of the Amorites being as tall as cedars?
2. What should the people of Israel remember about their former condition?
3. What great sin were they guilty of?
4. What is a Nazirite? What purpose did he serve in the O.T. dispensation?
5. When one sins against the knowledge of God's will he has what kind of sin is it?

PUNISHMENT PROMISED, THE COVENANT NATIONS—ISRAEL

TEXT: 2:13-16

- 13 Behold, I will press you in your place, as a cart presseth that is full of sheaves.
- 14 And flight shall perish from the swift; and the strong shall not strengthen his force; neither shall the mighty deliver himself;

- 15 neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself; neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself;
- 16 and he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. How will God "press them in their place, like a cart . . . full of sheaves?"
- b. What is the prophet telling the nation in vs. 14-16?

PARAPHRASE

Look, I am going to stop you in your tracks like a cart that is loaded too full of grain sheaves to move. The fastest runners will not have time to escape; the strength of the strong men will not avail; the great and influential will not escape; the long line of bowmen will give way; even the warriors mounted on horses shall be overcome! The bravest of the brave will only be able to make an ignominious escape by shedding his clothing by which the enemy might seize him!

SUMMARY

Israel will be paralyzed! None shall escape the judgement that is about to come.

COMMENT

v. 13 . . . PRESS YOU IN YOUR PLACE, AS A CART PRESSETH . . . FULL OF SHEAVES. Conjecture as to how this verse is to be interpreted is varied. Pusey says, "God bore His people, as the wain (cart) bears the sheaves . . . His longsuffering was, as it were, worn out by them . . . He was straitened under them, as the wain groans under the sheaves with which it is over-full." Laetsch says, "The threshing cart consisted of three or more rollers set in a heavy wooden frame surmounted by the driver's seat. These rollers were attached to wheels on the outside of the framework, and if either the wheels or the rollers were clogged by the sheaves of grain over which the sledge was drawn by oxen, the sledge was stopped from further progress until the obstructing sheaves had been removed." Lange says, "A more appropriate comparison is found in the pressure by which a threshing cart threshes the sheaves." K & D, say, "The comparison instituted here to the pressure of a cart filled with sheaves . . . the object of *press* is wanting, but may easily be supplied from the thought, namely, the ground over which the cart is driven."

We have chosen our own interpretation which we feel is warranted from the context. It would seem as if Amos is using the figure of a cart "stopped in its tracks" by being too full to pictorialize how God is going to "stop Israel in its tracks." Israel's military machinery, running smoothly under Jeroboam II (permitted by God), rolling on to victory, would suddenly be stopped by the Lord. Her facade of prosperity would be ripped from her. Disorder, confusion, panic, defeat, ruin, disaster was coming ever closer! Now she is "flying high"—soon she will be plunged into destruction!

v. 14-16 AND FLIGHT SHALL PERISH FROM THE SWIFT; . . . AND HE THAT IS COURAGEOUS AMONG THE MIGHTY SHALL FLEE AWAY NAKED IN THAT DAY . . . Now the prophet individualizes this national paralysis. The swiftest, strongest, bravest, ablest warriors will not be able to stand against God's judgment. The most courageous among the mighty will throw off his armor and his clothing and run for his life like a coward.

Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.), one of the greatest monarchs of antiquity, after capturing Samaria (capital of Israel), put on the throne as his vassal Hoshea, who had slain Pekah, king of Israel. With the death of Tiglath-pileser III, Hoshea decided to strike a blow for independence. Help was promised by the king of Egypt, but it did not come. Hoshea was made a prisoner, and the capital doomed to destruction, as the prophets foretold (Hos. 10:7-8; Isa. 28:1; Mic. 1:5-6). It was, however, only after a three years' siege that the city was captured. Before it fell, Shalmaneser had abdicated or died, and Sargon, who succeeded him, completed the conquest of the city and deported the inhabitants to Assyria (cf. II Kings 17-18). Not all of the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom were taken into captivity. The very poor, who would cause no trouble in the future, were left (II Kings 25:12). Inter-marriage with the imported peoples resulted in the hybrid stock later known as the Samaritans. The Ten Tribes taken into captivity, sometimes called the Lost Tribes of Israel, must not be thought of as being absorbed by the peoples among whom they settled. Some undoubtedly were, but many others retained their Israelitish religion and traditions. Some became part of the Jewish dispersion, and others very likely returned with the exiles of Judah in 536 B.C. who were previously carried off into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in 606-586 B.C.

Israel, as a distinct nation, ceased to be, just as Amos and his prophet-successors warned. Any nation, no matter how blessed and privileged in the past, who contemptuously defies the laws of God and

shakes its fist at the throne of heaven must suffer the same annihilation!
Let all the nations of the earth take heed!

QUIZ

1. What does Amos intend Israel to see in the "cart pressed" down?
2. Would there not be some who would escape?
3. When did Israel's captivity come? Whom did God use to accomplish it? (cf. Isa. 10:5-19)
4. Is there a lesson to be learned by nations today from Israel?

PENITENCE PROMOTED—

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— THE LORD DOES NOT ROAR WITHOUT CAUSE

TEXT: 3:1-8

- 1 Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying,
- 2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities.
- 3 Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?
- 4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?
- 5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is set for him? shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all?
- 6 Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?
- 7 Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets.
- 8 The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?

QUERIES

- a. Doesn't God know any other people than Israelites?
- b. What is the message of the epigrams in verses 3-6?
- c. Does Jehovah reveal *every* thing He does to the prophets?

PARAPHRASE

Listen, you chosen people, to the indictment which the Lord brings against you—against all the covenant people which I brought up out of the land of Egypt! Be reasonable, and think: I chose you over all the other nations of the earth to grant special knowledge and privileges and you are unique in being blessed; it is logical, then, since you have openly defied Me and disobeyed Me that I should punish you with a special severity! Does not common sense tell you that when two people meet together at an appointed time and place there was a previous cause for such a meeting—an agreement to do so? Will a lion roar in the forest without cause—unless his prey is doomed? or will the young lion growl in his den if he has not taken his prey there for his feast? Does a bird ever get trapped unless someone places a trap there to catch it? or when you see a trap being sprung does it not indicate to you some cause behind its springing? What if the warning signal is blown on the trumpet in a city—will the people pay no attention to it and go on their way heedless? I have been blowing a warning trumpet in your ears over and over—do you not realize that the evils which have befallen you in the past were from Me as warnings? Most assuredly God will not visit His judgment upon anyone without first warning them by revealing it through His messengers. But I tell you truly, God has roared like a lion who is about to pounce on His prey—whoever does not fear is doomed! The Lord God has spoken! His prophet cannot remain silent—he must deliver the Lord's message!

SUMMARY

In a series of seven questions the Lord teaches a lesson in clear logical thinking in matters of sin and judgment, privilege and responsibility.

COMMENT

v. 1-2 HEAR THIS WORD . . . AGAINST THE WHOLE FAMILY WHICH I BROUGHT UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT . . . YOU ONLY HAVE I KNOWN . . . I WILL VISIT UPON YOU ALL YOUR INIQUITIES. God's indictment is against the whole covenant people. Judah has already been warned (2:4) that she will be judged. But for the moment this particular prophet is concerned with the northern kingdom, Israel. No other people on earth were, at that time, privileged to be the recipients of the grace of God and the oracles of God in such a measure as Israel. She was a favored nation in this respect. Much was given her, much was

expected! Romans 9, 10, 11 show in no uncertain terms that God's choice of Israel was not due to any necessary merit in the case of Israel whereby God owed it to them. Their special privilege came by the Divine sovereign choice of God. Their blessing was unmerited favor—grace! This unique distinction demanded from its very uniqueness a special obligation of reciprocal love and obedience on the part of Israel (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 4:5-8; 32:34; Psa. 147:19-20). With greater privilege comes more severe punishment if the obligations are despised (Lev. 26:14ff).

v. 3-6 SHALL TWO WALK TOGETHER, EXCEPT THEY HAVE AGREED? . . . SHALL THE TRUMPET BE BLOWN IN A CITY, AND THE PEOPLE NOT BE AFRAID? SHALL EVIL BEFALL A CITY, AND JEHOVAH HATH NOT DONE IT? In a series of seven questions the Lord teaches a lesson in clear logical thinking in matters pertaining to sin-punishment relationships. Reason demands repentance! Verse 3 has often been quoted in treatises on "Unity." However, verse 3 has nothing to do with the subject of unity. It is simply an illustration of the universal law of cause and effect! Two people do not meet and walk together (effect) without previously making some appointment (cause) or arrangement to do so. Just so, says Amos, since every effect has its cause, your sin will cause God's judgment to come upon you due to the special relationship between you and God and even as God promised in His word.

These people of Israel had rationalized their sins so long they had lost the ability to see the very basic principle of cause and effect and to apply this to their relationship to God. But God is roaring like a lion—does a lion roar in the forest unless his victim is doomed? God does not roar without a cause any more than a lion does!

Birds caught in a snare logically demands that someone previously had set the snare. And when one sees a snare being sprung he must logically reason that something caused it to spring.

If a mighty blast of the warning trumpet is blown in the city do the people pay no attention to it? Do not all the disasters happening even now in your cities and villages sound a warning trumpet to you that God is beginning His judgment? How senseless and indifferent can this nation be? But, just like the unbelieving and scoffing today, Israel probably rationalized, "All these droughts, famines, disasters, wars are bound to happen in every country." But the prophet warns them, "Shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?" Local and national calamities *are not* due merely to natural causes, are not only the consequence of human mistakes, or faulty legislation, or political folly, or inadequate statesmanship. These and other matters may be secondary

or contributory causes. But the Prime Mover of this Universe is Jehovah God! He has done it (Isa. 45:1-7)! God is the author of both *weal and woe!* He does what He does from a just cause and for a just and merciful purpose. He does what He does from an omniscient sovereignty! The cause is man's sin, against which God has warned man time and again. The purpose is to warn man against rebelling against his Creator and to call the sinner to repentance, back to his God, the highest Good! Whatever the Lord does, whether tribulation or triumph, is good (Rom. 8:28) Incidentally, there is excellent manuscript evidence today that Romans 8:28 should be translated, "*God works all things together for good . . . etc.*" instead of "All things work together for good . . . etc." *This divine sovereignty working all things, weal and woe, together to serve His purposes, is one of the exhilarating thrusts of prophetic literature!*

v. 7-8 SURELY THE LORD . . . WILL DO NOTHING, EXCEPT HE REVEAL HIS SECRET UNTO HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS . . . THE LORD . . . HATH SPOKEN; WHO CAN BUT PROPHECY? God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11-20); He is not willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9); so He revealed His secret plans for the judgment of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous to His prophets (watchmen and shepherds) (Isa. 6; Jer. 1, etc.) and they revealed them to man as facts to be believed; commands to be obeyed; warnings to be heeded; promises to be enjoyed. In the sure word of prophecy we have a "light shining in a dark place," (II Pet. 1:16-21); in His word we have all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3-4); in His word we have doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God might be complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work, (II Tim. 3:16). So the Lord has roared; who is so insensible that he will not fear? God has spoken; how can God's messenger be silent? Even as Paul said, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel . . ." Necessity is laid upon every man called of God (and all Christians are called of God); the love of Christ should constrain every man (II Cor. 5:11-15) and knowing the fear of the Lord, we should persuade men! The Lord has spoken; who can but preach!

QUIZ

1. In what way did God "know" the covenant people?
2. What scriptures should they have known that promised severe punishment if they forgot His commandments?
3. What universal principle of reasoning is taught in verses 3-6?

4. Is God actually the author of woe? What scripture says so?
5. Why does God bring woe upon men?
6. In what way is God justified when He punishes men for their sins?
7. Why should men who know God's will speak to other men about it?

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— ISRAEL'S SINS ASTONISH EVEN THE HEATHEN

TEXT: 3:9-15

- 9 Publish ye in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold what great tumults are therein, and what oppression in the midst thereof.
- 10 For they know not to do right, saith Jehovah, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.
- 11 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: An adversary there shall be, even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be plundered.
- 12 Thus saith Jehovah: As the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued that sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed.
- 13 Hear ye, and testify against the house of Jacob, saith the Lord Jehovah, the God of hosts.
- 14 For in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.
- 15 And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why "publish in the palaces" of the heathen the sins of Israel?
- b. Who will the "adversary" be?
- c. What are "winter and summer houses?"

PARAPHRASE

The Lord says to the prophets, Go to Ashdod, whom Israel regards as a godless heathen city, and go to Egypt where Israel saw and experienced the ungodliness of that people, and tell them to come and see

the overflowing excess of the sins and abominations of Israel. Tell these godless nations to come and be astonished at the godlessness of Israel where justice and righteousness is topsy-turvy. Israel does not even know how to do right. Her people are so eager to sin they pile one sin upon another in their palatial mansions like people storing up treasures. So, says the Lord, I will allow an enemy of Israel to surround her country and this enemy will bring upon Israel humiliating defeat and plundering and looting of Israel's treasures. Furthermore, all that will be left of Israel will be a few pieces like what a shepherd is able to gather up after a lion has taken one of his sheep for a meal. This is what will be left of all of Israel's luxurious trappings. Now, you heathen people, as you bear witness against Israel's profligacy, also listen to the judgment that the Great God of All The Universe is going to bring upon her. When I judge Israel I am going to especially overthrow her religion and show its impotence. I will completely tear down her altars at the very center of her religious worship in Bethel. I am going to make shambles out of all the ivory-inlaid palatial mansions—summer and winter houses—all these great houses shall come to an end, says the Lord.

SUMMARY

The heathen are called to testify that the sins of Israel are so great that the judgment God is about to bring will be more than just.

COMMENT

v. 9-10 PUBLISH YE . . . AT ASHDOD, AND IN . . . EGYPT . . . ASSEMBLE YOURSELVES UPON THE MOUNTAINS OF SAMARIA, AND BEHOLD . . . TUMULTS . . . OPPRESSIONS . . . FOR THEY KNOW NOT TO DO RIGHT . . . K & D point out that these two heathen nations are called to "(1) see the acts of violence, and the abominations in the palaces of Samaria; and (2) . . . bear witness against Israel (ver. 13)." This, of course, implies that the sins of Israel are even worse than those of these heathen. Israel thought of the Philistines and the Egyptians as the worst of sinners. If such heathen as these are called to look upon the ungodliness of Israel, how great must have been her ungodliness! Everything was upside down. They were calling evil good and good evil (Isa. 5:20). They had perverted every good thing into something evil. Justice and order were overthrown by open violence (shades of 20th century America)! When they refused to have God in their knowledge (Hosea 4:6; 5:15—6:3; 6:6; 7:1-7; 7:14-16), God gave them up (Rom. 1:18-32) and they became worse than the heathen—insensible

to practically everything that was right! They not only did not know how to do right they did not know they should do right! This is what disregard for the revelation of God leads to—idolatry, ignorance, licentiousness!

v. 11-12 . . . AN ADVERSARY THERE SHALL BE . . . THY PALACES SHALL BE PLUNDERED . . . AS THE SHEPHERD RESCUETH . . . TWO LEGS, OR A PIECE OF AN EAR, SO SHALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BE . . . Just who this enemy (adversary) will be God does not choose to announce through Amos. From prophets very nearly contemporary with Amos (Hosea, Isaiah), we learn that this enemy shall be Assyria. The enemy will surround their beautiful, luxurious country with all its ivory-inlaid palaces and mansions and tear it to pieces. Israel will be so completely destroyed that about all that will be left is a few pieces, like what is left of a sheep when a lion gets through with it! The rich, luxuriant pleasurable things the rich have gotten themselves by oppressing the poor will be taken away from them by the Assyrians. They will have nothing left!

v. 13-15 . . . TESTIFY AGAINST THE HOUSE OF JACOB . . . I WILL ALSO VISIT THE ALTARS OF BETH-EL; AND THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR SHALL BE CUT OFF . . . I WILL SMITE THE WINTER-HOUSE WITH THE SUMMER-HOUSE . . . Now the heathen are called to witness the punishment Jehovah is going to visit upon reprobate Israel. *Jacob* is a term used (cf. Hosea 10:11) along with Israel, Ephraim and Samaria, to signify the northern kingdom. It may be, however, as K & D say, "Jacob is the whole of Israel, of the twelve tribes, as in ver. 1; for Judah was also to learn a lesson from the destruction of Samaria." The smiting off of the horns of the altar signifies the complete destruction of the altar. It may also have this special significance: the four horns on the four corners of the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:2), to which the sacrificial blood was applied (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 4:25-34; 8:15), were symbolic of sure, reliable forgiveness and salvation. To these horns clung the guilty transgressors for safety (I Kings 1:50ff; 2:28-38; Ex. 21:14). So, even the symbols of salvation were to be torn off the altars of Bethel, which had neither God's permission nor promise, no right of existence, no authority to forgive sins, no power to save. Though nominally built in honor of Jehovah, they were tangible evidence of Israel's rebellion, an abomination in the eyes of the Lord. The Lord will strike down Bethel, the very heart of Israel's religion. He will wipe out this vain, idolatrous religion from the land. Together with the altar at Bethel, He will tear down the luxurious homes of the rich and great built by the blood, sweat and tears of the oppressed poor. They had built them-

selves winter-houses and summer-houses. Ahab's palace at Jezreel evidently was his summer home (I Kings 21:1; II Kings 9:30ff). These homes were expensive with walls and furniture inlaid with costly ivory. These wicked and powerful rich (their power was dependent upon their riches) will be stripped of the riches in which they so vainly trusted. They would be powerless, destitute, prisoners! How foolish men are to seek satisfaction, joy, power in the fleeting, temporal, vain *things* of this temporal existence. We are reminded of Solomon (Ecclesiastes) and the Foolish Farmer in Luke twelve!

QUIZ

1. What does the calling of the heathen nations point out concerning the extent of Israel's sin?
2. What happens to people when they refuse to have God in their knowledge?
3. What did Amos mean to say to Israel by the figure of a shepherd rescuing pieces of his sheep?
4. What did tearing off the horns of the altars of Bethel signify?
5. Why would the people of Israel especially feel the loss of their luxurious homes?

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD'S HOLINESS DEMANDS PUNISHMENT FOR EVIL

TEXT: 4:1-5

- 1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, that oppress the poor, that crush the needy, that say unto their lords, Bring, and let us drink.
- 2 The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that they shall take you away with hooks, and your residue with fish-hooks.
- 3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every one straight before her; and ye shall cast yourselves into Harmon, saith Jehovah.
- 4 Come to Beth-el, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days;
- 5 and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill-offerings and publish them: for this pleaseth you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Who is Amos calling "kine" of Bashan?
- b. How would Israel be taken away "with hooks?"
- c. Is the prophet authorizing the people to transgress?

PARAPHRASE

Listen to Me, you fat cows of Bashan living in Israel—you sensuous women who encourage your husbands to rob and oppress the poor and crush the needy—you debauched women who nag your husbands to supply you with intoxicants: The Lord God affirms most certainly that by His holiness which cannot tolerate unrighteousness, He is bringing days of judgment upon you. Your enemies will come and violently tear you away from your place of comfort and ease just as a fisherman hooks a fish and takes it out of its natural habitat. You will be taken prisoner out of your city not through the gates because they will have been destroyed; no, you will go out through the great gaping holes in the walls of your city. And because of your sins you will have thrown yourselves into captivity toward Hermon. God ahead and sacrifice to idols at Bethel and Gilgal; if you offer slain sacrifices every morning, and tithe every three days you only multiply your apostasy from the living God. You have so completely perverted true religion that you think you can, by your excessive zeal in offering even leavened sacrifices and by legally commanding "freewill" offerings, continue on in your sins, fooling the Holy God. This is not because you don't know what God's holiness means, but because you love to do evil.

SUMMARY

God's holy nature, which they knew but refused to live up to, warns them of the impending judgment upon their unholiness.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . YE KINE OF BASHAN . . . THAT SAY UNTO THEIR LORDS, BRING, AND LET US DRINK. Most commentators feel that Amos is referring to the sensuous women of Israel when he calls them "cows of Bashan." Bashan was noted for its fat, sleek, cattle well-fed on Bashan's luxurious pasture lands (cf. Deut. 32:14; Micah 7:14; Num. 32). These indulgent women were pampered by their husbands (lord) who in turn had to oppress the poor and crush the needy to supply their wives with the means of debauchery, (cf. Amos 6:1-7). Compare Isa. 3:16ff and

32:9-13 for further description of the wantonness of the women of Israel. There are many "cows of Bashan" today in the world. Sensuous women who tempt their husbands to evil scheming in order that they may have the means to continue in their libertine living.

v. 2-3 THE LORD . . . HATH SWORN BY HIS HOLINESS . . . THEY SHALL TAKE YOU AWAY WITH HOOKS . . . YE SHALL CAST YOURSELVES INTO HARMON . . . These poor and needy have no recourse for justice. They are exploited even by the judges who should stand for justice. But the Lord, because He is holy, righteous, just, merciful, rises up as their Vindicator. The Perfect Holiness of Jehovah cannot tolerate evil (Psa. 5:4-5; 11:5), especially in a people whose call and blessing was that they should be a holy people! The rich of Israel were making no attempt to be holy in their living. We must be holy if we wish to be in communion with God (cf. Rom. 6:19; Heb. 12:14; Isa. 6:3; Col. 3:12; I Pet. 1:15-16; 2:5; II Pet. 3:11, etc.). We like the way John wrote it, "Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous," (I Jn. 3:7). There is the imputed holiness God gives us through what Christ accomplished on our behalf; on the other hand there is a holiness of living and thinking which we ourselves must work—motivated and energized, of course, by that holiness of His which He freely bestows upon us through the Gospel.

Because of their unholiness God would allow their enemy (the Assyrians) to come and violently "jerk" them out of their luxurious fish-bowl like a man who hooks a fish jerks it out of the water. They will be violently torn from their pleasant surroundings and caused to flounder and thresh in agony as a fish out of water. Amos is not referring to rings literally placed in the ears and noses of slaves, as was the custom then, but he is simply describing the sudden and awful change of circumstances that are about to come upon these debauched rich.

The gates of their cities will be so utterly destroyed and piled high with debris from war's destructive forces and their walls so completely torn down that the people will be marched off to captivity through the great gaping holes in the walls instead of the gates. These people of Israel, because of their sins, brought upon themselves this captivity. They are said to have cast themselves into this foreign land "Harmon" (which most translators believe is the territory beyond Mt. Hermon, or Damascus and beyond.)

v. 4-5 COME TO BETH-EL, AND TRANSGRESS; TO GILGAL, AND MULTIPLY TRANSGRESSION; . . . SACRIFICE EVERY MORNING . . . TITHES EVERY THREE DAYS . . . SACRIFICE THAT WHICH IS LEAVENED . . . PROCLAIM FREEWILL-OFFERINGS . . . FOR THIS PLEASETH YOU . . . Amos uses the figure of speech called *irony* here to show Israel the folly of her sins. Irony is a "kind of ridicule which exposes the errors or faults of others by seeming to adopt, approve, or defend them . . ." Other examples of the use of irony in the Bible are Job. 12:2; I Kings 18:27; Eccl. 11:9; Judges 10:14; I Kings 22:15; I Cor. 4:8. Amos was *not* approving or authorizing the people to sin! He as much as says, "Go ahead and do the sins you are doing, you are only multiplying God's displeasure with you in so doing!" They were "presuming upon the forbearance and patience of God . . . and by their hard and impenitent heart *storing up* wrath for themselves . . ." (cf. Rom. 2:4-5).

They had so perverted true religion of Jehovah they thought that by their superabundance of offerings they could fool God into thinking they were righteous. They did not stop with offering sacrifices of unleavened cakes upon the altar; to make sure they offered an abundance they even offered some of the leavened cakes (forbidden by the Mosaic law) as well. Not only this but the offerings which were supposed to be motivated out of a purely spontaneous impulse (freewill-offerings) (cf. Lev. 22:18ff; Deut. 12:6) they forced from people by making laws regarding "freewill offerings!" This was entirely the wrong attitude toward the Holy One of Israel, for He looks not on the outward man but upon the heart! Isaiah just a few short years later brought scathing denunciation against such conduct (Isa. 1:1ff). Israel is less sensible than the ass or the ox! They do not know God! But this is not because God has not revealed Himself—not because they have no opportunity to know Him—not because He is unknowable! No; they love to have it so! This type of religion pleases them. It soothes their consciences. Men who do evil, hate the light and love the darkness, because their deeds are evil and if they should come to the light their deeds would be exposed—then they would see how utterly vain and foolish their deeds are (cf. Jn. 3:18-21). Any man who thinks God is pleased with a trust in forms and rituals is foolish. Of course, there are certain specific forms of doctrine which we are obliged, by the very nature God Himself (holy, loving, trustworthy, omnipotent) to perform. But our faith is not in the act or rite itself but in the Person who commanded it! Again, if we refuse to do the thing which God has clearly commanded in the New Testament, it simply shows we do not trust the Person who commanded it—we trust our own wisdom more! On the

other hand, a mere perfunctory repetition of rituals does not necessarily mean we trust God the Person either. Sooner or later, just how much we trust Him, love Him and want to be like Him shows up in our daily living! This was true of Israel then, and it is true of all men now. For a list of Old Testament saints who trusted God and what that trust led them to do, see Hebrews, the eleventh chapter.

QUIZ

1. What does the phrase "kine of Bashan" describe?
2. Where did their "lords" get the "drink" demanded by these "cows of Bashan?"
3. Why does the Lord swear by "His holiness" that they shall be judged?
4. Why would they "go out at the breaches?"
5. To what extent had these people perverted the worship of God?
6. Why is God not pleased with mere repetition of religious ritual?

REASON CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— CHASTENING IN THE PAST SHOULD MAKE THEM THINK

TEXT: 4:6-11

- 6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.
- 7 And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.
- 8 So two or three cities wandered into one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.
- 9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive-trees hath the palmerworm devoured: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.
- 10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I slain with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I have made the stench of your camp to come up even into your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.

- 11 I have overthroned cities among you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. What is "cleanness of teeth?"
- b. Is God still responsible for famine, drought, war, as in Amos' day?
- c. What does Amos mean that Israel was "a brand plucked out of the burning?"

PARAPHRASE

I have tried all means of turning you to me, yet you love to persist in your wickedness. I have brought famine and starvation upon this nation and yet you have not returned unto me, says the Lord. I have caused drought; I have withheld the latter rain (three months before the harvest) which is sorely needed for the proper maturing of the crops. On the other hand, in order to show you *even more clearly* that the sending and withholding of rain belongs to Me, I have caused it to rain here and there, upon one town and one field, and not upon others. This caused such drought that the people of the areas where it had not rained were forced fainting of thirst to stagger great distances for their supplies of water, and then couldn't get enough to supply their needs; yet you did not return unto me, says the Lord. I smote your grain crops with blight and dry-rot; I sent locusts to strip and devour your orchards; yet you have not returned unto Me, says the Lord. I have sent among you all the diseases of Egypt; I have caused your young men to be slain in wars; I have caused your war horses to be slain; I have caused the stench of the slain to come into your nostrils as a reminder of your sins; yet you have not returned unto me, says the Lord. I have brought you to the verge of complete destruction as when I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and you were left destitute of everything like brands plucked out of the fire; yet you did not return unto me, says the Lord.

SUMMARY

The prophet calls Israel's attention to past judgments of God in an attempt to get them to repent. These judgments took place at different times all during Israel's history. Amos has arranged them in climactic form.

COMMENT

v. 6 . . . I . . . HAVE GIVEN YOU CLEANNES OF TEETH . . . AND WANT OF BREAD . . . The phrase "cleanness of teeth," means lack of food as is evident from the parallel "want of bread." This is what God told the people through Moses in Deut. 28:47-57. This is fulfilled in II Kings 6:24-31. A mother eating the flesh of her own child is recorded also by Josephus in his account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Romans. God's judgments are sure! Not one word of His will fall to the ground unfulfilled! Yet Israel did not repent!

v. 7-8 . . . I . . . HAVE WITHHOLDEN RAIN FROM YOU . . . AND CAUSED IT TO RAIN UPON ONE CITY . . . AND . . . NOT UPON ANOTHER . . . TWO OR THREE CITIES WANDERED UNTO ONE CITY TO DRINK . . . AND WERE NOT SATISFIED . . . At times God withheld rain as a call for the people of Israel to repent (cf. Lev. 26:19-20; Deut. 28:23). The rains which were withheld in this particular case were the so-called "latter rains" (three months before harvest). These rains fall in the latter half of February and the first half of March and are of the greatest importance to the development of the grain crops. Thus when the drought came, the crops failed. This is a matter of record in I Kings 8:35-36; II Kings 17-18; Isa. 5-6; Jer. 14, etc. But in order to show man even more clearly that He uses natural forces and that their sending and withholding belong to Him, God caused it to rain on one village and another village, while at the same time other villages received no rain at all. Rivers and wells dried up in these latter areas and the people had to travel long distances for their water supply and even then could not get enough to satisfy their needs. The word "wander" comes from an original word which means literally "to stagger, to totter," and pictures the people staggering, almost fainting with thirst, as they go from village to village in search of water! Yet Israel did not see the hand of God in these tribulations—they felt no chastening—they heard no call to repentance!

v. 9 . . . SMITTEN YOU WITH BLASTING AND MILDEW . . . YOUR . . . VINEYARDS . . . HATH THE PALMERWORM DEVoured . . . Their grain fields were either burned up by the "blasting" hot and dry winds or they were rotted by mildew (cf. Gen. 41:6, 27; Deut. 28:22). Their gardens and orchards were gnawed and stripped bare by the locusts (cf. Joel 1:4; 2:25; Deut. 28:39).

v. 10 . . . SENT AMONG YOU THE PESTILENCE AFTER THE MANNER OF EGYPT . . . I HAVE MADE THE STENCH OF YOUR CAMP TO COME UP . . . INTO YOUR NOSTRILS . . . God sent among the people of Israel many diseases in epidemic form "after the manner" that He had done in the days of Moses to Egypt (cf. Lev. 26:25; Deut. 28:60; Isa. 10:24; Ezek. 20:30). The Roman historian Pliny has called Egypt, "the mother of contagious diseases," because of the many epidemics arising there even in his day. God sent wars upon Israel. Often times, in crowded, unsanitary military camps epidemics took their toll along with the slain of the battlefields so that sword and sickness decimated the ranks of Israel's young, virile men who were the hope of the nation. The slain warriors and the slain battle-horses sometimes filled the air with that sickening stench of rotting flesh which is at times unbearable. But even this horrible stench did not remind them of their sins! For a record of Israel's decimation in war see II Kings 8:12; 13:3, 7.

v. 11 I HAVE OVERTHROWN CITIES AMONG YOU, AS . . . SODOM AND GOMORRAH . . . YE WERE AS A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE BURNING . . . Amos mentions this last judgment of God, not because it is last chronologically, but because it furnishes the prophet with a literary vehicle called "climax." Amos' list of five judgments of the Lord are given in an emotional ascension whereby a climax is reached at the last. The Lord has also called Israel to repentance by sending destructions upon her cities similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Israel was brought to the verge of utter ruin and overthrow more than once and was only saved like a firebrand snatched at the last moment from the consuming flames of the fire (cf. Zech. 3:2). See II Kings 13:4, 7 for the devastation of the land (cf. Isa. 1:9 also).

Predicting the future was not, as many suppose it to have been, the primary function of the prophet. The supreme task of the prophet was to interpret the events of history in the light of the will and purpose of God. The prophets saw the hand of God in the events of daily life and this they saw by the divine leading of the Holy Spirit within them (I Pet. 1:10-12; II Pet. 1:16-21). They sought to answer the pressing questions confronted in man's struggle with the totality of life. How was God related to the turbulent events of the world in the time of Amos? What was the relationship between the calamities, the crises, and the disappointments in life to the will of God? These same questions are asked today and may be answered by the same principles proclaimed by these Spirit-filled prophets! A correlation of

history and the divine will is a crying, personal problem in every age. How does one relate the divine will and the wars, epidemics, tragedies, famines and other like calamities in the twentieth century? The prophets of Israel would give little support to the modern protest that "the church ought to preach the gospel and leave everything else alone." For the prophets, the message of God was so interwoven into the fabric of daily life that the two could not be separated.

The underlying principle of all prophetic literature is the fact that judgment in history has a redemptive purpose. It is intended to cause man to see his desperate need for God, and subsequently to turn to His fellowship and communion. In the use of these disasters as a form of judgment, one is confronted with the most important aspect of the entire problem of God's will and natural calamity. The most significant point to consider is not the ultimate or secondary source, a full explanation of the justice of such deeds, or even an attempt to exonerate God. The most important consideration is that of man's response to such catastrophe. Do acts of this kind lead to a new awareness of God's sovereignty? Do they result in a new committal on the part of man to God. This is the significant element! Such calamities serve to cause man to recognize his finitude in the face of an overwhelming disaster, thereby opening the way for repentance and communion with God. Let all men know that the point of emphasis should be placed ultimately, not upon reason, but upon response. As Amos did, so must modern man consider as of primary significance the nature of his response to catastrophe. The moral reason behind such events, while important, must remain inexplicable. We cannot explain them perfectly but we can act in the light of them.

In view of this, history should serve to make man aware of his own dependence. Catastrophe should draw man near to the heart of God in an ever deepening communion. May it never be said that the catastrophes of history failed to draw this generation nearer to God. May it never be said, "Yet you did not return to me."

For further study on this subject we refer you to our Special Study, "The Prophetic Philosophy of History," and comments on similar passages from the five prophetic books treated in this commentary. See also our notes on Joel 2:1-11 in this commentary.

Naturally, the question will be asked, what of the righteous who must suffer at the same time God's catastrophic natural disasters are occurring? There are at least three biblical principles by which we may understand the so-called "suffering of the righteous." In the first place,

all the righteousness of the righteous is purely relative. That is, all our righteousness is as filthy rags relative to God's perfect righteousness, therefore we deserve *more* suffering than we endure here on earth no matter how good we are. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and we are only accounted as righteous by the grace of God which we appreciate by faith. If God were only just—if He paid us in kind for our behaviour—we would suffer worse than we do! Secondly, for the true saint of God, in both O.T. and New Testament times, suffering, trial, tribulation all serve to strengthen and purify. The Hebrew epistle has a great deal to say about this second principle. One of the most significant passages is: "For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised" Heb. 10:36. Then, there is the passage in Hebrews 12:3-11, of course. (Consider also these passages: II Cor. 1:3-11; 12-7; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-19, etc.). Thirdly, if the innocent be caused to suffer and die with the guilty remember these words, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them" Rev. 14:13; and, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" Psa. 116:15. Compare also II Cor. 4:16-18; II Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:21-24. We cannot understand, perhaps, but God has revealed enough of His governing principles that we should be able by faith to accept His sovereign will and look forward in hope to the consummation of all things. Why should the innocent baby of David and Bathsheba die because of their sin? Why should the man be born blind in order that the glory of God might be shown through him (Jn. 9)? Why should the faithful Jews be taken into captivity with the unfaithful ones? God has not told us all the "whys" but He has told us some of them—enough for us to make a response, a commitment in faith.

QUIZ

1. When did Israel suffer from famine and to what extent did they suffer?
2. When did Israel suffer from drought?
3. Why did God, even in drought times, cause it to rain in some places?
4. Why send pestilences "after the manner of Egypt?"
5. How was Israel "plucked out of the burning . . . ?"
6. How did Amos interpret or relate these disasters to the will of God?
7. What three principles explain, in part, the suffering of the righteous along with the wicked?

REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD'S CHARACTER AND WILL REVEALED

TEXT: 4:12-13

- 12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.
- 13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth; Jehovah, the God of hosts, is his name.

QUERIES

- a. How is Israel to "prepare to meet" its God?
- b. Whose "thought" does Jehovah declare to man?

PARAPHRASE

On account of your impenitence, O Israel, I am about to visit you with great and terrible judgment. Therefore, now, while there is time, prepare to avert your doom by repenting when you meet your God in judgment. Remember, the One you are going to meet in judgment is Lord of all the universe; He is the One who created the mountains and the winds; He is the one who, through His prophets, reveals to men the thoughts and intents of their hearts and He judges by the secret thoughts of the heart as well as by the outward actions. He is the one who created, who sustains and who controls the universe. Jehovah, the Omnipotent and Omniscient One, is His name!

SUMMARY

Israel, in light of her past hard-heartedness, is warned to prepare to meet the Lord of the universe in judgment.

COMMENT

v. 12 . . . PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL . . . This is one of those electrifying phrases so characteristic of the prophets. It has been repeated over and over through the centuries by preachers, who, like Amos, and Paul the apostle after him, "knowing the terror of the Lord, would fain persuade men!" Due to Israel's past impenitence when called to repent by national disasters, the coming judgment, if impenitence persists, will be so terrible God does not even choose to delineate it. But this blunt, piercing statement is a last call of God to His "called

REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE 4:12, 13

out ones" to perfect themselves in holiness. He does not say to them "prepare to meet your doom" as if their doom were irrevocably sealed, but, "prepare (that is, get yourself ready by repenting) to avert your doom." We are reminded of Jesus' warnings (Mark 13:32-37, etc.). We are also reminded of the perverted, ignorant bliss of these people of Israel who said they were actually looking forward to the Day of Jehovah (cf. Amos 5:18ff). They were wilfully ignorant of their sin and thus blissfully ignorant of what the Day of Jehovah would mean when it came. For them, if they did not repent, they would meet their God in darkness, not light!

v. 13 . . . JEHOVAH, THE GOD OF HOSTS, IS HIS NAME . . . Israel is reminded that they are not dealing with one of the impotent gods of the nations of whom they had grown so fond. Idolatry (ancient or modern) is convenient! When one creates his own gods he may manipulate his god to serve his own purposes. One may shelve it, gag it, blindfold it and even destroy it at will. One need not fear it nor feel any responsibility to it. But with Jehovah it is as different as light is from dark! He is the omnipotent Creator; He is the omniscient Revealer; He is the beneficent Sustainer. God is the searcher of the heart (Jer. 17:10; Psa. 139:2). Israel is reminded that when they meet their God, and meet Him they surely will for He is not a weak, man-made god, unable to bring His word to pass, He will judge their innermost secret thoughts and intentions (cf. Heb. 4:12; I Sam. 16:7). He is Lord of the universe; He commands all the heavenly and earthly hosts (Psa. 103:20ff) and every creature and creation must reckon with Him! Let the nature of God call you to repentance, O Israel, both then and now!

QUIZ

1. What did Amos intend to say to Israel by "prepare to meet thy God . . ."?
2. What did the people of Israel think about the coming Day of Jehovah?
3. Why did Amos elaborate on the nature of God in this context?

REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD'S WORD AGAINST ISRAEL

TEXT: 5:1-5

- 1 Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel.

- 2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is cast down upon her land; there is none to raise her up.
- 3 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: The city that went forth a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went forth a hundred shall have ten left, to the house of Israel.
- 4 For thus saith Jehovah unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live;
- 5 but seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.

QUERIES

- a. Who is "the virgin of Israel?"
- b. Why only 1/10th left in each city?
- c. Why is "Beer-sheba" mentioned in company with Bethel and Gilgal?

PARAPHRASE

Listen, O house of Israel, to this mournful funeral dirge which I have begun to chant over you! You were destined from the beginning to be kept inviolate from heathen invaders like a virgin is kept chaste, but you shall be ravaged and die a violent death and there will be none to save you. For the Lord God says, Every city of Israel which marches out to war will be so utterly destroyed that only a small remnant of people will survive in each city. Again, the Lord says unto Israel, There is still time—Seek Me and live; seek the idolatrous places and ways of Bethel and Gilgal, or make a pilgrimage to the idols at Beersheba, and you will go into captivity and become nothingness just as these idolatrous cities are to become!

SUMMARY

Amos wants to impress even more dramatically before Israel her headlong rush into ruin, destruction and captivity. He does so by setting before Israel Jehovah God as the Fountain head of life and the destiny of the centers of idolatry.

COMMENT

v. 1-2 . . . A LAMENTATION OVER YOU . . . THE VIRGIN OF ISRAEL IS FALLEN . . . Amos the prophet, on behalf of God, begins chanting Israel's funeral dirge. And this at the very apex of her prosperity! One

can surely visualize with what unpopularity Amos' preaching would be greeted in Israel! He is mocked, ridiculed and slandered as a preacher of "doom" and a pessimist. The phrase "virgin of Israel," is a "poetical personification of the population of a city or of a kingdom, as a daughter," with a further idea of being unconquerable expressed by the term "virgin." God had intended Israel's destiny to be one of separateness from the heathen world and as a result He would keep her inviolate from foreign invaders. Israel was to be pure, chaste, protected, untouched—but now she has played the harlot and she will be attacked, ravaged and brought to a violent end! For other figurative uses of "virgin" in this same sense see Isa. 47:1-2, etc. When God gives her up to be spoiled by foreign invaders there will be none to help her!

v. 3-5 . . . THE CITY THAT WENT FORTH A THOUSAND SHALL HAVE A HUNDRED LEFT . . . SEEK YE ME, AND YE SHALL LIVE . . . BUT SEEK NOT BETH-EL, NOR . . . GILGAL . . . BEER-SHEBA . . . Amos is not attempting to be mathematically precise when he predicts that only ten per cent of each city will be saved from total destruction, he is merely speaking figuratively (cf. Isa. 6:13) to say that only a very small remnant of the whole nation will be saved from utterly perishing. This was fulfilled exactly (cf. II Kings 17). Such total ruin would, of course, be the farthest thing from the minds of most of the people of Israel in these days of peace, luxury, prosperity and influence. Much like the people of the Roman empire just before its fall was the attitude of the people of Israel. We are fearful that there are many Americans who cannot see the danger signs in our generation—crime, government corruption, lewdness, selfishness, anarchy, and perversion of standards in almost every avenue of life from sex to art and music to law and order!

Yet God pleads with Israel once more. Seek Me, and live! Jehovah is the Spring of Life (cf. Jer. 2:13; Psa. 36: 10); He is longsuffering and does not take pleasure in the death of any of His creatures (cf. Ezek. 18:31-32; II Pet. 3:9). But Jehovah can only be sought and found through His revelation! They will not find Him at Bethel or Gilgal or Beersheba. These are centers of idolatry, false teaching, false worship; they will find there only ruin, destruction and captivity for that is what God has planned for these places! Beersheba, although in Judah the southern kingdom, is mentioned evidently because, being sacred to Jewish history (Gen. 21:33; 26:24; 46:1) it had been made into a place of idolatrous worship, to which people of the northern kingdom went on pilgrimages frequently.

Irresponsible conduct, whether within or without the religious structures of the day, cannot continue unabated without experiencing inevitable retribution. This is a moral law of the universe just as inevitable as any physical "law of nature!" If man will not hear the word of God warning of judgment in His revelation, it is only left for man to experience that judgment in history. Amos proclaimed that Israel was dead! The people did not know it, nor did they want to know it (7:10ff)! Although Israel continued to flourish for almost forty years after Amos' prophecy before national extinction came, yet, for all practical purposes, she was dead when Amos was preaching; thus he speaks of her future as if it were already present. Is it only extreme pessimism to say, "America is dead?" Could there be any parallel between Israel's condition and America's? If so, there must be a parallel looked for in their destinies! Perhaps it is not yet too late for America, even as it was not too late for Israel. Perhaps if America will seek Jehovah in His revelation—His word—she will find Him and live. Only let her not seek life in the many idols her people have made for there she will find only false teaching, false worship and death!

QUIZ

1. What is a "lamentation" and why did Amos begin one over Israel?
2. Why did he refer to Israel as a "fallen virgin?"
3. Why make a contrast between seeking Jehovah and Bethel, Gilgal or Beersheba?
4. Could there be a parallel between Israel's condition and America's?

REVELATION CALLS FOR REPENTANCE— GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE AND OMNISCIENCE

TEXT: 5:6-13

- 6 Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour and there be none to quench it in Beth-el.
- 7 Ye who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth,
- 8 seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; (Jehovah is his name;)
- 9 that bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong, so that destruction cometh upon the fortress.

- 10 They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.
- 11 Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof.
- 12 For I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins; ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate from their *right*.
- 13 Therefore he that is prudent shall keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time.

QUERIES

- a. What is turning justice to "wormwood"?
- b. What is turning the "shadow of death into the morning?"
- c. Why shall the prudent keep silence?

PARAPHRASE

Again I say to you, Israel, Seek the Lord and live or else He will leap like devouring fire through your nation and consume her, and none of the false gods of Bethel will be able to stop Him. You evil men who turn justice into a bitter pill for the poor and oppressed, righteousness is trampled into the dust by you; you had better seek the Great Creator, the Omnipotent One, who created the Seven Stars and the constellation Orion; He is omnipotent also in His government of the universe for He turns the deepest misery into prosperity and light or turns the bright day of prosperity into the dark night of adversity; He calls to the waters of the sea to pour themselves over the earth in terrible floods to judge the wicked and no strong man and no fortress can defy Him for He is the Omnipotent God, Jehovah! Any man who dares to stand for righteousness and justice is hated. You may have built great houses but you will not live in them; you may have planted pleasant vineyards but you will never enjoy even the first wine that is produced by them; all because you have oppressed the poor and unjustly extorted measurements of wheat from them as bribes for the evil judges. I am the Omniscient One and I know the multitude of your transgressions and the magnitude of your sins; you make war on those who want to be just, you pervert justice by taking bribes and you refuse to help those who are needy and seek redress of wrong. On account of this time of wide-spread moral corruption, the man who plays it smart will be silent since all speaking and warning brings persecution.

SUMMARY

God, through the prophet Amos, reveals the corruption of the Israelites thus displaying His omniscience and contrasts that with His omnipotence in creation and government. This adds force to the warning and the predictions of judgment.

COMMENT

v. 6 SEEK JEHOVAH, AND YE SHALL LIVE; LEST HE BREAK OUT LIKE FIRE . . . The prophet repeats his call to the people that Jehovah (which includes His Word for this is where He has revealed His person and His will) is their source of life. To turn to Him is the only alternative to inevitable destruction. If they do not seek Him (where He is supposed to be sought) He will "break out" like a fire, He will become a roaring inferno which will consume the whole nation of Israel (house of Joseph) and none of their false gods and false religious practices at Bethel will be able to stop the judgment; they are powerless, they are dumb (cf. Isa. 41:21-29; 44:6-20). He is omnipotent; He has the authority and power to grant life or He has the authority and power to take it away. Israel must choose the alternative course from the one she is now following if she would have life.

v. 7-9 YE . . . TURN JUSTICE TO WORMWOOD . . . SEEK HIM THAT MAKETH THE PLEIADES . . . AND . . . SHADOW OF DEATH INTO . . . MORNING . . . AND MAKETH THE DAY DARK WITH NIGHT . . . THAT CALLETH FOR THE WATERS OF THE SEA . . . THAT BRINGETH SUDDEN DESTRUCTION . . . Wormwood is a species of plant related to our western sagebrush. It was the oriental source of a much used oil obtained from the dried leaves and tops of the plant. Absinthe, a liqueur, the continuous use of which leads to mental deterioration and even death, derives its flavor from this oil (cf. Lam. 3:15, 19). The plant is a symbol of bitterness. The rich and powerful of Israel had perverted justice (that which is supposed to be sweet, pure, refreshing and vital) into bitterness and rotteness. They were wiping their feet on every semblance of right—they had trampled it down to the ground. It is difficult to imagine a society so corrupt. Yet history records other eras just as corrupt (e.g. last days of Roman empire; Dark Ages). In certain areas of our big cities justice is just as severely perverted. But again, the Lord appeals to the people on the basis of His omnipotence. Contrasted with their present condition of being in the darkness of sin, He, who made the starry heavens is able to turn their deepest misery into the glorious light of morning. He is also able to take what may appear to their sin-seared consciences as prosperity and turn it into a dark night

of adversity. This calls to our mind the sublime statement of God's sovereignty in Isaiah 45:5-7: "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I gird you, though you do not know me, that men may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am the Lord, who do all these things." This passage is in a context where God, through Isaiah, is foretelling (by approximately 200 years before his birth) of the service Cyrus, future king of Persia, is going to render to God and His people! Blessing and curse both come from the Lord to serve His sovereign purposes—it is up to man to choose which he will have! Yes, He even commands the seas and the rivers and brings about the catastrophic floods with sudden destruction upon wickedness. Man will never build a fortress, a bomb shelter, or an underground command complex strong enough to withstand the hand of the Omnipotent God!

V. 10-12 THEY HATE HIM THAT REPROVETH IN THE GATE . . . YE HAVE BUILT HOUSES OF HEWN STONE, BUT YE SHALL NOT DWELL IN THEM . . . FOR I KNOW HOW MANIFOLD ARE YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS . . . Now the omniscience of the Lord is revealed. He is not blind and deaf! He knows both the multitude and the magnitude of their sins. They despise anyone who takes a stand for righteousness and justice. The only persons they like are those who trample and oppress the poor and demand bribes for judgments. This reminds us of the words of Jesus, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world . . . therefore the world hates you" (Jn. 15:19). "Birds of a feather, flock together!" From their "blood money" they have built magnificent plantations—great houses and rich vineyards. How many tears and moans of the starving went into the ill-gotten gain of the rich and influential one can only guess! They have built them, but they shall not dwell in them—they shall not enjoy the harvest of their vineyards. The Lord will fulfill His threat (Deut. 28:30; Micah 6:15; Zeph. 1:13), for He *knows* the arrogance and evil of the rich and He hears the groans and supplications of the oppressed.

There are two false concepts the people had of Jehovah God. First, they believed He could be worshiped apart from His own revelation of Himself. Second, they believed that their conduct toward their fellow man had no bearing on their relationship to God. These are *exactly* the two main concepts John the apostle deals with in his First epistle, (cf. I Jn. 2:3-4; 2:9-11; 3:11-18; 3:19-24; 4:1-6; 4:7-12; 4:20-21, etc.). We must seek God, that is we must learn about Him,

obey Him and worship Him, only as we are guided by His revelation of Himself in His delivered Word. At the same time we must love men as He loves them. To turn aside the needy manifests a hatred of God regardless of how many worship rituals we may observe!

v. 13 THEREFORE HE THAT IS PRUDENT SHALL KEEP SILENCE IN SUCH A TIME . . . It is difficult for us to understand this as a divine injunction. In the light of Amos' actions in not remaining silent and the many exhortations in both Old and New Testaments toward speaking the Word of God against social injustices, we prefer to understand this as another of Amos' rebukes couched in irony and sarcasm. Some men may never know the reality of the suffering of the oppressed and poor because of their failure to take time to consider it as a real problem. Others do not know of it because they have forced themselves to ignore it, not wanting to be troubled with "the other fellow's problem." Humanity can be sure of this: God knows it, and in the long stretch of history will act to bring it to an end. A society built on injustice and fed on the sufferings of the oppressed can never stand.

The social and political situation had so deteriorated in the day of Amos that the "smart" man would either join the "establishment" or keep quiet. The same situation prevails in every generation. It even drifts into the religious society. The advice comes constantly, "Don't get excited, don't get carried away, don't become a fanatic or preacher of doom. Keep your nose out of it. Play it cool—be wise—keep your mouth shut. It's just best not to get mixed up in any way with things going on in these evil times!" But there is one who will not keep silent. God will not keep silent, for He has spoken once for all in the New Testament on such injustice and He has warned His people to speak out against it also. He will continue to speak if voices will rise up in this generation who are wise enough that they will not keep silent like Amos (cf. also Ezek. 33:1-16). Human personality cannot be abused for personal gain without Divine retribution. Let us pray that our generation learns this lesson from God's Book before it has to experience God's judgment!

QUIZ

1. What two alternatives are offered to the people of Israel by Amos?
2. What was the omnipotent God able to do with their wretched condition, if they repented? If they did not repent, what then?
3. How does God use "weal and woe"? Quote scripture proof!
4. Why does the world hate those who stand for righteousness?
5. What two false concepts did Israel have concerning Jehovah God?
6. What did Amos mean by ". . . the prudent will keep silent"?

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— HATE EVIL AND LOVE GOD

TEXT: 5:14-20

- 14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say.
- 15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.
- 16 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the Lord: Wailing shall be in all the broad ways; and they shall say in all the streets, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful in lamentation to wailing.
- 17 And in all vineyards shall be wailing; for I will pass through the midst of thee, saith Jehovah.
- 18 Woe unto you that desire the day of Jehovah! Wherefore would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness, and not light.
- 19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.
- 20 Shall not the day of Jehovah be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

QUERIES

- a. How is "seek good," parallel with "seek Jehovah?"
- b. What is the meaning of "wailing shall be in all the broad ways?"
- c. Why "Woe" unto all those who "desire the day of Jehovah?"

PARAPHRASE

Search after and do that which is good and refrain from doing evil in order that you may live. Then the Lord God of Hosts will truly be your Helper, as you claim He is. Outward religious formality is not enough, you must have a heart that abhors evil and loves good which brings about the establishment of what is right and just in social relationships. Perhaps even yet the Lord God of Hosts will have mercy on the small remnant which remains after the great chastening takes place upon Israel. As I have said before, says the Lord God of Hosts, All admonition to return to Me appears to be useless, therefore, there will be weeping and moaning for the dead up and down the streets of every village and city, every farmer will also be wailing for the dead

and there will be so much death and destruction lamentations will be chanted to those who are professional wailers themselves. And in the vineyards, where one would expect to see rejoicing, there shall be wailing. Jehovah no longer "passes-over" Israel but will have passed through the land in judgment just as He did in Egypt in the days of Moses. Alas for you who rest your hope of deliverance from the heathen upon what you think the Great Day of Jehovah will be! You do not know what you are asking for when you pray for the Day of Jehovah to come for it will not be a day of deliverance for you for you are no better than the heathen. It will be for you as it is for the heathen, a day of misery, darkness and doom. There will be no escape from it. In that day every place is full of danger and death; neither in-doors nor out-of-doors is anyone safe. God will not let you escape! How can you expect the Righteous Jehovah to bring upon those who seek evil and not good any kind of a Day but inevitable and absolute destruction and darkness?

SUMMARY

For a small remnant, godly living may avert the destruction that is surely coming. But for the majority, whose conception of the Day of Jehovah is perverted, God's judgment is inevitable and absolute.

COMMENT

v. 14-15 SEEK GOD, AND NOT EVIL, THAT YE MAY LIVE . . . HATE THE EVIL, AND LOVE THE GOOD, AND ESTABLISH JUSTICE IN THE GATE . . . Social injustice and the abuse of human personality ultimately stems from the concept that religion and morality are separate. This is a Satanic dichotomy! God has never authorized such a division! But man has, ever since Eden, been deceived into thinking that religion and everyday living are two separate compartments of life. True God-revealed and God-centered religion is Life. Practically all the prophets had to deal with this false concept (cf. Isa. 1:1-20; Micah 6:1-6, etc.). In this realm man makes either one of two errors—he either substitutes religion for morals or he substitutes morals for religion. God teaches through the prophets that all morality finds its roots, its spiritual source and its compelling power over the consciences of men in the character of God Himself, and that is true religion (cf. James 1:27). To seek God is to seek good; to love God is to love good and, conversely, to hate evil because God hates evil. Elton Trueblood has described our modern predicament as a "cut-flower society." That is, we are attempting to maintain an ethic without a religion. The

solution in Amos' day was, even as in our day, restoration of the "old paths" (cf. Jer. 6:16-21) and regeneration, *not* revolution. Social injustice cannot be corrected by simply renovation and reorganization of the social structure. Social injustice can only be overcome by upgrading the ethics of all men and this can be done only by regeneration, recreating men in the image of God, and this is accomplished by true religion which in turn involves submission to the authority of God as revealed exclusively in the written word of God!

The people of Amos' day were claiming that Jehovah was with them and that they were with Jehovah, but Amos knew that as long as they continued in their present evil deeds and thoughts their claims on God were vain and false. Their only hope was to turn to God and righteousness. Many of the Israelites had already gone too far and had set their minds against God. Amos was speaking to those few who would still listen. God's mercy was still available for the few who would "hate evil and love good."

The prophets did not preach reformation, but restoration and regeneration! They were not political revolutionaries or civil rights advocates, *per se*. They were preaching to change individuals, to call each man to repent and turn to God's revealed will for their lives. Society will never be changed except as men are changed! And men will never be changed until they are united with God through His revelation which has now been made in His Incarnate Son!

v. 16-17 . . . WAILING SHALL BE IN ALL . . . THE STREETS . . . AND IN ALL VINEYARDS . . . FOR I WILL PASS THROUGH THE MIDST OF THEE, SAITH JEHOVAH, Unless the sin of Israel was corrected, and Amos seems to feel the situation is almost hopeless for the largest segment of the nation, national destruction would be inevitable. Amos portrays the coming time as one of nation-wide mourning. There will be mourning in the squares and plaza's, in every street of every city, in the fields of the farmers and lamentations will be changed to those who are professional wailers themselves. Alas! Israel is no longer God's special people—she has become as heathen and as rebellious as Egypt in the days of Moses. God will no longer "pass-over" Israel, but will "pass through her midst" as He did Egypt with the plagues!

v. 18-20 . . . THE DAY OF JEHOVAH . . . IT IS DARKNESS, AND NOT LIGHT . . . On the Day of Jehovah, see our Special Study seven, pages 84 to 90, "The Day of The Lord." The Jews, from the Messianic prophecies of the Torah (Law of Moses), had interpreted the destiny of their theocracy to be that of eventual world rulers. On some

great Day of the Lord they believed God would deliver his people from all heathen oppression and bondage and elevate them to the supreme place of power and influence among the nations. They looked forward to this great Day (Malachi 2:17—3:5) when the Lord would come suddenly to His temple, the Messiah would be a warrior king who would appear as a political champion and military hero to rally to his standard the Jews from every nation and lead them in a victorious onslaught against their enemies. Heathen oppressors would be annihilated and God's elect race would become the world's conquerors.

H. E. Dana, in *The New Testament World*, pages 128-139 describes in full the Messianic Hope of the Jews (or what the prophets call "the Day of the Lord"). The divine choice of Israel was to the end that Jehovah might have a people who would establish his name in all the earth and make his Law supreme. Therefore the national interests of Israel were one with the cause of Jehovah. To oppose or oppress the chosen people meant to defy Jehovah and to disdain his righteous demands. They were God's specially chosen representatives among the nations, and considered that they should be treated as such. But, on the contrary, they were despised by the Gentiles, ruthlessly seized and consigned to bondage by one despotic conqueror after another, to be buffeted and maltreated in the most humiliating fashion. To the devout Jewish religionist this could only mean that Jehovah was keenly incensed at the heathen nations and regarded them as his own defiant enemies. The coming Day of the Lord (Messianic age) must in the very nature of the case bring the consummate destruction of the incorrigible and the humble submission of those who yielded to the Jewish state.

The truth of the matter was, the Day of the Lord would be a day of deliverance—but only for the true Israel, those who were Jews inwardly and not Jews only outwardly—for the Day of the Lord of which Amos speaks is typical and prophetic of the climactic Day of the Lord, the coming of the Messiah. When the Day of the Lord came of which Amos was speaking, God delivered the faithful remnant through which He could someday present the Messiah, while at the same time He judged those who were unfaithful and had therefore cut themselves off from covenant relationship with Him. For the most of the people of Israel, then, the Day of the Lord was "darkness and not light." It was a time of inescapable crisis, a time of inevitable judgment, a time when man would be abandoned by every known source of aid. Amos uses an almost humorous figure of speech in verse 19 to describe the inescapability of God's judgment!

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE 5:18-20

Having known oppression during practically all of her existence it seems only natural that Israel would have longed for a time of deliverance. No doubt, people passionately spoke of the way in which life would be vindicated, once the day of the Lord was manifested. But they did not realize what they were hoping for. The Righteous God does not change! He must judge every man who sins! He must execute every rebel!

Has not every individual and generation been guilty of reliance upon national and religious heritages instead of personal relationship to God? Should we not have some second thoughts about how ready we are for the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord to come? If God were to come in the consummation of all the ages today would we be ready? "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away. But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is . . . And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (Mark 13:31-37)

QUIZ

1. What did Isaiah and Micah have to say about the connection of religion and morality?
2. Why cannot the two be separated?
3. What is necessary in order to bring about true social justice?
4. What is the meaning of God "passing through the midst" of Israel?
5. What did Israel think the Day of Jehovah was?
6. What does Malachi say the Day of the Lord will be like?
7. How extensive may the Day of the Lord be?

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— RID RELIGION OF HYPOCRISY

TEXT: 5:21-27

- 21 I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
- 22 Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.
- 23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.
- 24 But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream,

- 25 Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
- 26 Yea, ye have borne the tabernacle of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of god, which ye made to yourselves.
- 27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, whose name is the God of hosts.

QUERIES

- a. How can God hate feasts He commanded in the Law?
- b. Why the command to "take away . . . the noise of thy songs"?
- c. What are the "shrines of their images"? the "star of their god"?

PARAPHRASE

I thoroughly hate and despise your hypocritical observations of My feasts and I abhor your fake solemn assemblies. Furthermore, all the burnt-offerings and meal-offerings you offer are unacceptable and I will pay no attention to all the peace-offerings you make. You may as well stop all your noisy psalm-singing because I am not listening to the religious music you are playing. Because your worship is mere hypocrisy My righteous judgment will pour out and roll over the land like a flood. Just as in the wilderness when you hypocritically made sacrifices and songs and worship to heathen idols and heavenly bodies and called it worship to Me, so you are doing now! Because of this I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

SUMMARY

God's threatened judgment will not be averted by all their worship because even their worship is hypocritical.

COMMENT

v. 21-23 I HATE, I DESPISE YOUR FEASTS . . . TAKE THOU AWAY FROM ME THE NOISE OF THY SONGS . . . Amos is not denouncing Mosaic revelation and legislation any more than any other prophet did. The prophets emphatically advocated that the people of their day return to purified practice of Law of Moses. The prophets commanded that the Law be observed! Just two examples should be sufficient here to show this (cf. Jer. 26:4-5; Malachi 4:4). For further information on this, see Special Study No. eight, pages 91, 92. The prophets did *not*

institute some "revolutionary or evolutionary" new religion devoid of the Mosaic legislation! They came to call the people back to keeping the pure Law of Moses from the heart. What Amos *is* denouncing, as is plain from the context, is the perverted, hypocritical, idolatrous forms of religious ceremony these Israelites were then practicing. He is merely denouncing what practically all the prophets before him and after him denounced (cf. Isa. 1:11ff; Jer. 7:1ff; 6:20ff; Mal. 1:8ff). God is not only not pleased with this syncretistic (mixture of heathen and Jewish worship) religion, He hates it—it is an abomination to Him and vain and useless as far as the worshipper is concerned! Every sacrifice or offering made aroused in the heart of the All-Righteous and Perfectly-Holy God a divine hatred. The chanting of their religious psalms and the playing upon the harps was a weariness to God which He commands to be stopped. So, it was not that God hated the very feasts, offerings and songs He Himself had commanded in the Law—these ceremonies in themselves were not wrong. It was the perverse and rebellious nature of the people performing them that made them offensive to God. The people were hypocrites ("play actors"). They were worshipping Jehovah only in pretense while their real affections were centered on their idols and images. They were neglecting the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith (cf. Matt: 23:16-36). This same principle is true of those who claim to be covenant people of God today! Religious ritual, no matter how scripturally accurate it may be, will not substitute for loving God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength, and loving one's neighbor as one's self. If this principle is truly adhered to one will certainly make every effort to be scripturally accurate in ritual.

v. 24 BUT LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN AS WATERS, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A MIGHTY STREAM. This passage is usually interpreted, "Let an overflowing justice and righteousness between men take the place of your hypocritical dealings and sacrifices and flood the land." K & D say, "Because the Lord has no pleasure in this hypocritical worship, the judgment shall pour like a flood over the land . . . *Mishpat* (justice) is not the justice to be practiced by men; for although Jehovah might promise that he would create righteousness in the nation, so that it would fill the land as it were like a flood, He only demands righteousness generally, and not actually in floods." They further state, "The verse is to be explained according to Isaiah 10:22, and threatens the flooding of the land with judgment and the punitive righteous of God." Lange says, "Such worship, instead of averting the judgment, rather provokes its full execution. It should pour over the land, like a flowing stream. It

is wrong to interpret the verse as an exhortation to the people to practice judgment and righteousness. The image of a flood of waters is much too strong for such a thought; it points rather to an act of God." In spite of the weight of this scholarship there are those who interpret this passage as a command to the people, e.g. Laetsch, ". . . let judgment, God's norm, His Law . . . run down as water, spreading throughout the country, and righteousness, good works demanded by the Law . . . fill the nation like a mighty stream . . ." We believe the view of K & D and Lange best represent a correct contextual interpretation.

v. 25-27 DID YE BRING UNTO ME SACRIFICES . . . IN THE WILDERNESS . . . YEA, YE HAVE BORNE THE TABERNACLE OF YOUR KING AND THE SHRINE OF YOUR IMAGES . . . THEREFORE WILL I CAUSE YOU TO GO INTO CAPTIVITY BEYOND DAMASCUS . . . Amos asks a rhetorical question, that is, he asks a question for which he is going to supply the answer and which answer is already well known by his audience. Did the nation bring God sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years? Indeed they did, and just like in Amos' day they were, for the most part, hypocritical sacrifices to heathen idols while they called it worship to Jehovah! The Northern Kingdom had from its very origin adopted the idolatrous worship of calves as its national religion (1 Kings 12:26-28), a device of Jeroboam's own heart, and the history of the twelve tribes is a record of ever-repeated idolatry and rebellion against God. This tendency dated back to the early days of Israel's acceptance as God's covenant nation. It was only forty days after the solemn declaration of this covenant when Israel asked Aaron to make gods for them to go before them, and worshipped the golden calf (Ex. 32:1-6). She did not cease to worship idols even after God's longsuffering and the intercession of Moses kept them from being exterminated (Ex. 32:7—34:11). Forty years later Moses warns them (Deut. 9:6-24) against idolatry, and twice in particular against that special form of idolatry with which Amos charges them here: the worship of the host of heaven, of sun, moon, and stars (Deut. 4:19; 17:2-3). Star worship was one of the earliest and most widespread forms of idolatry in Israel. The false gods worshiped by Abraham's ancestors in Ur of the Chaldees (Joshua 24:2) were astral deities. The "images" which Rachel had taken from her father (Gen. 31:30ff), and which were later buried by Jacob (Gen. 35:2ff) were teraphim, small statuettes of Ishtar. In Egypt, Israel was exposed to the danger of various forms of idolatry, among them worship of the sun-god Ra (also called Amon). So, by ancestry, by environment in Egypt, by the proximity of the Amorites and other nations addicted

to star worship during the wilderness wandering, and by their rebellious spirit (Ex. 32:9; Deut. 9:6; Ps. 95:10-11), the Israelites were inclined to star worship.

In the wilderness Israel carried the tabernacle ("tent") wherein they had Sakkuth, the Assyrian-Babylonian god identified with Saturn. Him they regarded as their "Moloch" (their "king or god"). This has no reference to the tabernacle of God legislated by Moses. Israel aped the heathen festival processions in which their star gods were carried about. The names used by Amos in verse 26 (Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god) may be an ancient as the idols, or he may be calling these ancient idols by the names current at his time. The sin remains the same, star worship. Stephen, in his famous defense (Acts 7:41ff), quotes from Amos here and states that because Israel refused to acknowledge and serve the true God as He had revealed Himself to them, God surrendered them in divine judgment to their self-chosen ways which could end only in ruin and damnation. The generation of Amos' day, in mixing idolatry with sacrifices done in the name of Jehovah, was just like the contemporaries of Moses, practicing idolatry and all the while claiming to be worshippers of Jehovah.

But the judgment of God shall overwhelm them like a flood and carry them off into slavery and bondage to a land far beyond Damascus. The precise location of their captivity is not yet revealed—it is reserved for Hosea to be the first to mention Assyria as the exact location (Hos. 9:3; 10:6; 11:5). Hosea also has a great deal to say about Israel's worship of idols (3:1; 4:12-13; 4:17; 6:10; 7:16; 8:4-5; 10:5-6; etc.). Hosea paints an even worse picture of degradation in the land as a result of its idolatry than was painted by Amos! The terrible consequences of rebellion against God grew steadily worse—injustice, crime, immorality of all degrees soon led to complete anarchy in the land. In 722-721 B.C. the ten tribes of the Northern kingdom were subjugated by the Assyrian king and the people were deported to Assyria never to return as a nation (II Kings 17:1-6).

QUIZ

1. Did the prophets seek to abolish the law and institute a new type of religion?
2. Why were their feasts and sacrifices and worship services offensive to God?
3. What is the meaning of "let justice roll down as waters . . .?"
4. Did Israel worship idols in the wilderness? Explain!

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— LUXURY LEADS TO INDOLENCE

TEXT: 6:1-8

- 1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come!
- 2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: are they better than these kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border?
- 3 —ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;
- 4 that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;
- 5 that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David;
- 6 that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.
- 7 Therefore shall they now go captive with the first that go captive; and the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away.
- 8 The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by himself, saith Jehovah, the God of hosts: I abhor the excellence of Jacob, and hate his palaces; therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

QUERIES

- a. Why refer the covenant people to Calneh, Hamath and Gath?
- b. What is "putting far away the evil day?"
- c. Is the use of musical instruments contrary to God's will?

PARAPHRASE

Alas, alas, for those who are lounging in luxury and false security in Jerusalem and Samaria; alas for those reknowned leaders of the reknowned nation of Israel, to whom all the people of Israel come for counsel. Go over to Calneh, Hamath and Gath and you will find that your land is just as prosperous and great as theirs. In spite of My blessing you and making you chief of the nations you have remained ungrateful and unmindful of My warnings. You insist that calamity will not come to you yet you bring the Day of Judgment nearer each day by your violent

deeds! You sprawl yourselves luxuriantly upon expensive couches and take for your gluttonous feasts only the choicest lambs and calves; you sing frivolous, nonsensical and lustful songs to the accompaniment of the harps; and, as David invented musical instruments to worship his God, you invent musical instruments to worship your god, your belly; you drink wine from sacrificial bowls of silver in adoration of your god, and, instead of being grieved for the spiritual downfall of the nation, with unbridled rejoicing you anoint one another with the most expensive oils and perfumes. On account of this, these sensual leaders of the people shall be the first ones taken into captivity where they shall no longer lounge in luxury for that will cease. The Lord Jehovah has sworn an immutable oath upon His own immutable Name, saying, I despise the false pride and glory of Israel and hate its luxurious homes. I will give up this land into the hands of its enemies including all the people and everything else in it.

SUMMARY

A false sense of pride and position has drugged Israel into a false feeling of security which in turn has led her to luxury, gluttony, indolence and lethargy. God promises judgment and captivity.

COMMENT

v. 1 WOE TO THEM THAT ARE AT EASE IN ZION . . . AND . . . SECURE . . . IN . . . SAMARIA . . . Amos directs his warning from God to the whole nation. Especially to the "notable" men—the reknowned leaders. These public leaders had allowed themselves to be lulled by luxury into a false ease and security. They, in turn, had counseled all the people who came to them that peace, prosperity and safety were the watchwords of the day (Jer. 6:14). They were confident that God would not allow anything bad to happen to the chief of nations (Jer. 7:4ff), after all, had not God chosen this nation above all the others (Jer. 2:3; Ex. 19:5; II Sam. 7:23ff; Amos 3:2). Prosperity is dangerous. It may be either blessing or curse, according to the way it is received by those to whom it may come. If the one who prospers receives it with thankfulness to God constantly aware of his dependence upon God and uses it to the glory of God it can be a wonderful blessing and a great source of joy. But if the one who prospers is ungrateful and makes his riches his whole aim in life he falls into a snare, into many hurtful lusts, and drowns in perdition (cf. I Tim. 6:6-10; Deut. 4:9; 6:10-12; 8:11-20; 32:15; Psa. 9:17; Prov. 1:32; 30:9; Jer. 3:21; Dan. 4:30; 5:20; Hosea 10:13; 13:6; Lk. 12:16-19).

v. 2-3 PASS YE UNTO CALNEH, AND SEE . . . ARE THEY BETTER THAN THESE KINGDOMS? Calneh was a city in the land of Babylonia (Calno of Isa. 10:9) one of the four cities founded by Nimrod (cf. Gen. 10:10). Hamath is one of the most ancient surviving cities on this earth located in upper Syria on the Orontes river. The "entrance of Hamath" (Num. 34:8) was to be the northern limit of Israel, but God left some of the Hivites there to be a test to the faithfulness of Israel (Judg. 3:3). Calneh and Hamath were two of the 19 city-states that rebelled against mighty King Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria (745-727 B.C.) and were subdued only after several campaigns and it is no wonder Amos calls it "Hamath the great." Gath was one of the five royal cities of Philistia (Josh. 13:3; Judg. 3:3; I Sam. 4:4, 16, 18), destroyed by Uzziah (II Chron. 26:6) with a history of greatness and influence in the days of Amos. Amos has selected these three rich, powerful, influential cities to compare Israel, in her greatness, to, and thus emphasize Israel's ingratitude! These three cities were powerful, yet none of them was better than Judah or Israel. In spite of God's blessing the once insignificant Hebrew nomads until their prosperity exceeded that of these three rich metropolises, this generation of Hebrews remained an ungrateful people, unmindful of the Rock that begat them (Deut. 32:6-18).

v. 3 —YE THAT PUT FAR AWAY THE EVIL DAY, AND CAUSE THE SEAT OF VIOLENCE TO COME NEAR . . . These people were just like those of a 150 years later in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel crying "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," (cf. Jer. 6:14; 8:11; 14:13; Ezek. 13:10, 16). How could Amos preach to them "hard times," when all was well—politically and economically? They refused even to think of hard times, judgment, retribution of God for their sins. But by their very acts of impenitence and refusing to see anything "wrong" with their excesses and injustices they were hastening the day of God's judgment upon them! They were ripening fast (as Amos later pictorializes with the basket of summer fruit). They were actually rotting. In just 40 years the northern kingdom would be overthrown completely by the Assyrians and as a nation it would disappear from the face of the earth.

v. 4-6 . . . THAT LIE UPON BEDS OF IVORY . . . EAT THE LAMBS OUT OF THE FLOCK . . . SING IDLE SONGS . . . INVENT . . . INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC . . . DRINK WINE IN BOWLS . . . BUT ARE NOT GRIEVED FOR THE AFFLICTION OF JOSEPH. We wish to quote extensively here from, *The Bible Commentary, The Minor Prophets*, by T. Laetsch, pub., Concordia, pp. 170-171:

". . . In the homes of the rich were found all the conveniences and luxuries of the day. There were 'beds,' or divans, of ivory, richly decorated with ivory plaques and panels . . . on which Mr. Richman sprawled; luxuriant couches, on which the lady of the house stretched out her weary limbs after having returned from a stroll through the avenues of the city where she had exhibited her beauty, enhanced by many an artificial means (Isa. 3:18-23). The less fortunate sisters, the common rabble, the dames of the underworld, the flappers of 750 B.C., admired their richly attired sisters and ran to the next bazaar to buy some cheap bauble, some of the latest beauty helps, in order to look like their more favored sisters. In the elegant homes of the rich and in the temples of their idols (ch. 2:7, 8) riotous feasts and banquets were held. Only the most dainty meats were served, lambs selected from carefully tended flocks, calves from the midst of the stall (cp. Mal. 4:2), kept in special stalls, fed with special feed. At these banquets men and women idled away their time by "chanting" crooning to the sound of the 'viol,' the harp (v. 5). They also invented for themselves, not to God's glory, instruments of music. The better such noisemakers suited the intention of their inventors, to affect the nerves, create excitement, stir up passions, the higher was the inventor honored. He was likened to David, who had introduced many musical instruments in the Temple service (I Chron. 23:5; II Chron. 29:25-26) . . . Amos, of course, uses these words in bitter irony. Such crooning, accompanied by jazzy instrumental music, was regarded as the highest 'superart' by the delighted audiences. The heads and bodies of the assembled guests were anointed with 'the chief ointments,' the finest and most expensive perfumeries, filling the ball with their intoxicating odors. The passions kindled by the voluptuous music and suggestive dress were nourished by the rich food and fanned into irrepresive ardor by large bowl-fuls of wine freely making the rounds (v. 6). The term used here for 'bowls' in all other passages denotes ritual bowls used in the Temple for sprinkling the sacrificial blood upon the altar. Were they used at these banquets in the homes and the idol temples in order to give a semblance of piety to these orgiastic festivals, as the saying of grace before modern family dinners ending in drinking bouts? We are reminded of Belshazzar's feasts (Dan. 5:1-5)."

The Arabic and Greek words translated "idle" mean literally, "to throw or strew many useless words about, to gossip," and this describes the singing at the banquets as frivolous nonsense. The sin is not, per se, in the use of instruments of music in religious worship (David was commanded to invent instruments of music to be used in God's temple in worshipping the One, True God), but the use of instruments to sing vain and idle songs in a perverted religious ceremony. As David made instruments of music to worship the true God, these idolators made instruments to accompany their stupid songs as they worshiped their god, the belly! Amos 6:5 cannot be used to condemn the use of an instrument in New Testament church worship—to do so is wresting the scriptures! It could be used to show God's displeasure with a great amount of the silly, nonsensical, and immoral music which has been invented today by those whose god is still their physical lusts!

The word used by Amos to describe the bowls out of which the gluttons drank their wine has special reference to the silver sacrificial bowls made by the tribe-princes at the consecration of the altar to Jehovah (Num. 7). Amos does this to show that the people in Moses' day manifested their zeal for Jehovah by so doing, and these people of Israel, of Amos' own times, showed just as much zeal for their god, the belly.

And the greater crime than all this gluttony and idolatry is, as Amos states in v. 6, "they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." They were blind, deaf and dumb to the spiritual rotteness then prevalent. They were not the least concerned that this nation whose destiny was holiness and truth was sick unto death with the leprosy of sin. The injustice, cruelty, decadence did not bother them. They were perfectly satisfied as long as they had food and drink and were rich enough to satisfy their desires.

v. 7-8 THEREFORE SHALL THEY NOW GO CAPTIVE WITH THE FIRST THAT GO CAPTIVE; AND THE REVELRY OF THEM THAT STRETCHED THEMSELVES SHALL PASS AWAY . . . THE LORD JEHOVAH HATH SWORN BY HIMSELF . . . Jehovah makes a solemn, terrible vow. Those who spent their time luxuriating and satisfying every selfish whim—who had no time for God—will be the first taken captive. They will be the first to be made slaves of a foreign despot. They will have no time henceforward for revelry. That will come to a sudden end. From that time onward they will be an enslaved people. God cannot make His vows any more emphatic than by swearing by His own name, for there

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE 6:6-8

is nothing greater in existence than God. Since He has the authority and power to carry out His threats it is not at all evil for Him to swear by His own Holy Name. It *is* vain for man to swear by anything, either heaven or hell, or by the hairs on his head since he has no control over any of it (cf. Matt. 5:33-37; Jas. 5:12). Hebrews, in that glorious passage emphasizing how God demonstrated the immutability and finality of His promise-keeping, in 6:13-17 tells us that "God interposed Himself with an oath." We believe the interpretation of how God "interposed Himself" is found in II Cor. 5:19 where we are told, "God was *in* Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself . . ." and in II Cor. 1:20, ". . . For all the promises of God find their Yea in Him" (that is, in Christ). So, when God swears by Himself, rest assured, it is certain to come to pass!

QUIZ

1. Why was Amos against the "ease" those in Zion and Samaria were having?
2. Why refer the people of Israel to the cities of Calneh, Hamath and Gath?
3. What does Amos mean by saying they were "putting far away the evil day"?
4. What sort of society does Amos describe in verse 4-6?
5. May Amos 6:5 be used against the use of instruments in religious worship? Explain your answer!
6. Why condemn them because of their lack of grief for the affliction of Joseph?
7. How emphatic is the phrase "The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by himself" to be taken?

RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS REPENTANCE— FALSE PRIDE TURNS RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BITTERNESS

TEXT: 6:9-14

- 9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.
- 10 And when a man's uncle shall take him up, even he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto

him that is in the innermost parts of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No; then shall he say, Hold thy peace; for we may not make mention of the name of Jehovah.

- 11 For, behold, Jehovah commandeth, and the great house shall be smitten with breaches, and the little house with clefts.
- 12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? that ye have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood;
- 13 ye that rejoice in a thing of nought, that say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?
- 14 For, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith Jehovah, the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entrance of Hamath unto the brook of the Arabah.

QUERIES

- a. Why should a man's "uncle" burn him and question him about anyone remaining in the house?
- b. Why could they not make mention of the name of Jehovah?
- c. What is the "thing of nought"?

PARAPHRASE

So thorough shall be My destruction of this nation then, even if there are ten in one house they will all perish. And when the kinsman comes to take care of the dead there will be such a multitude of dead corpses he will have to burn the bodies instead of burying them. This relative will call to see if there is one last living person who has gone way back in the very back of the house in order to save his life. If there is one the kinsman will ask, Is there anyone else besides yourself alive in this house? If the answer comes back, No, the kinsman shall then call, Keep quiet then, and do not even speak the name of God lest His attention be drawn towards this place and He smite this house until there is not one left alive! The perversion of righteousness into false pride can no more save you than horses can run on rocks or oxen can plow the sea. You have bragged that you have, by your own doing, built an invincible military power but I tell you that you are putting your hopes on that which is nothing in My sight. I am going to bring against you an enemy nation, says the Omnipotent God, which will crush you down throughout the whole length and breadth of this land of Promise.

SUMMARY

The judgment will be complete. False pride, a perversion of righteousness, will not save them from God's judgment.

COMMENT

v. 9-11. . . IF THERE REMAIN TEN . . . THEY SHALL DIE . . . EVEN HE THAT BURNETH HIM, . . . IS THERE YET ANY WITH THEE? . . . HOLD THY PEACE . . . THE GREAT HOUSE SHALL BE SMITTEN . . . AND THE LITTLE HOUSE . . . Jehovah is going to bring such destruction and death to Israel that even in the palaces of the rich and houses of the largest families where some may escape seige, famine and disease, even those who remain will die. Then where a near kinsman (Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32; II Kings 13:21) comes to inter the dead he will find so many corpses that he will be forced to burn them instead of bury them in order to quickly dispose of the possibility of contagion and stench. Only extreme emergencies made it necessary to burn a corpse, which in Israel was a penalty for extreme wickedness (cf. Lev. 20:14; 21:19; I Sam. 31:11-13). When this awful task is finished the kinsman calls, either to his helper or a survivor hiding in the farthest corner, Is anyone left alive. When the answer comes back, No! the kinsman hastens to warn the answerer not to mention the name of Jehovah (either in prayer or oath) lest the attention of Jehovah be drawn to this particular place and the one mentioning His name and he also be slain. Of course, God's attention is at all times everywhere present! He needs no such drawing of His attention. Whether the people of the northern kingdom had fallen to such superstitious regard for Jehovah by associating Him with heathen gods or not we are not told. Amos paints this picture in order to show the complete hopelessness and despair that will grip the hearts of those very few survivors when God's judgment begins to fall! Rich and poor alike have been guilty of turning away from Jehovah to serve their appetites and so the houses of the great and small will be destroyed alike!

v. 12-14 SHALL HORSES RUN UPON THE ROCK? . . . YE HAVE TURNED JUSTICE INTO GALL . . . YE THAT REJOICE IN A THING OF NOUGHT . . . I WILL RAISE UP AGAINST YOU A NATION . . . That they will be able to avert the judgment of God was as incongruous as their actions which were, in turn, as inconsistent as a horse running full speed upon rocks or as oxen plowing the sea. The fruit of their "righteousness" was wormwood, bitterness (see our comment on wormwood at 5:7).

Their "righteousness" was false righteousness which led to false pride. They perverted justice and proudly bragged of their military and economic power. But what they were putting their hopes in (military and economic power, and religious heritage) was "nothing"—vain and powerless. "Horns" symbolize military power. They forgot and denied that God had anything to do with their prosperity and boasted that they attained it by their own abilities. This God-denying pride is enmity against God. When man declares war on God there is nothing left for God to do but uphold His holiness and omnipotence. So God, as in this case, often uses secondary agents and agencies to carry out His will (cf. Isa. 10; 45; Jer. 27; Dan. 2:36ff; 4:19ff, etc.). Here, Israel is warned that God is going to raise up against them "a nation." We know that nation to be Assyria (Hosea was the first to mention this enemy of Israel by name). This nation crushed the Land of Promise (including both Israel and Judah) from north to south—from one end to the other which is where Hamath and the Arabah would be located—the extreme northern and southern boundaries of the whole land of promise, see II Kings 17. While Israel had more common sense than to run horses over rocks and plow seas with oxen—while they acted so responsibly in the common things of life, they exhibited such irresponsibility in the most significant areas of human conduct—righteousness and justice. So *the Lord caused* (as the original text emphasizes) a nation to rise up against this ungrateful, irresponsible, arrogant, sensual people. The message of Amos is still quite relevant and contemporary. Our society is almost a sister to that one in its ingratitude, irresponsibility, arrogance, sensuality. Amos was not able to call men back to God in his day, but he was willing to lay down his life if necessary to give God's call to repentance. Can prophets of today succeed where Amos did not? Time alone will tell!

QUIZ

1. What is the significance of "ten" remaining in the house?
2. Why does the near kinsman come to "burn" the bones?
3. Why does he tell the one answering him not to mention the name of Jehovah?
4. Why the figure of speech of horses running on rocks and oxen plowing the seas?
5. What was Israel rejoicing in that was called "nought"?
6. Whom did God raise up against Israel?
7. Why is the message of Amos so relevant? why is it so imperative?

PROPHECIES PRESENTED, CHAPTERS 7-9

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED—
NOT ALIGNED WITH GOD'S STANDARD

TEXT: 7:1-9

- 1 Thus the Lord, Jehovah showed me: and, behold, he formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.
- 2 And it came to pass that, when they made an end of eating the grass of the land, then, I said, O Lord Jehovah, forgive, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small.
- 3 Jehovah repented concerning this: It shall not be, saith Jehovah.
- 4 Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, the Lord Jehovah called to contend by fire; and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land.
- 5 Then said I, O Lord Jehovah, cease, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small.
- 6 Jehovah repented concerning this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord Jehovah.
- 7 Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.
- 8 And Jehovah said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more;
- 9 and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

QUERIES

- a. Why did God "show" in vision these judgments He was preparing?
- b. Why did God "repent" in two instances when Amos interceded?
- c. What is the message of the "plumbline"?

PARAPHRASE

This is what the Lord God showed me in a vision concerning the future: He had prepared a vast swarm of locusts to destroy all the main crop that sprang up after the first mowing, which went as taxes

to the king, so that none of the people had any grain. These locusts devoured every stalk of grain and blade of grass. Then I cried, O Lord God, forgive your people, I beg you, and do not send this judgment upon them. If you turn against Israel and so utterly destroy them, what hope is there? For Israel is so small! The Lord turned from this plan and did not fulfill the vision and told me: I will not do this, Then the Lord-God showed me a great burning-up by which He intended to judge the people; it dried up the deepest rivers, lakes and springs and would have devoured the land. Then I said, O Lord God, Stop, I pray, If you so utterly consume them, what hope is there? For Israel is so small! The Lord turned from this plan also and did not fulfill the vision and told me: I also will not do this. But then He showed me another vision: The Lord was standing beside a wall which supposedly had been built according to a plumbline and He was checking it with His plumbline to see if it was straight. And the Lord said to me, Amos, what do you see? I answered, A plumbline. Then the Lord said, I will test My people against My plumbline. I will no longer turn away from punishing them if they are out of line with My standard. The idol altars and temples of Israel will be destroyed; and I will destroy the dynasty of King Jeroboam with the sword.

SUMMARY

God will have patience for a time, and spare the land the plagues it deserves. But if there is no repentance by the people from this goodness of God, His forbearance will cease and the downfall will come.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 . . . HE FORMED LOCUSTS . . . THEY MADE AN END OF EATING THE GRASS OF THE LAND . . . I SAID, O LORD . . . FORGIVE . . . JEHOVAH REPENTED CONCERNING THIS . . . Amos is given a vision of a future judgment God has planned for Israel. Amos sees it as if it had already happened. God prepared a vast swarm of locusts, as He did in the days of Joel, and they devoured all the grain and grass of the land. The first mowing of the grain and grass crops (at least the greater part of it) was claimed by the king (cf. I Sam. 8:12-15; I Kings 18:5-6) for feeding the army horses. If the second growing was destroyed by locusts everyone else would soon perish. There would be no grain or grass for human or animal consumption. K & D feel this and the succeeding vision of the "fire" should be interpreted symbolically. We must agree with Lange that a literal interpretation best fits the facts. Amos intercedes and God's plan calls for forbearance or goodness

which will lead men to repentance and thus God turns from immediate judgment. This, however, does not contradict the immutability of God's counsel. See our comments on Jonah 3:9 for a discussion of God repenting. We should like to quote Lange here:

"What was threatened was deserved, but still the punishment as destructive has not yet become a necessity. God can still spare. If the stroke did fall, there would be no unrighteousness in God, and also just as little, if it did not. How the case stands only He who is the searcher of hearts and the Judge of all the earth can certainly know. But men may and should presume that forbearance is possible, and therefore should intercede. Even this has its limits, and cannot be a duty under all circumstances, otherwise the conviction of a moral government of the world would grow weak."

What happens to man in his relationship to God depends upon man's response to God's immutable will. If man rebels against God's righteous and wise government then he will suffer the consequences already decreed and determined. If he repents he may avert those consequences because that salvation is also a part of God's unchanging government. On the other hand it is also a part of that sovereign purpose of God to lead men to repentance by showing them His forbearance and mercy and kindness for a period of time decreed and determined by Him. This is what Amos prayed for and what the Lord, having already purposed to do, granted. One of the functions of a prophet was, by demonstrating his faith and dependence upon God by prayers of intercession, to lead the people to a penitent, dependent attitude toward God (cf. Gen. 20:7; Ex. 32:11ff; Num. 14:13ff; I Sam. 7:8; Jer. 14:8ff; 15:1).

v. 4-6 . . . THE LORD . . . CALLED TO CONTEND BY FIRE . . . IT DEVoured THE GREAT DEEP . . . JEHOVAH REPENTED CONCERNING THIS . . . In a second vision of the future Amos is given to see a great "burning-up" where God is going to punish and try Israel by "fire" as it were. Most scholars agree that this is a drought. Such an intense drought as to dry up all the stream beds, the lakes, the deep springs and the deepest wells. All life would soon cease to exist in the land. K & D make this symbolic of God's judgment upon the heathen nations. The heathen nations, according to them, compose the "great deep" and God's judgment comes like a "fire" which devours the "great deep." This great judgment by God, after having consumed the nations, would also begin to consume Israel. So Amos prays and God relents. But again we must agree with Lange:

"How gratuitous is all this! Nothing of it is found in the visions themselves. What the prophet saw in the second vision is certainly not to occur; therefore the judgment upon the heathen, if it is contained there, is not to occur. Of a remnant remaining over, not a word is said."

In other words, God promises not to send this judgment. Now we know that the heathen nations were judged by God. If this is to be taken symbolically of their judgment and God promised not to do and yet did it, someone is wrong!

v. 7-9 . . . THE LORD STOOD BESIDE A WALL MADE BY A PLUMBLINE, WITH A PLUMBLINE IN HIS HAND . . . BEHOLD, I WILL SET A PLUMBLINE IN THE MIDST OF MY PEOPLE ISRAEL . . . Plumb-lines were used then just as they are now to build walls perpendicularly straight. They are a standard or a rule or a norm to follow. Now Amos sees God standing upon a wall which had been, in the beginning, made according to this standard or divine plumb-line. God is also holding along side this wall the divine plumb-line again and, behold, the wall is out of plumb. It veers away from the plumb-line. It is crooked and in danger of falling. It is ready to be condemned. God's revealed Word is the standard by which it is judged and it shows that Israel is no longer true to their covenant promise of loyal obedience (Ex. 19:7-8; 24:3-7). Instead, they make it their practice to be out of line with God's rule, disregarding His Law, which demands holiness, justice and righteousness. No more leniency will be shown to Israel. He will not again forgive Israel. God is a God of patience, and He does not come in judgment without a purpose. But this does not abrogate the fact that there is a point beyond which God, because of His own character, cannot go in dealing with man's sin.

To every man and to every nation there comes a time when the plumb-line of God's revealed Word has been set. Judgment moves on with its inevitable tread and nothing is left for man's degenerate condition but judgment. When justice is turned into poison and the fruit of righteousness becomes wormwood and light is turned into darkness it shows that that which God has raised up is out of plumb and the time for tearing down has come!

Does America, raised up straight and true, dare now to see what God's plumb-line indicates concerning her status? America with all her anarchy, licentiousness, materialism is leaning, nay, teetering dangerously out of plumb!

QUIZ

1. How would you summarize this whole section as to what it teaches?
2. What does it mean, "God repented?"
3. What is the judgment of "fire" mentioned in verse 4?
4. What picture does Amos get when he is shown the plumbline of God?
5. What is the plumbline of God?

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— CORRUPT RELIGIOUS LEADERS

TEXT: 7:10-17

- 10 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.
- 11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.
- 12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:
- 13 but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house.
- 14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees:
- 15 and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.
- 16 Now therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac;
- 17 therefore thus saith Jehovah: Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

QUERIES

- a. Why was the land "not able to bear all Amos' words?"
- b. What did Amaziah mean, "flee . . . into . . . Judah and there eat bread?"
- c. What did Amos mean by saying he was not "a prophet's son?"

PARAPHRASE

Then Amaziah, the high priest at the sanctuary of the golden calf at Bethel, rushed a message to King Jeroboam which said: Amos has plotted a conspiracy against you and our nation. And he is preaching his treason right here in the religious center of the nation. The nation cannot survive his seditious words for it will soon lead to rebellion all across the land. Amos is saying you will be killed in war, O King, and all Israel will be taken far away into exile and slavery. When the King took no action against Amos, Amaziah sent orders, saying, Amos, get out of the land of Israel; go on home to your own land of Judah and earn your salary as a prophet there! Never again are you allowed to preach in Israel, and especially at Bethel, for it is the royal center of religion in Israel. Then Amos gave this reply to Amaziah: I am not a prophet by profession and simply for the livelihood involved—neither was I trained to become such a professional religionist. My livelihood was earned by herding sheep and dressing sycamore fruit trees. The Lord God Himself called me and told me to leave my flock and commissioned me to go and preach unto my kinsmen and countrymen in Israel. The Lord has commissioned me personally, I am no professional prophet preaching merely for the money as you falsely assume, Amaziah! Whoever forbids me to preach sets himself in opposition to the Lord God. Now therefore listen to this message to you from the Lord. You say, Do not prophesy against Israel—the Lord's reply is this: Because of your enmity to the word of the Lord your wife shall become a prostitute in this very city, and your sons and daughters will be slain violently, and your property will become the booty of an invader. You yourself will die in a heathen land, and the people of Israel will most definitely become slaves in exile, far away from their homeland.

SUMMARY

The daring announcement by Amos of the overthrow of the dynasty of Jeroboam excites the wrath of the high priest at Bethel. He relates the affair to the king. The king apparently does not intervene. The high priest then takes it upon himself to banish Amos from Israel. Amos announces the terrible wrath of God upon Amaziah and Israel.

COMMENT

v. 10-11 . . . AMAZIAH . . . SENT TO JEROBOAM . . . AMOS HATH CONSPIRED AGAINST THEE . . . Evidently Amos' preaching had met with some response among some of the people of Israel. The people were

responding or taking notice of the prophet's warnings enough to cause Amaziah, high priest of the golden calf worship at Bethel, to be concerned about rebellion. If the people had paid no attention to Amos' preaching, Amaziah would not have bothered the King with it. Amaziah sends an urgent appeal to the king that Amos be dealt with for what Amaziah says is a plot of conspiracy against the king's life and the nation. Amaziah very shrewdly does not even mention the main content of Amos' preaching; the apostasy of Israel, his pleas for repentance, etc. As a good politician he turns it into a threat against the king's life and unpatriotic sedition against the nation. This is the first show of the corruption in the heart of Israel's religious leader. He is not concerned with worshipping Jehovah God nor with righteousness; his only concern is that the status quo not be disrupted.

v. 12-13 . . . AMAZIAH SAID . . . FLEE UNTO JUDAH . . . AND THERE EAT BREAD, AND PROPHECY THERE . . . BUT NOT AGAIN ANY MORE AT BETH-EL . . . We can only conjecture as to whether Amaziah acted on authority from the king or on his own authority in banishing Amos from Israel. It seems that Amaziah was determined to get rid of this "trouble of Israel," king or no king! His command to Amos is to "flee" (get out of Israel, while the getting is good) to Judah, Amos' own country. Amaziah adds a nasty insinuation that if Amos expects to make any money at this preaching business it won't be in Israel. His insinuation is that Amos was only prophesying for the money or livelihood it brought. Furthermore, Amos' assault upon the very center of the calf worship of the northern kingdom jeopardized its independence. Jeroboam I realized in the very birth of the northern kingdom that if the people of Israel were allowed to return to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah in the temple they would soon move to dissolve the divided kingdoms and reunite them into one. His first move (I Kings 12:26ff) was to institute the calf worship as distinct from the worship in Jerusalem. Amos' attempt to overthrow this apostate religion threatened the very existence of the nation of Israel. Now we see the next indication of the corruptness of Amaziah's religious leadership. He was only a priest because of the livelihood—he was a hireling and insinuated that Amos was also. Amaziah was not a priest in order to serve the people as a minister of the word of God—he was a priest to be sustained and served by the ignorant and sensual worshippers of the calf. The corruption of his heart led the people of Israel in a corrupted religion. And this became a major cause of the judgment of God upon Israel.

v. 14-17 . . . I WAS NO PROPHET, NEITHER WAS I A PROPHET'S SON . . . HEAR THOU THE WORD OF JEHOVAH . . . THY WIFE SHALL BE A HARLOT . . . THY SONS AND DAUGHTERS SHALL FALL BY THE SWORD . . . THOU . . . SHALT DIE IN A LAND THAT IS UNCLEAN . . .

Calmly Amos repudiates the insinuation that he was in the business of prophesying for the sake of money. He was not a prophet by profession neither had he ever been trained to preach the Law of God as others had (see Special Study Eight "The Schools of The Prophets"). Professionally or vocationally Amos was a herdsman in the hills of Tekoa. He also dressed sycamore trees to provide his living. The sycamore tree of Palestine bore a kind of fruit that required piercing, nipping or scratching in order to ripen. K & D call it a "mulberry-fig" tree. He earned his living this way—he was not a hireling preacher like Amaziah. God took this honest-hearted, willing, God-fearing man from the flocks and commissioned him with a divine command to Go! tell my people! He was not sent by the religious leaders of Judah; no human had advised Amos what to preach. His commission and his message were both from Jehovah Himself. Who was Amaziah to forbid that this message should be preached? Who was Amos that he should disobey the Lord God, merely because a human priest, and an apostate one at that, did not like his message?

Whoever sought to oppose the message of Amos opposed the Most High God! Since Amaziah had rebelled against the word of God, God, through Amos, pronounces His judgment upon His enemy, Amaziah. Amaziah's wife was to become a common prostitute, selling her body and soul to other men. This is probably what she did because of the extreme conditions of privation and starvation during the siege of the cities of Israel just before the captivity. Amaziah's sons and daughters were to die violent deaths by the sword, either by murderers or soldiers in battle. His property, undoubtedly a large and rich estate, would become the booty of the invaders and be divided amongst heathen soldiers and conquerors. As for Amaziah himself, he would be taken captive with all the people of Israel and he would die in a heathen land, never again to see his beloved homeland. The encounter between Amos and Amaziah reminds us of the encounter between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer. 38). God's word shall not return unto Him void but shall accomplish that which He purposes (Isa. 55:6-11).

Honeycutt in *"Amos And His Message,"* has said, "In a day when the ministry tends toward a cold professionalism, the message of Amos carries a severe warning for the contemporary minister." The world will always need men of integrity who cannot be intimidated, coerced, or

threatened into silence at the very time when a prophetic voice is needed most. Here is to be found the acid test of preaching: Will a preacher speak for God in the face of adversity and hardship, even the threat of both job and life? Knudson has well observed: "Someone has said that there are two classes of preachers—the good preachers who have something to say, and the poor preachers who have to say something. But there is yet another and higher class. It consists of those who both have something to say, and who have to say it. Such are the prophets. Such a one was Amos." A poet has said it this way:

God give us men. The time demands
 Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and willing hands;
 Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
 Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
 Men who possess opinions and a will;
 Men who have honor; men who will not lie;
 Men who can stand before a demagogue
 And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;

 Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog
 In public duty and in private thinking!
 For while the rabble with their thumb-worn creeds,
 Their large professions and their little deeds
 Mingle in selfish strife; lo! Freedom weeps!
 Wrong rules the land, and waiting Justice sleeps.

by J. G. Holland

QUIZ

1. Why was Amaziah so excited about Amos' preaching?
2. Why would Amos' preaching at Bethel be particularly threatening to Israel?
3. What is a "son of the prophets?"
4. Name the specific judgments of God upon Amaziah and his family?
5. How does Amos furnish an example for preachers today?

CAUSES OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— GOD'S LONGSUFFERING HAS EXPIRED

TEXT: 8:1-6

- 1 Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, a basket of summer fruit.

- 2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said Jehovah unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.
- 3 And the songs of the temple shall be wailings in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah: the dead bodies shall be many; in every place shall they cast them forth with silence.
- 4 Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail,
- 5 saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit;
- 6 that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

QUERIES

- a. How does a "basket of summer fruit" symbolize the end of Israel?
- b. What is the meaning of "casting them forth with silence?"
- c. How will the ephah be made small and the shekel great?

PARAPHRASE

Then the Lord showed me a vision a basket full of ripe fruit. He asked me, What do you see, Amos? And I replied, I see a basket of summer-ripe fruit. Then the Lord God said to me, So are my people Israel ripe for destruction. I will not defer their punishment again. The songs of joy which the people sing at their riotous feasts in their temple will be turned into weeping and wailing. There will be dead bodies by the thousands where God has cast them down in many places; there will be a deathly silence as those living are overwhelmed at the terrible judgment of God. Listen to this, you who greedily plan to devour the poor man's possessions. You who sigh with impatience for the legal holidays and days of religious worship to be over and done with so you can get on with cheating the poor. You cheat and rob the poor by using short measures and raising prices; you cheat by weighing merchandise on rigged scales; you cheat by selling for grain the sweepings from the floor of your graneries. All this you do to make the poor man so poor he cannot even pay for a pair of shoes and then he is forced to become a slave to his creditors.

SUMMARY

Israel is ripe for destruction. Why? Because of her rebellion against Jehovah and His Law and all that is righteous and just. God's judgment will terrify!

COMMENT

v. 1-2 . . . BEHOLD, A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT . . . THE END IS COME UPON MY PEOPLE . . . The prophet is given another vision. What he sees is symbolic of Israel's future. He sees a basket filled with summer fruit. There can be no doubt as to what it symbolizes for God Himself has given the interpretation. Just as a basket of summer fruit indicates the reaper has gone through the vineyard and that the time for growing and developing has ended so God the reaper has passed through Israel and her time has ended (cf. Isa. 18:5; Jer. 24; Hosea 9:10; Joel 3:13; Micah 7:1; Nahum 3:12; Rev. 14:15, 18). "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved" (Jer. 8:20), could be written over the palaces and homes of Israel! Their last opportunity has come and gone according to the vision given to Amos. Most certainly there comes a time (known only to God, of course) when God's longsuffering runs out. His Spirit will not always strive with man (Gen. 6:3). It was revealed to Amos that this terrible moment was about to come to Israel.

v. 3 . . . THE SONGS OF THE TEMPLE SHALL BE WAILINGS IN THAT DAY . . . DEAD BODIES SHALL BE MANY . . . THEY CAST THEM FORTH WITH SILENCE. When that terrible day of the Lord shall come the songs of frivolous joy and merriment sung in their temples (plural in Israel) will be turned into howling shrieks of mourning; they will be weeping and wailing instead of laughing and singing. There will be cries of terror, fear; tears of mourning for the multitudes of dead bodies cast out in many places. Then after the first expressions of mourning there will come the awed silence born of the overwhelming severity of the judgment of God they experience (cf. Zeph. 1:7; Hab. 2:20; Zech. 2:17). There will be the furtive whispers and glances as they literally feel the omnipotent wrath of God in their very presence.

v. 4-6 HEAR THIS . . . YE . . . THAT . . . SWALLOW UP THE NEEDY . . . SAYING, WHEN WILL THE NEW MOON BE GONE, THAT WE MAY SELL GRAIN . . . MAKING THE EPHAH SMALL . . . AND SELL THE REFUSE OF THE WHEAT? Israel is a nation of greedy profiteers, "Swallowing up the poor." The original text pictures the rich "panting" after the poor man and his possessions like a wild beast pants for its victim. The greedy rich harassed the poor and literally "stalked" them. The rich merchants and officials could barely wait while they punctiliously performed religious holidays until they could get back to cheating the poor and powerless. As far as the rich were concerned they only went through the motions of observing religious holidays for the sake of expediency. It helped them maintain control in governmental

affairs and gave them a show of being religious. That was as far as religion went in their lives. When they got to their houses of merchandise or judgment seats it was "do the other man before he has a chance to do you."

The *Chodesh* (the new moon) was a holiday on which all trade was suspended just as it was on the Sabbath (cf. II Kings 4:23; Isa. 1:13; Hos. 2:13). (For regulations concerning the Sabbath day see Exodus 20:9-10).

The *ephah* (in dry measure) is about $\frac{3}{5}$ of a bushel. The *shekel*, in Amos' day, was probably a hunk of crude, shapeless precious metal, heavy enough so as to approximate the value of the item purchased in actual weight. The buyer usually weighed his "money" to the seller. The Jewish *shekel* was such a weight (*shekel* literally means weight). Among the Jews the shekel was used for the temple tax, poll tax, and for redemption from the priesthood (Ex. 30:11-16; 13:13; Num. 3:44-51). Most historians believe that the earliest money pieces, as such, were struck about 700 B.C. in the small kingdom of Lydia in Asia Minor. So in Amos' day they were probably still using *shekels* as weights. In Jesus' day, of course, the shekel was struck in coin form and the value of a shekel then was worth about a day's wages. Now we can begin to see that if the greedy merchants made the ephah basket smaller than usual and increased the weight of the shekel over what it usually was then they were robbing the poor unmercifully. Not only that but they were using scales upon which to weigh grain that were "rigged." Furthermore, they were selling the chaff for wheat. The poor were being robbed so thoroughly that they did not even have enough to pay the very smallest debt (a pair of shoes). The poor debtor would either have to sell himself to his creditor (Lev. 25:39) or wait for the courts (which were also unjust) to hand him over to his creditor for enslavement.

Honeycutt says, "One of the most frighteningly disturbing events upon which an individual can contemplate is 'the end.' Whether it be the end of human existence as known in this life, the end of the cosmos as often stressed in some eschatological forecasts, or the end of an era of vitality for an institution; 'the end' is never a pleasant topic of conversation. Consideration of its reality is intensified in its sense of dread, however, when one comes to understand that 'the end' is not just a future event . . . Amos anticipated this when he spoke of the end as having already come upon Israel. The end of the nation had been so firmly fixed that he viewed it as already achieved. The nature of her character and her reaction to God had been such that Amos could speak of the end of Israel as a present reality."

When current political and religious structures and behaviours are examined, one often has this same feeling concerning the present reality of the end. The seeds of dissolution and destruction have been sown in both political and religious life and the end seems to be upon us now! It seems as though the end has already come!

In the case of Israel social injustice as a principle of life and conduct was cited as characteristic of a nation of whom it could be said "the end has come." We firmly believe that whether it be ancient Israel embroiled in the problems of the eighth century B.C. or contemporary America, the principle is the same. Social injustice as an accepted fact of life will bring about the destruction of any society, ancient or modern. The same is true of the manifestations of superficiality in religion.

QUIZ

1. How are we to interpret the figure of the basket of summer fruit? Why?
2. How severe will be the judgment of God upon Israel?
3. How were the rich cheating the poor?
4. Could Israel's destiny be a lesson for contemporary society? Why?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS PROPHESED—BITTER MOURNING

TEXT: 8:7-10

- 7 Jehovah hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.
- 8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? yea, it shall rise up wholly like the River; and it shall be troubled and sink again, like the River of Egypt.
- 9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.
- 10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sack cloth upon all lions; and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

QUERIES

- a. Why speak of the land "rising like the River?"
- b. Did the Lord actually cause the "sun to go down at noon?"
- c. Why and how is the Lord to bring "baldness upon every head?"

PARAPHRASE

Jehovah has sworn that just as surely as He is held up to be the pride and glory of Israel, He must punish Israel's inglorious sin. Every evil work she is guilty of will be punished for the Lord does not forget any sin not repented of. Yes, the whole nation will be shaken and there will be mourning everywhere. The judgment of the Lord will overwhelm the land like the River Nile at flood stage and the nation will rage like a flood with great trouble and destruction and then sink into nothingness. And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord, that I will cause Israel's "sun to go down at noon," that is, I will take away the sunlight of her prosperity and bring suddenly upon her the darkness of destruction right at the midday of her existence. And I will turn this nation upside down by turning your festivals into times of mourning and all your gay, frivolous songs will be turned into wailing, despairing cries of lamentation. I will cause the whole nation to put on their mourning clothes and shave their heads bald in mourning custom. Your mourning will be very great and very bitter—like the mourning of those whose only son has died.

SUMMARY

The Lord's judgment upon the unmitigated sin and rebellion of Israel will be very severe. The Lord is going to overwhelm the land with a flood of judgment. He is going to turn everything upside down.

COMMENT

v. 7-8 JEHOVAH HATH SWORN . . . THE LAND TREMBLE . . . IT SHALL RISE UP . . . LIKE THE RIVER . . . AND . . . BE TROUBLED AND SINK AGAIN . . . The scene changes. The "worm is turned." From a description of the sinful state of Israel, we are brought abruptly to a description of the Lord's terrible judgment. Jehovah is the pride of Jacob (Israel), (cf. I Sam. 15:29). Jehovah is the One in whom Israel gloried. And, as surely as Jehovah is the glory of Israel He is also her Judge. He must judge her sins. Leaving Israel's sins unpunished would be denying His glory. Amos paints, with figurative language, a terrifying picture of God's judgment. The nation will tremble with fear as the judgment of the Lord floods over it. The nation shall be troubled and rage within like the torrents of the flooding Nile River swelling over her banks, inundating and destroying everything in its path. Then Israel, subdued, will sink down. Some commentators think Amos is likening the behaviour of the earth's surface during earthquakes which God sent in judgment upon Israel to the rising and falling of the Nile. It would seem to us that what is to happen to Israel here is to cover

the entire length and breadth, or the whole population, and thus too extensive for a literal earthquake. We take his language to be figurative.

v. 9-10 . . . I WILL CAUSE THE SUN TO GO DOWN AT NOON . . . TURN YOUR FEASTS INTO MOURNING . . . BRING . . . BALDNESS UPON EVERY HEAD . . . AS A BITTER DAY. Since this would be such an extraordinary phenomenon if it happened literally, we would expect it to be historically noted by the prophet. Inasmuch as it is not we take it to be figurative. K & D say, ". . . to any man the sun sets at noon, when he is suddenly snatched away by death, in the very midst of his life. And this also applies to a nation when it is suddenly destroyed in the midst of its earthly prosperity." Jesus said, "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Jn. 9:4). Israel, at ease in Samaria and Bethel, riding on a wave of material and political well-being, was at the midday of her existence. It is doubtful that she enjoyed such prosperity even in the days of David and Solomon. But, when Israel thought it was noontime, God knew that her sun had set. God was about to turn this superficial brightness into what it really was, darkness, judgment, bitterness. Indeed, instead of the air of festivity and gaiety Jehovah was about to bring mourning, lamentation and bitterness. Their religious and social festivals would cease and their gay, suggestive, idle songs would be turned into doleful, sorrowful wailing. We have seen this happen in our own generation. The Great Third Reich of Adolph Hitler was turned from the bright sunlight of its midday into the blackness of utter defeat and destruction. The gay, martial songs and festivities of the early days of the Third Reich were turned into wailing and tears. Sackcloth was the dress of mourning. Baldness produced by shaving the head was done as a mark of mourning for the dead (cf. Lev. 21:5; Isa. 15:2; 22:12; Micah 1:16). Grief and mourning was to be so widespread as to be almost total. It would be very deep grief, like the grief of mother and father mourning the death of an only son. God's judgment would be long and bitter.

QUIZ

1. Why does the title, "the excellency of Jacob," mean that Jehovah must judge Israel for her sins?
2. Why is the language to be interpreted figuratively which speaks of "the land rising like the River . . . ?"
3. What is the meaning of the figure, "the sun to go down at noon . . . etc?"
4. What parallel to verse 10 have we witnessed in our own generation?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS PROPHESIED—SPIRITUAL FAMINE

TEXT: 8:11-14

- 11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah.
- 12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of Jehovah, and shall not find it.
- 13 In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst.
- 14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, As thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, As the way of Beer-sheba liveth; they shall fall, and never rise up again.

QUERIES

- a. When did this "famine" of the words of Jehovah occur?
- b. Why would they "run to and fro" to seek the word of Jehovah?
- c. Who is the god of Dan?

PARAPHRASE

Listen, the time is coming very soon when I am going to send a spiritual famine upon this land. People will be starving to death for God's Word—not physical food. People will be dying of thirst for the living water. And they will stagger all over the earth, running hither and yon to find a consoling word from Jehovah but they will not find it. Even young women and young men in the vigor of youth, the strongest and best equipped to stand adversity will grow weak and pant for the living water of Jehovah's Word. Those who put their trust in the calf-gods of Israel like the one located at Dan and those who make pilgrimage to Beersheba to engage in idolatrous worship shall fall never to rise again!

SUMMARY

One aspect of God's judgment will be the spiritual famine resulting from Israel's rebellion. When the flood of judgment comes, however, the people will desperately seek for the bread of life, the word of God. Their impotent gods and worship will not supply them with the food they need.

COMMENT

v. 11-12 . . . I WILL SEND A FAMINE IN THE LAND . . . OF HEARING THE WORDS OF JEHOVAH . . . THEY SHALL WANDER FROM SEA TO SEA . . . AND SHALL NOT FIND IT. They had forbidden God's true prophets to bring to them the Word of the Lord (Amos 2:12). They refused to know His Word (cf. Isa. 1:3; II Chron. 15:3; Jer. 5:4). Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos, describes the spiritual poverty of the nation in its death throes. He writes, ". . . the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land . . . My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children," (cf. Hos. 4:1, 6). This famine of the word of Jehovah began when Israel rejected the law and grew worse until God took them into captivity where they had no prophets to declare to them His word, (cf. Ezek. 3:26; 7:26). God turned away from Israel when He took them to the land of the Assyrians and caused the word of prophecy to cease. Chrysostom says, "God did not speak to them through the prophets; He breathed not upon them the Spirit through which they spake. He did not appear to them, but is silent and hidden. There was silence, enmity between God and man."

In death, destruction and in exile from the land of their fathers, crushed by their oppressors, hearing only of gods more cruel than the heathen who make them, they will "run to and fro," they will suffer a famine of truth, they will hunger and thirst for the God of Israel and some word from Him of His care for them and His fulfillment of the covenant made by Him, but they shall not find it. Hosea tells how the people of Israel, just before their downfall, sought revelation from idols, "My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God" (Hos. 4:12). Jerome writes, "Such is the present condition of the Jews. They roam in restless vagrancy about the world and seek the word of God; but they find it not, because they have killed the incarnate Word revealed in the written word."

To those of Amos' day and to those in every generation who reject the Word of God for some other philosophy, the message is the same. Inevitably, there will come the time when a word from God will be sought for like starving men seek for food. One writer warns, "Try to imagine all the influence of religion taken out of your life. In trouble, sickness, loneliness, failure, try to imagine yourself cut off from God.

This is what Amos prophesies . . ." Think of the nations, Russia—China, etc. which have rejected the word of God and remember how desperately hungry some within those enslaved lands are for the word of the Lord. In Moscow when Gene Dulin was asked to preach at the Russian Easter Sunday afternoon service, the minister said, "Give a powerful sermon on the resurrection!" Think of the ignorance, poverty and backwardness of the many nations where there has been a famine of the word of God or where His word has been kept secret by heretical priests and churches. Think of our own country where men are running to and fro preaching one panacea after another which are all doomed to failure because in large segments of this land there is a famine of the word of God!

v. 13-14 . . . FAIR VIRGINS AND THE YOUNG MEN FAINT FOR THIRST . . . THEY THAT SWEAR BY THE SIN OF SAMARIA . . . SHALL FALL, AND NEVER RISE AGAIN. Even young women and young men, in the vigor of youth, the best equipped to withstand these adverse conditions, will grow weak and hunger and thirst for some voice of authority and promise of help from Jehovah. It is true even today! Thousands and thousands of young people across our land, disillusioned and starved to death on the garbage of the contemporary intellectualism are "running to and fro" seeking a voice of authority, a sane standard of conduct, a life which consists of more than "things." But, because the "intelligentsia" of our world have, for the most part, rejected the word of the Lord, our young people "faint for thirst."

In Israel, in Amos' day, the people were swearing by (putting their trust in) the golden calf which they worshipped at Dan and Bethel. They believed that all their prosperity, like that of their heathen neighbors, was due to their worship of these idols and other idolatrous forms of worship made toward Jehovah at Beersheba. In our day, we are no better! Israel worshipped the golden calf only because she was sure her prosperity came through this. We worship science because we are sure our prosperity comes through it. Anthony Standen, in his book, *Science Is A Sacred Cow*, says, "What with scientists who are so deep in science that they cannot see it, non-scientists who are too overawed to express an opinion, hardly anyone is able to recognize science for what it is, the great Sacred Cow of our time." Yes, we have rejected the Word of God which reveals to us the True Source of both material and spiritual well-being, for our own Sacred Cow—science! We have our own Bethels, Dans, and Beershebas—our own priests and our own oracles. And if we continue to worship there and seek guidance there, WE SHALL FALL, AND NEVER RISE AGAIN!

QUIZ

1. What were the conditions of Israel in relation to spiritual knowledge of God in the days of Amos and Hosea?
2. When did God take His word away from Israel finally and completely?
3. Is the prophecy, "they shall not find it" still being fulfilled in the unconverted Jews today?
4. How does this section of Amos have relevance for our generation today?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS
PROPHESED—THOROUGH
AND INESCAPABLE

TEXT: 9:1-6

- 1 I saw the Lord standing beside the altar: and he said, Smite the capitals, that the thresholds may shake; and break them in pieces on the head of all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the Sword: there shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one of them escape.
- 2 Though they dig into Sheol, thence shall my hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down.
- 3 And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and it shall bite them.
- 4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.
- 5 For the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, is he that toucheth the land and it melteth, and all that dwell therein shall mourn; and it shall rise up wholly like the River, and shall sink again, like the River of Egypt;
- 9 it is he that buildeth his chambers in the heavens, and hath founded his vault upon the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; Jehovah is his name.

QUERIES

- a. Why does the Lord specify the smiting of the "capitals"?
- b. How may it be said that the Lord brings evil upon anyone?
- c. What is the Lord's "vault" upon earth?

PARAPHRASE

And I saw in a vision the Lord standing beside the idolatrous altar at Bethel to judge Israel. And He gave orders, saying, Smash the tops of the pillars and shake the temple until the pillars crumble and the roof crashes down upon the people below. Those who may escape this destruction will be caught and slain with the sword. Though they might be able to dig into Sheol, the place of departed spirits, My hand will reach there and find them; though they climb up to heaven in their attempt to escape Me, I will bring them down from there. Let them try to hide in the rocks atop Mount Carmel and I will search them out and capture them. Even if they could hide in the bottom of the sea, I could simply send the sea-serpent after them to bite and destroy them. And even though they think that by willingly going into captivity they may be safe from My judgment, I will see to it that many of them are killed there by the sword and that they receive judgment and not good. For the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, the One who is judging, is the One who has but to touch the earth and it dissolves and all its people mourn, while the whole earth rises like the Nile, and sinks like the floods of Egypt. The sphere of this God's existence or His habitation is in the invisible heavens above the visible heavens as well as here on the earth. He is the same God who controls by His almighty power the waters of the sea, calling them up to pour out upon the face of the earth. Jehovah is this God's name.

SUMMARY

The judgment and destruction of Israel is inevitable, thorough and inescapable. This is because of the nature of her God—omniscient and omnipotent.

COMMENT

v. 1 I SAW THE LORD STANDING BESIDE THE ALTAR: AND HE SAID, SMITE . . . We must agree with Lange and Pusey, against K & D, that the "altar" here is the altar Jeroboam set up at Bethel. It would symbolize all the idolatry of which Israel was guilty and which God is about to judge and punish. The whole context and intent of Amos' ministry demands this interpretation. It is not possible in the light of the prophet's ministry that this is the altar at Jerusalem. God is giving Amos a vision of the thoroughness and inescapability of His judgment upon Israel and so it is pictured as being in progress. God commands, Smash the pillars! "Capitals" are really the crowns or

tops of the pillars in the idolatrous temple there at Bethel and other locations. These pillars were probably imitations of those in the true sanctuary at Jerusalem and so the Israelite temple was struck from above and made to collapse in total destruction upon the heads of those worshipping the golden calf. Should any succeed in escaping the crash of the building, even these God would slay with the sword. The point is, none shall escape who justly deserve the Lord's judgment.

The manner in which the Lord addresses Amos, saying, Smite . . . reminds us of God's commission to Jeremiah in Jer. 1:9-10 . . . "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." In a sense Amos did "Smite the pillars," even as Jeremiah "pulled down" kingdoms by foretelling the judgment of the Lord. The Lord's word of judgment is so absolutely certain to come to pass that when it is spoken it is as much as accomplished then.

v. 2-4 THOUGH THEY DIG INTO SHEOL . . . CLIMB UP TO HEAVEN . . . HIDE . . . IN THE TOP OF CARMEL . . . HID . . . IN THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA . . . GO INTO CAPTIVITY . . . THENCE WILL I COMMAND . . . AND . . . SLAY THEM . . . These verses sound very much like David's Psalm 139, praising God for His allseeing providence. It is not unlikely to suppose that Amos may have accommodated this Psalm in expressing the message God wanted him to give to Israel. However, it is not necessary to assume that he *must* have done so. In either instance it would not deny the infallibility of Amos' message. Such phrasing and figurative language is simply natural to the Hebrew expression to picture the omnipotence of God. There is simply no escape for the impenitent, in this world or any other, when God's judgment time has come. Sheol is the O.T. name for the place of departed souls, corresponding to the N.T. word Hades. The word occurs 65 times in the Hebrew OT and is rendered in the King James Version 31 times "hell," 31 times "grave," and 3 times "pit." This difference in translation is due to the fact that "hell" is ordinarily thought of as a place of punishment, while "grave" is substituted when the reference is to the souls of good men. In the American Standard Version no attempt is made to translate the word—it is merely transliterated into "Sheol." Psalms 16:10, quoted by Peter as a Messianic prophecy shows that Hades is the N.T. synonym for the O.T. Sheol. The reference to Mt. Carmel is made because it is a point on the extreme western boundary, immediately next to the Great Sea. As one writer has stated it, "Whoever hides himself there, must

know of no other secure refuge in all the land beside. And if there be no security there, nothing is left but the sea." The "serpent" is the one named Leviathan (cf. Isa. 27:1). Amos describes the people in their misery and terror as going willingly, gladly, into captivity before their enemies like a flock of sheep to escape judgment. Captivity, at least seemed safe. Yet, here too, God would command the swords of their enemies to slay them.

It is the omnipotent God who brings judgment. Judgment is never simply the action of humanity or nature alone. It arises out of the character of the holy God and finds expression through His control of time and history. God is the God of history, and history is the history of God. As such, history reflects God's action and ultimate control; it is not dominated solely by economic, social, or political forces. When judgment falls, let God be seen!

V. 5-6 FOR THE LORD . . . TOUCHETH THE LAND AND IT MELTETH . . . HE . . . BUILDETH HIS CHAMBERS IN THE HEAVENS . . . Now Amos substantiates all that he has promised before. The thoroughness and inescapability of the judgment which Amos prophecies is certain because of the nature and character of Jehovah of Hosts. He speaks and it comes to pass, He commands and the earth stands forth. He has no need to exert anything more than a mere touch and the earth melts! The word "chambers" means literally, "places to which one has to ascend, upper chambers, stories." K & D say, "The heaven in which God builds His stories, is the heaven of clouds; and the vault, according to Gen. 1:7, is the firmament of heaven, which divided the water above the firmament from the water beneath it. Consequently the upper rooms of God are the waters above the firmament, in or out of which God builds His stories (Psa. 104:3), i.e. the cloud-tower above the horizon of the earth, which is raised above it like a vault." "Vault" means literally, "arch." It probably refers to the firmament, or the visible heavens, which seems to span the earth like an arch. We believe Amos is simply picturing God's omnipresence. He dwells everywhere. He is high above everything that man can see or imagine. Not only so, but He is in absolute control of the forces of nature. Even in our own self-sophisticated age of science and technology the sea, the rain, the weather all remain uncontrolled by man yet mysteriously under universal laws which defy human comprehension and analyzation. What with all our advances we still are at the mercy of the sea and floods. Jehovah commands the entire universe and uses it to bring judgment upon His enemies and blessing to His friends.

QUIZ

1. Where was the Lord standing when Amos saw Him?
1. What are the "capitals" God commanded to be smashed?
3. Where is Sheol?
4. What is the "serpent" of the sea?
5. Where are the "chambers" which God builds in the heavens?
6. What is the "vault" upon the earth?
7. What is Amos' purpose in all his figurative language?

DESCRIPTION OF JUDGMENTS
PROPHESED—DISRUPTION
AND DISPERSION

TEXT: 9:7-10

- 7 Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith Jehovah. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?
- 8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; save that I will not utterly destroy the houses of Jacob, saith Jehovah.
- 9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as grain is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least kernel fall upon the earth.
- 10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, The evil shall not overtake nor meet us.

QUERIES

- a. Why does God compare Israel to the Philistines and Syrians?
- b. What part of the house of Jacob will Jehovah not destroy?
- c. How will God "sift" Israel like "grain in a sieve?"

PARAPHRASE

What makes you think, O Israel, that you are any better in My eyes than the Philistines and the Syrians? Just because I brought you from Egypt and put in you this land is no reason to think that I will overlook your sin anymore than I do not overlook the sin of these other nations which I also established in their lands. I am no respecter

of person for I am offended with sin in every man. I am fully aware of the sinfulness of the kingdom of Israel, and I will wipe that kingdom off the face of the earth. No, I will not totally destroy the entire house of Jacob for a very few are still righteous and god-fearing people and I will save that remnant. But I am going to give the command and the house of Israel will be disrupted and dispersed among all the nations like grain is shaken and sifted in a sieve. The solid, good grain remains but the trash falls to the ground. So it shall be with Israel. All those sinful, complacent people who say, Evil shall not come upon us, will die violently by the sword. The righteous shall be saved.

SUMMARY

God warns a complacent people that He is no respecter of person. The wicked shall die for their sins. The good shall be saved. God is going to obliterate the kingdom of Israel from the face of the earth.

COMMENT

v. 7-8 ARE YE NOT AS THE CHILDREN OF THE ETHIOPIANS UNTO ME, O CHILDREN OF ISRAEL . . . BEHOLD THE EYES OF THE LORD . . . ARE UPON THE SINFUL KINGDOM . . . " . . . children of the Ethiopians" is also translated "sons of the Cushites," Ham's posterity. This should pierce the pride of the Israelite as nothing else would do—to liken them to the heathen. It certainly was intended to destroy the veneer of complacency with which they had deluded themselves. The bringing of Israel out of Egypt in a special way avails no more than the bringing of the Syrians and Philistines out of their former dwelling places. God did it all. With God it is not where you came from and what you were that counts—it is what you are now and what you are becoming that counts! The sinful of Israel were depending upon their past heritage and special treatment by God. Jesus had to deal with the same complacency and pride with the Pharisees (cf. Jn. 8:31ff). This trust in themselves—"Then Peter opened his mouth; and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," (Acts 10:34-35; cf. Rom. 10:12; Mt. 5:45). Special treatment is no license to sin! God is offended by sin in any people, and especially so in a people whom He has chosen and blessed above others! His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom!

Caphtor is probably Crete or perhaps refers to all the islands of the Aegean Sea. Kir is in the general direction of Elam (today it is Iran).

For other details on the nations see our comments on Amos chapters one and two.

The word of Jehovah is that the kingdom of Israel, as a kingdom, will be totally obliterated from the face of the earth. The fulfillment of this is found in II Kings 17. That does not mean, of course, that God has violated His covenant with Jacob (named Israel). God has kept His covenant, even in judgment and destruction of the sinner. Man, the sinner, has *not* kept his covenant. Those few righteous of the northern kingdom who did keep God's covenant terms were to become (with the righteous of Judah's dispersed) the seed of the messianic nation through which God was going to ultimately fulfill His covenant. Amos is gradually leading into the glorious climax of his prophecy in which he paints word pictures with figurative language of the future blessings of the Messianic age when God shall have fulfilled His promises in Christ and the Church.

v. 9-10 . . . WILL SIFT THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AMONG ALL THE NATIONS . . . YET SHALL NOT THE LEAST KERNEL FALL UPON THE EARTH . . . ALL THE SINNERS OF MY PEOPLE SHALL DIE . . . The heritage of Israel did not grant immunity from judgment, and physical descent from Jacob did not guarantee exemption from accountability. Love is neither blind, nor is it weak. Consequently, as Honeycutt observes, the wrath in God's love and the love in God's wrath should be equally recognized. Remember that one of the backgrounds upon which the prophets are to be read and interpreted is "Judgment-Redemption." Judgment is never the last word in God's scheme. There is a redemptive emphasis which is a result of judgment in history.

Verse 9 definitely refers to the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes of Israel which occurred about 722-721 B.C. The Assyrian emperor transported the Jews and scattered them from one city to another in the vast Assyrian empire. He also imported foreigners into the former territory of Israel. These married the few poor and insignificant Jews left behind in Israel and became the Samaritans. The kingdom of Israel was never to be established again. But there is that righteous remnant still within this rotten nation. Not one of those shall "fall upon the earth." This will be the holy seed-grain out of which the Lord will form a new and holy people (Christians—the Church) and kingdom of God over which the "son-king" in Isaiah 9 and 11 will reign. K & D likens the Gentile nations among whom the northern kingdom (and later the southern kingdom) was dispersed unto the

sieve—"Such a sieve are the nations of the world, through which Israel is purged from its chaff, i.e. from its ungodly members. It is true that among those of Judah who returned from the Babylonian captivity with Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah were some of the ten tribes of Israel.

Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) has left records of the fall of the northern kingdom. Many of the Israelites were deported to Upper Mesopotamia and Media and lost their identity there. Many of the people of Israel lost their national identity through assimilation during the centuries following their déportation. Others made their way southward to Judah, and remnants of them appear among the later Jews. Those who lost their identity are often referred to as the "ten lost tribes of Israel." This is not altogether accurate. From the establishment of the Church until time shall cease, however, all Jews, as well as Gentiles, must appropriate the promises of God through Jesus Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek. We shall amplify this in our next section.

QUIZ

1. Is God a respecter of person? Prove it!
2. When God destroyed Israel did He fail to keep His covenant?
3. Who are the "kernels" which shall not fall to the ground?
4. What finally happened to the kingdom of Israel and all its people?
5. Are there "ten lost tribes of Israel today?"

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— DAVID'S THRONE AND DOMINION RESTORED

TEXT: 9:11-12

- 11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old;
- 12 that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations that are called by my name, saith Jehovah that doeth this.

QUERIES

- a. What is the "tabernacle of David" and why is it fallen?
- b. How and when will God raise it up and rebuild it?
- c. How will the covenant people "possess" all the nations?

PARAPHRASE

When I have thoroughly sifted and purged the covenant people through captivity and prepared them for the coming of the Messiah I will establish again the Messianic throne which I began in David and promised to perpetuate through his lineage. I will raise up the throne of David from the ruins into which it has fallen and restore it until it far exceeds its former glory. This new Davidic kingdom will conquer in spiritual warfare many people from the former enemies of God's covenant nation. All from the many Gentile nations who become worshippers of Jehovah God will become citizens of this new Davidic kingdom.

SUMMARY

Out of the purging process of captivity God will bring about the fulfillment of His covenant of redemption through the revived lineage of David.

COMMENT

v. 11 . . . I WILL RAISE UP THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID . . . That this has its fulfillment in the establishment and ongoing of the Church cannot be questioned! All one has to do is turn to Acts 15:12-21 to find that Holy Spirit inspired apostles have confirmed such fulfillment. There can be no argument with the authoritative pronouncements of the New Testament when it specifically states the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy. The passage in Acts 15:12-21 is one of those "key passages" referred to in our introductory study entitled "Interpreting The Prophets." This passage from Amos (9:11-12) is not the only prophet quoted by James in Acts 15:12-21, but it *is* quoted as having its fulfillment in the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles and their reception into the Church which is the restored kingdom of David, Christ, the son of David, reigning upon that throne. We take the liberty of quoting extensively just here from "*New Testament Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecies*," by James D. Bales, pub. The Harding College Press, pages 150, 151, 152, 153, 167, 168:

"James did not say that he was quoting Amos. It is true that much is found in Amos, but it is not true that the context permits one to think that he is quoting Amos and adding to what Amos or any of the prophets said, when he said: After this I will return.

"James expressly said that he was not referring to only one prophet. 'And to this agree the words of the prophets.' (Acts 15:15). *James was using words from the prophets, plural, and not from a prophet, singular.*

"Why, then, when one fails to find all that James said in one of the prophets, such as Amos, must one conclude that James has added something to what one prophet said. James stated that he was using the words of more than one prophet.

" . . . we can take written words of the prophets, and the ideas expressed in those written words, and put them together to say just what James said. And James evidently put together written words for he said that he was giving written words of the prophets which applied to the taking out of a people from the Gentiles for God's name. And the places from whence we take these words will be from passages which deal with the same theme. This is the judgment of God on Israel for her sins, and then the gathering of the children of Israel into His favor—at least the gathering of those who would accept Him. In Jeremiah 12 God describes His forsaking of 'mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.' (12:7). After a time of punishment He said, 'And it shall come to pass, *after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, the Lord liveth; as they taught my people to swear to Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord.*' (Jer. 12:15-17). Amos speaks of the same thing. He speaks of the Lord's destroying the sinful kingdom, except that He would not utterly destroy them (9:8-10). Then he stated that He would raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, etc. (9:11-12). They were, just as Jeremiah said, to be planted on their land after he had brought them out of captivity (9:14-15).

"Jeremiah and James use almost identical words. 'After that I have plucked them out I will return,' God said through Jeremiah (12:15). 'After this I will return,' God said through James in referring to what was written in the words of the

prophets (Acts 15:15). God said, in other words, that after He had visited punishment on the house of Israel, that He would return and rebuild the tabernacle of David. It was *after this*—after his punishments on Israel which were stated by Old Testament prophets—that God would rebuild the tabernacle of David. It was not after the new covenant days, and the calling of the Gentiles, that God would rebuild David's tabernacle. And this having been done—God having punished them for the sins which such as Amos and Jeremiah denounced them for—God was now rebuilding David's tabernacle.

"There are words of the prophets written, other than those of Jeremiah and Amos, which show that the Gentiles were to seek the Lord . . . (Isa. 11:10). Words of prophets which James quoted stated that the tabernacle of David was to be rebuilt in the future (future from the time that the prophets spoke) that the Gentiles might seek the Lord (Acts 15:16-17). Christ is that root of Jesse and today the Gentiles seek Him. Paul showed this when he proved from Old Testament prophecies that the Gentiles were to receive mercy of God, and he showed that these promises applied to the present dispensation of mercy. *So Paul proved by Old Testament prophecies the same thing that James proved.* (cf. Rom. 15:8-9). Paul then quotes at least four Old Testament statements to show that God had planned to extend mercy, which was being extended during the gospel dispensation, to the Gentiles. And the fourth quotation is as follows: 'And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.' Paul went on to say that he was 'the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sacrificed by the Holy Spirit.' (Rom. 15:12, 16). Christ, then, is the root of Jesse whom the Gentiles seek in this present age. But Isaiah said that it was to be 'in that day.' (Isa. 11:10), . . . the context is applied by the premillennialists to a future dispensation. Yet, the Gentiles now seek the root of Jesse. They were to seek Him "in that day." So evidently that day has come. *Thus Paul and James agree, and agree with the prophets, that the present dispensation is the one in which the prophets had prophesied that the Gentiles would seek the Lord.*"

Mr. Bales also gives an excellent treatment of the phrase "tabernacle of David." We shall quote briefly from his work but suggest that our readers purchase a copy of his book here quoted for detailed study:

"The rebuilding of the tabernacle of David was evidently not a rebuilding of the Mosaical system, but the restoration of a king to David's throne. And that Christ is now on David's throne we have shown in another chapter. The Mosaical system will not be rebuilt. Its mediator, Moses, has now been replaced by Christ (Deut. 18:15-17; Acts 3:22-26). The old Covenant was to pass away, and it has passed away (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:5-10, 16). Its sacrifices have ceased for the Lamb of God has been offered once for all to bear the sins of the world."

Thus we believe that this "key" passage in Amos 9:11-12, as interpreted by Spirit-borne apostles in Acts 15:15-16, along with the multitudes of other such prophecies as compared with the New Testament teaching that the covenant made to Abraham is fulfilled in Christ, proves that the Old Testament prophets were speaking of the Messianic kingdom—the church of Christ—not some dispensation or millenium which is to follow the age in which we are now living. Of course, the consummation of all that God promised in His covenant with Abraham and has potentially accomplished in Christ, will all be realized when Christ comes the second time, "not to deal with sin," (not to give another opportunity for the salvation of the Jews or anyone else), and when all the ages will be over and time shall become eternity and He shall make a new heaven and a new earth.

v. 12 . . . THAT THEY MAY POSSESS THE REMNANT OF EDOM . . . Connected as it is to what has gone before, this phrase is, of course, fulfilled in the establishment of the church and the evangelization of the Gentiles just as the preceding prophecy is so fulfilled. See our comments on Obadiah, verse 20-21 for further study. The Old Testament prophecies most certainly did not have their ultimate future fulfillment in the mere literal restoration of the Jews to a portion of land. Listen to John P. Milton in "*Prophecy Interpreted*," pages 14, 15, 71, 72, 73:

"The prediction of Amos, 'that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name' (Amos 9:12), implies the conquest of Edom and other Gentile nations and their incorporation by force into the national Israel; which could be one way of sharing the blessing of

the covenant, at the same time as it indicated the victory of God and of His people over their enemies. The imagery fits the historically contemporaneous situation. *But* there are other Old Testament prophecies, such as in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 which have already dropped the imagery of physical conquest in favor of the more spiritual one of a voluntary seeking of the Lord in response to invitation, and have thus prepared the way for the New Testament use of the Amos passage in Acts 15:17 . . . "

There are too many people today who believe that unless God fulfills in a literal way, by restoring the physical Jewish nation to a physical Palestine, the covenant He made with Abraham, that God is not faithful to His word. Mr. Milton continues:

"God is faithful to His word, but He can get along without us if we are faithless. That is both the glory and the tragedy of Israel. That which God set out to do through Abraham as His servant and through Israel as His people He has fulfilled, and is fulfilling now, through Christ and the Christian Church. It couldn't be made any clearer than it is in Acts 3:17-26. Read it in your Bible. And notice, it does not say a word about the land of Palestine, or even about Israel as a nation, but drives straight to the heart of the promise of blessing.

"We must learn to distinguish between that which is the very essence of a promise, or its central idea, and that which belongs to the temporary forms of which God made use in bringing the promise to fulfillment. We must learn to distinguish, too, between the eternal and the transient in prophecy. The possession of the land by Israel was an essential stage in the working out of God's covenant of blessing for all men. So was the call of Abraham and the history of the people of Israel. But nowhere in the New Testament is there the slightest indication that these are of the essence of the new covenant. The 'central idea' in the Old Testament promise which is fulfilled in Christ is not the promise of a bit of territory on earth. If the New Testament is right in what it says, even the patriarchs saw more clearly than to set their hopes on an earthly Canaan: they looked for a better country, a heavenly one:

And, again:

"When Amos says, . . . (9:11-12), James in Acts 15:15-18 puts it . . . The difference is significant. The prophet uses what to him must have been a perfectly natural picture of covenant fulfillment in the form of a national conquest of an ancient enemy. It is as if he visualized the incorporation of Edom in Israel as a result of conquest; in this way the blessing of God's covenant would be shared also by them. The New Testament uses the picture of the Gentiles seeking the God of Israel and a share in the blessings of His people. See Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4. What is the nature of those blessings? A careful study of the covenant will make it clear that even in the case of Israel they were essentially spiritual. Should it then be too difficult to see that when Amos speaks of the mountains dripping sweet wine he may be concerned with more than material prosperity; and that its ultimate reference is to 'every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places of Christ? It belongs to the progressiveness of revelation to bring out the meaning latent in the original promise in and through the fulfillment. The 'times-coloring' disappears . . . and the spiritual reality remains, only more clearly discerned as befits the fulfillment. Which is the more important to stress, the promise of the land or of the blessing? Which is the 'central idea' in the covenant promise?"

This leads us to a consideration of the next section of Amos which describes in highly figurative and "times-coloring" language the future glory and prosperity (spiritual) of the Messianic kingdom (tabernacle of David).

QUIZ

1. How may we be sure of the interpretation and fulfillment of this prophecy?
2. How many prophets did James quote in Acts 15:15-17 besides Amos?
3. What is the "tabernacle of David?"
4. How many more times is Christ coming to the world? What is He coming for?
5. Who is to possess the "remnant of Edom, and all the nations...?"
7. How does prophecy in Amos connect with Obadiah's prophecy?

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— FRUITFULNESS AND PROSPERITY RESTORED

TEXT: 9:13-14

- 13 Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.
- 14 And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

QUERIES

- a. What is the meaning of "the plowman shall overtake the reaper?"
- b. When did God "bring back the captivity of . . . Israel?"

PARAPHRASE

Lo: The days are coming, says the Lord, when there shall be one unceasing inpouring of spiritual harvest in the resurrected dynasty of David. It will be as if a plowman followed right on top of the reaper to prepare the field immediately for another crop! Or, it will be as if those who tread the grapes would have such a large harvest they would be treading the grapes right into the time normally set aside for re-seeding the vineyards! Such shall be the abundance and super-abundance in this spiritual harvest of blessings, that it shall be as though the hills of Palestine are dissolving themselves in the rich streams of mercy and grace which they pour down. I will restore the fortunes of my covenant people. I will sustain them materially that they may serve Me to accomplish the restoration of David's throne and the super-abundance of spiritual blessings.

SUMMARY

Jehovah, through Amos, continues speaking of the great purpose a purged and chastened people are to serve—the restoration of David's throne and fulfillment of the covenant in spiritual blessings.

COMMENT

v. 13 . . . THE PLOWMAN SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER . . .

The prophet takes a phrase from the Law (Lev. 26:5) to describe a super-abundant harvest which is so wholly beyond the natural as to be supernatural. He is, therefore, speaking of the consequences of the restoration of the throne of David, i.e. the reigning of Jesus Christ upon that throne and the establishment of the church. Pusey says, "All this is beyond nature, and so, the more in harmony with what went before, the establishment of a kingdom of grace, in which the heathen should have the name of God called upon them . . . There shall be one unceasing inpouring of riches; no break in the heavenly husbandry; labor shall at once yield fruit; the harvest shall but encourage fresh labor. The end shall come swiftly on the beginning; the end shall not close the past only, but issue forth anew. Such is the character of the toils of the Gospel." Compare the words of Jesus in John 4:35-38! This restored dynasty of David has a glorious future filled with fruitfulness and prosperity! Just as the "raising up of the tabernacle of David" refers to the Gospel age, so this, in the same context, is explained by Paul in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places of Christ . . ." It should be very evident that the prophet is not speaking literally when we are told that "the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt." Pusey, again, "Such shall be the abundance and super-abundance of blessing, that it shall be as though the hills dissolved themselves in the rich streams which they poured down . . . Everything, heretofore barren and unfruitful, should overflow with spiritual blessing. The mountains and hills of Judea, with their terraced sides clad with the vine were a natural symbol of fruitfulness to the Jews, but they themselves could not think that natural fruitfulness was meant under this imagery. It would have been a hyperbole as to things of nature; but what, in natural things, is a hyperbole, is but a faint shadow of the joys and rich delights and glad fruitfulness of grace."

v. 14 AND I WILL BRING BACK THE CAPTIVITY OF MY PEOPLE

ISRAEL . . . The Revised Standard Version translates this phrase, "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel . . ." K & D says this, "That this phrase is not used here to denote the return of the people from captivity, but the turning of misfortune and misery into prosperity and salvation, is evident from the context; for Israel cannot be brought back out of captivity *after* it has already taken possession of the Gen-

tiles." (v. 12) K & D interpret verse 14 thus: "As . . . the territory of the re-erected kingdom of David . . . will receive the blessing of the greatest fertility, so will the citizens of this kingdom, be no more visited with calamity and judgment, but enjoy the rich beneficent fruits of their labor in blessed and unbroken peace." It is possible, though the context (as K & D say) does not seem to favor it, that Amos is using what Milton terms "shortened perspective" (see our introductory study of principles and interpretation) here. In other words, it may be that Amos is speaking of what God is going to do historically in restoring the Jews to Palestine in the time of Cyrus (536 B.C.) but that out of that shall come the future blessings in the Son of David, the Messiah. It could be that Amos' perspective is so shortened that the beginning of God's work in the restoration from the captivity is blended right into the eschatological fulfillment of it in the "last days" (the end of the Jewish age and the beginning of the Christian age). We must remind ourselves again and again that the prophets spoke primarily for their contemporaries. Whatever they would wish to convey of God's ultimate blessings in fulfilling His covenant the prophets would have to couch in contemporary historical developments and contemporary modes of expression. So God promises here to restore, bless and sustain where He had formerly disrupted, dispersed and judged.

QUIZ

1. How is verse 13 to be interpreted—literally or figuratively? Explain your reasons.
2. What is the RSV translation of the first phrase of v. 14?
3. What reasoning does K & D give to agree with the RSV translation?
4. What do we mean by "shortened perspective?"
5. Why is it necessary to remember that the prophets spoke for their contemporaries?

RESULTS OF JUDGMENT PROPHESED— SECURITY-PEACE-PROTECTION RESTORED

TEXT: 9:15

- 15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God.

QUERIES

- a. When did God "plant" them upon their land?
- b. Were the Jews ever again plucked up out of their land?

PARAPHRASE

And I, the Lord God, will establish, sustain and protect this new kingdom of David. The citizens of this kingdom will be guarded by Me and no one shall ever pluck them out of their inheritance which I have given them, says the Lord thy God.

SUMMARY

God is the builder, sustainer and protector of the Messianic kingdom. Its citizens are safe and secure.

COMMENT

v. 15 . . . I WILL PLANT THEM . . . AND THEY SHALL NO MORE BE PLUCKED UP . . . This, of course, is within the context of what we have been discussing—the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant by the restoring of the Davidic throne with the attendant blessings as a consequence of that restoration. Here the emphasis is on the victory, peace and security that will come when David's throne is raised up. We want to share with our readers certain comments here from Lange:

" . . . God will magnify Israel by establishing a new condition of prosperity . . . directly mediated through the action of the judgment. This judgment . . . operates . . . in a purifying direction . . . the divine grace shows itself in this, that after the destruction of the ungodly elements, first and chiefly in the ten tribes, but also in Judah, there arises a single but prosperous and powerful kingdom of Israel under the legitimate monarchy, which attracts to itself all the elements spared and refined by the judgment, including those which belonged to the existing ten tribes . . . "

Again, Lange says:

"The threatening, as well as the promises of prophecy, find their complete fulfillment first in the New Testament, yet not in the literal Israel, but in the people of God represented by Israel in so far as it is apostate.

"A certain fulfillment was no doubt experienced in the restoration accomplished by the Jews who returned from ex-

ile. But this was by no means 'the Messianic salvation,' the consummation of God's kingdom in Israel . . . The Messiah came in the person of Jesus Christ.

"What therefore was promised to Israel passes over by virtue of the new covenant to all who belong to Israel through faith in Christ and form the people of God. And we are not at all to expect a literal fulfillment of these engagements to a national Israel, and in the shape of temporal blessings on the stand-point of the Old Testament. For, if we did, it would follow that there must be a literal possession of the 'remnant of Edom.' But the boldest realist will hardly conclude that in the future Edom will again exist alongside of Israel.

"We may here appropriate in substance the observations of Keil, who says that 'the raising up of David's fallen hut commenced with the coming of Christ and the founding of the Christian Church by the Apostles—(as to which we refer, e.g., only to Luke 1:32, 33, where Jesus is represented as the restorer of David's throne, and one whose kingdom shall have no end).—and the possession of Edom and of all the other nations upon whom the Lord reveals his name, took its rise in the reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven set up by Christ . . . The land which will flow with streams of divine blessing is not Palestine, but the domain of the Christian Church . . . The people which cultivate this land is the Christian Church, so far as it stands in living faith and produces the fruits of the Holy Spirit.'

"And—we may add—so far as the Jews are converted to Christ and incorporated into the Christian community, there is 'a bringing back of the captives.' Still this 'bringing back' is not limited to Israel after the flesh. Its fulfillment is to be sought more generally in the freedom which Christ has brought, in consequence of which believers in Him are no longer prisoners under the control of an alien power. They 'possess the glorious liberty of the children of God,' through their enjoyment of communion with God.

". . . this promise for the people of God first began to be fulfilled at the appearing of the Messiah and in the domain of the Christian Church. Its complete fulfillment is to be expected at the *parousia* of Christ; and then the spiritual blessing, the spiritual power and greatness, the spiritual freedom which the people of God now enjoy, will obtain a corresponding outward sensible manifestation."

The promise of God that in Messianic days He would establish a kingdom so securely that it would never be conquered or "plucked up," is found in a number of places in the prophets (cf. Jer. 24:6; 31:28; Isa. 60:21; Ezek. 37:25). One should read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 37 to get the full impact of prophetic expression. Notice in Ezek. 37:24-28 that the resurrected dynasty of David is central! Isaiah spoke gloriously of the peace and victory that was to come when God's covenant would be fulfilled (cf. Isa. 25:1—26:6).

Old Testament prophecies were viewed by New Testament authority to have been fulfilled in spirit. Yet, the attendant physical phenomena were not recorded. Obviously they did not accompany the fulfillment of the principle, or real content of the prophecy. This does not invalidate the prophetic ministry of the prophets. Rather *it illustrates that the physical descriptions were literary devices used to express a truth that otherwise would have defied description.*

Pre-millennial literalism in seeking physical fulfillment in a physical Jewish nation misses the whole point of the prophetic message and, in our opinion, is completely out of harmony with plain, unequivocal New Testament teaching as to its fulfillment. Lange finds it worthy of note that a Hebrew with the background and hopes such as James would have failed to see a literal fulfillment of these closing words of Amos. Lange says, ". . . it is remarkable that James, who was so pronounced a representative of the Judaistic tendency, should regard such a promise as we have in Amos, as fulfilled, so far as regards its meaning, in the appearance of Christ and the spiritual blessings thence resulting, without even once referring it to the second coming of the Saviour. Even he therefore is a patron of the so-called spiritual interpretation of the prophecies; and if the theological explanation here finds itself in agreement with a disciple of the Lord, and him a man of strong Jewish-Christian feeling, that is a proof that it is on the right track, and has so much the more reason for disowning the doctrine of a future glorification of the national Israel as guaranteed by the prophets."

This last verse of Amos reminds of Jesus who said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (Jn. 10:27-29). It also reminds of Romans 8:31-39—read this passage again. The peace, security, fruitfulness, blessing which we find in Christ, God planned ages and ages ago and revealed it to the minds and

hearts of stalwart men of God like Amos to deliver to those who would take comfort in it. Those men, in turn, master artists all, each in his own way, splashed in variegated hues, now bold and arresting, now shaded and peaceful, using hyperbole, simile, metaphor and parable as their paints, one glorious picture after another of God's holiness and love working for man's redemption in every historical event.

We would like to know more about this great spokesman of God. But here our association ends until it is renewed, we trust, in that day when what he preached and predicted shall be consummated. Amos, man of holy conscience, unselfish motives, unshakable courage and uncompromising conviction was not a prophet by profession or training. He was a simple rustic, a shepherd, whom God charged with delivering to his countrymen the Lord's message of judgment, repentance and redemption. He received "a divers portion" of the message of God and communicated it in "divers manners." Every Christian today, even the least in the kingdom, is greater than Amos in the sense that God has spoken to the Christian in these last days Son-wise. The least the Christian can do is seek to exemplify Amos' holy conscience, unselfish motives, unshakable courage and uncompromising conviction.

QUIZ

1. What is the emphasis in v. 15 as it is connected with the whole context?
2. How are we to interpret the whole passage? Where is it fulfilled?
3. Where else in the O.T. prophets is the principle of v. 15 found?
4. What is remarkable about the fact that James interprets the context as fulfilled in Christ?
5. Where in the N.T. do we find the principle of security, peace and victory pronounced?
6. How should Amos, the man, become an example for the Christian?

AMOS

EXAMINATION

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Summarize in one paragraph, the philosophy of history as taught by the Old Testament prophets.
2. Describe in detail, the circumstances of the times in which Amos took God's message to Israel.
3. What is generally accepted as the theme of the book of Amos?

ASSOCIATIONS

Associate the persons or events of column one with the correct person or event of column two.

1	2
Uzziah	a synonym for Israel
Carmel	the high priest of Israel
Tekoa	king of Judah
Gaza	center of worship in Israel
Damascus	capital of Syria
Ammon	city of Philistia
Moab	Amos' home town
Amaziah	mountain in Israel
Tabernacle of David	city of Philistia
Bethel	Messianic prophecy
Nazirites	heathen nation east of Jordan
Ashdod	heathen nation east of Jordan
Jacob	Jewish sect

MEMORIZATIONS

" . . . because I will do this unto thee, _____ to meet thy _____, O Israel."

"Seek _____, and not _____, that ye may live; and so _____, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say."

"But let _____ roll down as _____, and _____ as a mighty stream."

"Woe to them that are at _____ in Zion, and to them that are _____ in the mountain of Samaria . . ."

"In that day I will rise up the _____ of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its _____ and I will _____ it as in the days of old;"

EXAMINATION
CONTEMPLATIONS

1. What was Amos' occupation? What did he mean he was "not the son of a prophet?"
2. What was the birthplace of Amos and what type of life did he lead?
3. Why did God direct Amos to pronounce judgment upon the many heathen nations surrounding the chosen people? What is the lesson in this for today?
4. What kind of living were the people engaging in according to Amos' description?
5. Why is Amos called the prophet of "social justice?"
6. What was the religious condition of the northern kingdom in Amos' day?
7. What opposition did Amos meet in his preaching in Israel?
8. Does the book of Amos teach against the use of musical instruments in the worship of God?
9. Where is the Messianic prophecy recorded in the book of Amos? Where is it repeated in the New Testament?
10. What does the N.T. interpretation of Amos' prophecy teach concerning the Messianic kingdom?

REVOLUTION OR REGENERATION

Amos 5:24

INTRODUCTION

- I. MAN'S REDEMPTION, TRANSFORMATION, REGENERATION IS TO BE ACTED OUT OR EXPRESSED IN SOCIAL RELATIONS
 - A. God created man; He created this world order
 1. He has not abdicated His sovereignty over this order
 2. He maintains His sovereignty and moral government by holding the world responsible to His revealed Will
 - B. All men and nations are responsible to God for moral uprightness and just social behavior
 1. The O.T. prophets spoke principles and guidelines for social relations which are as relevant today as they were 2500 years ago . . .
 2. These same principles are amplified and confirmed by Jesus Christ and His apostles
- II. GOD'S WORD JUDGES EVERY HUMAN CULTURE AND INSTITUTION
 - A. The U.S.S.R AND CHINA are as much "under God" as the U.S.A., because God is infinite, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. HE TRANSCENDS ALL POWERS AS WELL AS ALL THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN ABILITIES, INSTITUTIONS AND NATIONS. HE IS THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE
 1. Cf. Amos 1-2; Isaiah 13-23; Jer., Ezek., ect. Daniel
 2. "It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me . . ." Jer. 27:5
- III. PRIVILEGE BRINGS RESPONSIBILITY
 - A. If God expected so much of Israel and Judah in Amos' day in social justice because they were witnesses of the One True God,
 - B. How much more does he require of U.S.A. since we have so long had the glorious gospel and providential grace of God in material means?!

SERMON FROM AMOS

IV. GOD'S WAY OF BRINGING ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE

- A. He did not call upon Israel to send a Senate Investigation Committee to discover the causes and recommend cures for the nations problem—HE REVEALED IT . . . SIN WAS THE CAUSE . . . REPENTANCE THE CURE
- B. He did not send a Ph.D., an URBANOLOGIST, SOCIOLOGIST, OR SHEEPHERDER AND FRUITPICKER TO SIMPLY DECLARE WITH CONVICTION AND CLARITY THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD!
- C. God did not call upon Israel's government to provide a massive welfare war on poverty, to pass a sword-control bill. He called upon them to obey the Divine Law
 1. Amos did not preach civil disobedience to the poor, he preached obedience to God to all
 2. Israel did not need a great politician, organizer, economist, legislator . . . SHE NEEDED A GREAT PREACHER, A HEARLD OF THE TRUTH, A CONSCIENCE-STABBING CRYER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, A WARRIOR OF THE FAITH!

SO THIS MAN AMOS, NOT A PROFESSIONAL CLERGYMAN, NOT A SIGN-CARRYING RIOTER, NOT AN ORGANIZER OF MARCHES . . . BUT A MAN ALL ALONE, WHO BELIEVED GOD AND HAD THE COURAGE TO PREACH GOD'S MESSAGE, HAS A RELEVANT MESSAGE FOR OUR SOCIETY TODAY!

DISCUSSION

I. THE SOCIAL SICKNESS OF ISRAEL'S DECADENT SOCIETY CLOSELY PARALLELS THAT OF OUR OWN

- A. "They have forgotten how to do right, says the Lord. They maintain their palaces by the fruit of violence and robbery." Phillips, Amos 3:10
 1. Violence and crime in our world is at an appalling level!
 2. 15 yr. olds commit more serious crimes than any other age group; 1/6 boy is referred to the juvenile court; in 1965 more than 2 million Americans were sentenced to prison; 40% of all male children will be arrested sometime in their lives for something more serious than traffic violations; 3 million crimes reported in 1965 while in some places only 1/10th of certain crimes are reported
 3. In all large cities no one is safe on the streets after dark; THERE ARE MANY WHO ARE ADVOCATING THE BURNING DOWN OF CITIES, RIOTING, CIVIL REVOLUTION! Gangs of wild, thrill-seeking, cruel, cold-blooded boys and girls roam the streets, even of Joplin!

4. Organized Crime like the Mafia, etc., control great institutions and organizations and often city governments and political parties!
- B. Indulgent luxury and sensual excess; ". . . at ease in Zion lying upon beds of ivory, eat lambs from the flock . . . sing idle songs . . . drink wine in bowls . . . anoint themselves with finest oils . . ." Amos 6:1-6a
 1. Indulgence and excess is rampant all over the world among the rich and poor, in every realm possible
 2. Indulgence in building expensive homes and clothes
 3. Excess in eating, obesity, have to take pills, etc.
 4. Excessive indulgence in frivolity, recreation, etc.
 5. Excess in alcohol are ruining us. Yale School of Alcohol Studies, drinking cause of 20% of all divorces, 25% of all insanity, 37% of all poverty, 47% of all child misery, 50% of all crimes, 50% of all traffic deaths; industry loses 60 million man hours and 1 billion a year in wages due to alcohol absenteeism; Hoover says 5 billion a year is spent to combat crime due to liquor drinking. This is 1 billion more than total revenue received by federal government for liquor sold!!!
 6. We have so indulged in sex it is openly perverted . . . homosexual wedding performed in Rotterdam by catholic priest . . . plays on Broadway now have naked women and men on stage and roaming through audience . . . a movie about the love of two lesbians for one another is being shown in New York.

In one play, Time describes, "In full light, and facing the audience, the unclothed heroine knelt on a table throughout the play as a symbol of passive white idealism. A fully dressed Negro, symbolizing angry black nationalism, devours her." THE DECADENT CANAANITE, GREEK AND ROMAN THEATRES HAD NOTHING ON THOSE OF U.S.A.!

7. We indulgently pay money to see such things . . . corrupt-minded movie stars make millions of dollars off indulgent society . . . sports heroes are paid fabulous salaries . . . so-called entertainers are millionaires over night simply for sitting and spouting obscenities on the T.V.
- C. Oppression of the poor: ". . . cows of Bashan, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy . . . trample the poor . . . afflict the righteous, turn aside the needy . . ." (cf. 4:1; 5:11-12; 8:4-6)

SERMON FROM AMOS

1. Like it or not there are people all over the world who make their living by oppressing the poor . . . yes, even here in Joplin
 2. Loan sharks; those who exploit people by bring young girls into prostitution to escape poverty; criminals who exploit the poor by selling them numbers or other forms of gambling; people who pay less than fair wages simply because of a persons color or nationality
 3. Like it or not some people in America have been denied the opportunities others have simply because they were black-skinned, were Mexican nationality, were poorly dressed, etc. I have lived in the South, and the West and the North and it is all the same! Greed, prejudice, SIN causes men to oppress one another!
 4. GOD WILL NOT HOLD THE OPPRESSORS OF THE POOR GUILTYLESS . . . NEITHER WILL HE HOLD GUILTYLESS THOSE WHO KNOW IT AND DO NOTHING ABOUT IT! ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO OUGHT TO BE REGENERATING SOCIETY BY PREACHING REPENTANCE TO THE OPPRESSORS, AND HOPE TO THE OPPRESSED!
- D. Perverting Justice and Righteousness: "O you who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth . . . you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe . . . they hate him who reproves in the gate . . . abhor him who speaks the truth" (5:7, 10, 12)
1. Convicted criminals go unpunished because of political pressures on courts and judges or because of outright bribes
 2. Looters encouraged to rob, destroy because politicians want votes
 3. Rich and influential able to get by with flouting tax laws, and other laws the poor and middle class would not
 4. International criminals violate our sovereignty and we do nothing
 5. Our boys dying in V.N. while our so-called allies ship our enemies food and arms
 6. Those who stand for truth, justice, law and order, smeared as fanatics, extremists
- E. Apathy—Indifference ". . . but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph . . ." 6:6b
1. None seem to have the courage to speak out against evil and in favor of righteousness

AMOS

2. Too many have it too good . . . and those who do not have it so good want to change the situation only in terms of materialistic values!

Rolland Steever says in Christian Standard, July 6, 1968, Christ in the Ghettos . . . "We cannot turn our faces away and fearfully hope that this situation will go away. It will not!"

3. People have made sin respectable by euphemizing it . . . the godless liquor traffic is now called "tavern, grill, night-club, cocktail lounge." Drunkenness is called "illness of alcoholism." Youthful crime is called "juvenile delinquency". Pornography is called "realism," Divorce and sexual promiscuity are recommended as producing maturity for later marital relations, immodest dress is called "fashionable." Dope addition is called "escapeism."

- 4 10 or 12 people stand by and watch a pregnant school teacher attacked and raped in Kansas City. Others watch while a gang kick an old man to death in New York park.

LEGISLATORS AND JUSTICES SEEM UNCONCERNED OR PARALYZED BY FEAR TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE MORAL ANARCHY EXCEPT VOTE MORE MONEY HANDOUTS AS RANSOMS

POLITICIANS HAVE PROPOSED EVERY PANACEA POSSIBLE AND ALL THEIR SCHEMES ONLY ADD MORE PROBLEMS TO THE PROBLEM SCIENCE'S SOLUTIONS ARE SUPERFICIAL AND SHALLOW

EDUCATION IS EXTRANEIOUS AND IRRELEVANT TO THE PREDICAMENT

WHAT ARE WE TO DO? WHERE ARE WE TO TURN? WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

II. THE CAUSE OF ISRAEL'S DECADENCE PARALLELS OUR OWN

A. Psychiatrist Carl Jung, in a letter to E. Stanley Jones, wrote, "Those psychiatrists who are not superficial have come to the conclusion that the vast neurotic misery of the world could be termed a neurosis of emptiness. Men cut themselves off from the root of their being, from God, and then life turns empty, meaningless, without purpose. So when God goes, goal goes. When goal goes, meaning goes. When meaning goes, value goes, and life turns dead on our hands."

B. Sidney Cave, in his book, "The Christian Way," says "Right and wrong are, for many, words which have ceased to have any intelligible content, and the sense of liberation from the restrictions of traditional morality has brought not the joy of freedom but

SERMON FROM AMOS

the *malaise* which comes from lives lived without aim or meaning. We are all aware of the psychic injury suffered by a child if he finds that the one he has trusted as his father is not his father. That is the plight of many in the modern world. They have lost their heavenly Father and feel not liberated, but merely insecure . . . Many have lost the sense of a father's care but not the sense of need."

- C. Time, April 26, 1968, in an article on American authors, says they are "viewing the world as a lunatic comedy . . . they work from an assumption that society is at best malevolent and stupid, at worst wholly lunatic. The gods are dead and their graves untended, morality is a matter of picking one's way between competing absurdities, and the only sane reaction to society—to its alleged truths and virtues, its would-be terrors and taboos—is a cackle or a scream of possibly cathartic laughter"

WHAT IS THE CAUSE? "MEN HAVE CUT THEMSELVES OFF FROM THE ROOT OF THEIR BEING, GOD . . . THEY HAVE LOST THEIR HEAVENLY FATHER . . . THE GODS ARE DEAD . . ."

D. ISRAEL'S ROAD TO RUIN WAS PAVED WITH UNBELIEF, IDOLATRY, RITUALISM

1. ". . . because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept his statutes . . ." 2:4
2. THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR LIES—2:4
". . . but their lies have led them astray, after which their fathers walked."

OUR NATION IS FILLED WITH POLITICAL LEADERS, INDUSTRIAL LEADERS, YES, EVEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO HAVE REJECTED THE WORD OF GOD . . . THEY HAVE SCORNEO ITS ETHICAL PRECEPTS AS BEING IRRELEVANT . . . THEY HAVE EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR THE SATANIC INSPIRED LIES OF HUMANISM, AND EVOLUTIONISM.

3. The Israelites in Amos' day were worshipping idols, golden-calves, star-gods and other images at Bethel and Dan (cf. 3:14; 5:25-27)

AND OUR NATION HAS ITS IDOLS AND IMAGES TO WHICH THEY PAY OBEDIENCE . . . MOVIE STARS, ENTERTAINERS, SPORTS, TELEVISION, AUTOMOBILES, HOUSES, POLITICIANS, PHILOSOPHERS, THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR!

WE HAVE OUR SHRINES, THE MOVIE HOUSE, THE NIGHTCLUBS, THE STADIUMS, POLITICAL RALLIES, WHERE THERE ARE SET RITUALS WE ALL GO THROUGH, LAKESIDES, ETC.

AMOS

4. Ritualism ". . . bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days . . . proclaim freewill offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel."
4:4-5

10 years ago in Christian Standard, Jan J. Erteszak said, in an article "From Asylum to Powerhouse" 12-5-59 . . . "Our churches are increasing in membership and material well-being at an unprecedented rate. Religion has become popular. But, almost in inverse proportion to its popularity, it is losing its central place of commitment in the lives of the people." YES, WE HAVE MANY PEOPLE IN AMERICA WHO GO TO CHURCH AND GO THROUGH THE RITUALS . . . THEY LOVE TO DO THIS . . . IT SALVES THE CONSCIENCE . . . BUT GOD AND HIS WORD DOES NOT PERMEATE THEIR EVERYDAY LIVING!

THIS IS THE CAUSE . . . IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CAUSE OF EVERY SOCIETY WHICH HAS PERISHED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH . . . REJECTION OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD'S REVEALED WORD!!!

EGYPT DID NOT DIE FROM LACK OF WEALTH OR POWER!

OLD BABYLON DID NOT DIE FROM LACK OF EDUCATION OR CULTURE!

ASSYRIA DID NOT DIE FOR LACK OF MILITARY MIGHT!

THE NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE WAS THE RICHEST ON EARTH!

PERSIA WAS POWERFUL AND RICH!

GREECE WAS POWERFUL AND RICH!

ROME WAS POWERFUL AND RICH!

AND ON AND ON ONE MIGHT GO . . . NONE OF THEM WERE OVERTHROWN AS A RESULT OF ATTEMPTS BY ENSLAVED PEOPLE THYING TO HAVE A DEMOCRACY . . . SO DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS OF NO ASSURANCE OF PERPETUATION OF SOCIETY!

ALL SOCIETIES, GOVERNMENTS, PEOPLES, INDIVIDUALS STAND OR FALL ACCORDING TO THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE UNIVERSAL AND ETERNAL PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE MORAL GOVERNMENT!

MORAL ANARCHY BREEDS POLITICAL ANARCHY . . . WHICH WILL IN TURN PRODUCE POLITICAL DICTATORSHIP AND MORAL DICTATORSHIP.

IT IS PRAGMATICALLY PROVEN CORRECT . . . A PERSON OR A NATION CAN ONLY BE FREE SPIRITUALLY, MORALLY, AND POLITICALLY IF IT KNOWS AND DOES THE TRUTH OF GOD!

SERMON FROM AMOS

III. THE CURE FOR ISRAEL'S DECADENCE IS THE SAME CURE NEEDED TODAY . . . REGENERATION

- A. Cecil Todd said in his last Revival Fires magazine, "Our nation has strayed from God! Our problem is not the color of people's skin: our problem is the color of people's hearts. The heart of our problem is the problem of our hearts! Our problem is not the poverty-stricken ghettos—the slum areas; our problem, rather, is the poverty-stricken souls—the slums of people's hearts . . . What we need in this country more than a war on poverty is a war on sin."
- B. Amos said it this way: "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord the God of hosts will be with you . . . Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate . . . let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream." 5:14-15, 23-24
- C. The prophets taught and Jesus confirmed that all social morality finds its roots, its spiritual source and compelling power over the consciences of men in the character of God Himself. To seek God is to seek good; to love God is to love good, and, conversely, to hate evil because God hates evil.
1. The solution is even as it was in the days of Jeremiah . . . restoration of the old paths wherein is the good way (Jer. 6:16-21) . . . the solution is REGENERATION, not REVOLUTION.
 2. Social injustice cannot be corrected by simply renovation and reorganization of the social structure. NO MATTER WHICH POLITICAL PARTY REORGANIZES!
 3. Social injustice can only be overcome when men are recreated in the image of God. SOCIETY WILL NEVER BE CHANGED EXCEPT AS INDIVIDUAL MEN ARE CHANGED! AND MEN WILL NEVER BE CHANGED UNTIL THEY ARE UNITED WITH GOD THROUGH HIS REVELATION WHICH IN THESE DAYS IS MADE IN HIS INCARNATE SON
- D. The FAITHFULNESS OF GOD is the great motivating power appealed to by the prophets. GOD HAS KEPT HIS PROMISES IN THE PAST . . . HE WILL KEEP THEM IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE!!
1. History is appealed to.
 2. So, what God did through Jesus Christ in time and in history is confirmation of the FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (II Cor. 1:20) . . .

AMOS

THIS BECOMES THE BASIS OF MORALITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, EVERYTHING . . . BECAUSE IT IS THROUGH THESE EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES THAT WE ARE ABLE TO ESCAPE THE CORRUPTION THAT IS IN THE WORLD AND BECOME PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE . . . REGENERATED (II Pet. 1:3-4)

CONCLUSION

WHAT THEN CAN THE CHURCH DO IN OUR AGE OF SOCIAL UPHEAVAL . . . HOW IS THE CHURCH TO BE INVOLVED . . . HOW MAY IT BE MADE RELEVANT FOR THIS GENERATION?

I. THE CHURCH MUST START BY OUT-COMMITTING THOSE WHO, BY THEIR OWN ADMISSION, ARE DETERMINED TO DESTROY OUR SOCIETY

A. A committed church is a fellowship of believers which accepts the following premises and acts upon them:

1. The basic teachings of Christ are universal in time, space, and every situation of life . . . as significant in London, Berlin, Moscow, Paris, Peking as U.S.A.
2. They are just as pertinent to our interdependent and complex society of today as they were in the first century
3. They are applicable to the totality of our problems—business, home, public life, international relations
4. Those who practice the Christian precepts in their daily lives are blessed themselves while, at the same time, they bring blessings to their society.

B. The church must come to grips with the following tasks:

1. Of involving men in her message for today and in her activity . . . SHOWING MEN THAT THE WORD OF GOD IS RELEVANT FOR THEIR PROBLEMS . . . EVANGELIZE THOSE WHO ARE SEARCHING TODAY
2. Become skillful in building a lasting conviction in its members. WE MUST CONVINCE MEN THAT CHRIST'S RULE OF LOVE REALLY WORKS . . . THAT IT WILL ENRICH THEM IN THE GREATEST POSSIBLE WAY . . . SPIRITUALLY
3. It must learn to generate commitment in its entire membership . . . IN A COMMITTED CHURCH THERE ARE NO SPECTATORS: EVERYONE IS A PARTICIPANT . . . EVERYONE HAS A TASK

SERMON FROM AMOS

THE CHURCH CAN ONLY IMPART WHAT IT POSSESSES, AND THE EXTENT OF ITS INFLUENCE WILL DEPEND ON THE SINGLE-MINDEDNESS, THE SPIRITUAL MUSCLE, THE DEPTH OF CONVICTION, AND THE WILLINGNESS TO WITNESS OF THOSE WHO ARE FULLY COMMITTED.

IT IS USUALLY AT THE CROSSROADS OF DESTINY THAT REAL PROGRESS IS AFFECTED. WE ARE AT SUCH A CROSSROAD. IF WE UNDERTAKE TO BRING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO GRIPS WITH THE 20TH CENTURY, WE CAN, AND WE WILL CHANGE THE COURSE OF THE HISTORY OF DISSOLUTION WHICH IS NOW IN THE MAKING

II. IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU AND WITH ME AS INDIVIDUALS

TO BE A CHRISTIAN IS NOT SO MUCH DOING THIS OR THAT, BUT ALLOWING GOD TO CREATE IN YOU HIS OWN IMAGE—JESUS CHRIST!

NATIONS MAY CRUMBLE, BUT GOD'S PROMISES ARE CERTAIN TO ENDURE!!



"That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches . . ." (Amos 6:4). Ivory plaques, often inlaid with gold and precious stones, decorated with cherubs and religious motifs of foreign origin, have been found by the hundred at Megiddo and Samaria. They testify to the luxury and extravagance of the upper classes in Israel in the first half of the eighth century B. C., against which the Prophet Amos thundered in vain.

ALONE

It is human to stand with the crowd, it is divine to stand alone; it is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is God-like to follow a principle, to stem the tide.

It is natural to compromise conscience and follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty.

"No man stood with me, but all men forsook me," wrote the battle-scared apostle in describing his first appearance before Nero to answer for his life for believing and teaching contrary to the Roman world.

Truth has been out of fashion since man changed his robe of fadeless light for a garment of faded leaves.

Noah built and voyaged alone. His neighbors laughed at his strangeness and perished in style.

Abraham wandered and worshipped alone. Sodomites smiled at the simple shepherd, followed the fashion, and fed the flames.

Daniel dined and prayed alone. Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone. Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone. Jesus loved and died alone.

And of the lonely way His disciples should walk, He said: "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Of their treatment by the many who walk in the broad way, He said: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

The church in the wilderness praised Abraham and persecuted Moses. The church of the kings praised Moses and persecuted the prophets.

The church of Caiaphas praised the prophets and persecuted Jesus. The church of the Popes praised the Saviour and persecuted the saints. And the multitudes now, both in the church and the world, applaud the courage and fortitude of the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness or foolishness like faithfulness to truth today.

Wanted, today, men and women, young and old, who will obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fortune and friends and life itself.

SPECIAL STUDY TEN
 FIGURES OF SPEECH IN AMOS
 American Standard Version
 by Shirley Woolsey

CHAPTER 1

- v. 2 — Jehovah will roar and utter voice . . . anthropomorphism . . . pastures shall mourn, the top of Carmel shall wither . . . personification
- v. 3 — for three transgressions, yea for four (also in vv. 6, 9, 11, 13, and 2:1, 4, and 6) . . . meiosis
 they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron . . . personification of Gilead and verbal metaphor
- v. 4 — send fire into Hazael that shall devour the palaces (also in vv. 7, 10, 12, 14, and 2:2 and 5) . . . metaphor
- v. 5 — break the bar of Damascus . . . verbal metaphor
- v. 11 — cast off pity,
 anger did tear . . . verbal metaphors or personifications of abstract qualities: pity and anger

CHAPTER 2

- v. 7 — they pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor . . . hyperbole
- v. 9 — height was like the height of cedars . . . simile
 they were strong as the oaks . . . simile
 I destroyed their fruit from above and roots from beneath . . . metaphor
- v. 13 — I will press you, as a cart is pressed down that is full of sheaves . . . simile
- v. 14 — flight shall perish from the swift . . . personification of flight
- v. 16 — flee away naked . . . maybe literal, or an ellipsis if it means naked of courage

In chapters 1 and 2 there is a climax of judgments, in the Oriental custom of "beating around the bush" . . . finally coming to Israel.

1:3—Damascus; 1:6—Gaza; 1:9—Tyre; 1:11—Edom; 1:13—2:1 Moab; 2:4—Judah; 2:6—Israel.

FIGURES OF SPEECH

CHAPTER 3

- v. 1 — children of Israel (throughout book) . . . metonymy
(people called by name of nation's founder)
- v. 3-8 — effect: cause:
 Shall 2 walk together—except they have made an
 appointment
 Will a lion roar in the forest—except he hath prey
 Will a young lion cry out of his den—if he has taken
 nothing
 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth—where no
 trap is set
 Shall people not be afraid—when the trumpet is blown
 in a city
 so: Shall evil befall a city—the Lord hath not done it
 . . . litotes . . . climactic parallelism in rhetorical
 questions (interrogation)
- v. 10 — store up violence and robbery in their palaces . . .
 verbal metaphor and hyperbole of their desire for
 evil.
- v. 12 — as this: shepherd rescues two legs or ear out of lion's
 mouth
 so this: Hebrews rescued from silk beds, etc. . . .
 similitude

CHAPTER 4

- v. 1 — cows of Bashan . . . metaphor
- v. 4-5 — come to Bethel and transgress . . . irony and sarcasm
- v. 6 — cleanness of teeth . . . metaphor for lack of food
- v. 8 — two or three cities wandered into a city to drink . . .
 personification of cities.
- v. 9-11 — A climax:
 v. 9 — I have smitten with mildew
 v. 10 — I have sent pestilence
 I have slain men
 I have carried away your horses
 I have made the stench of your camp
 come to your nostrils
- v. 11 — I have overthrown cities among you; YET
 YOU HAVE NOT RETURNED!

AMOS

- v. 11 — You were as a brand plucked out of the burning . . . simile
v. 13 — God treads on the high places of the earth . . . anthropomorphism

CHAPTER 5

- v. 2 — virgin of Israel is fallen,
no more rise,
cast upon her land
none to raise her . . . personification of nation
v. 3 — 1,000 and 100 left
100 and just 10 left . . . synecdoche (definite no. for indefinite)
v. 6 — God will break out like fire, devour, none will quench . . . simile
v. 7 — You turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth . . . verbal metaphor and perhaps a hyperbole
v. 8 — God calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the earth . . . anthropomorphism
v. 18 — The day of the Lord is darkness and not light (also v. 20) . . . metaphor
v. 19 — As a man flees from lion and bear meets him
As a man runs to house, leans on wall and a snake bites him:
So (you seek day of Lord and will find it darkness.) . . . similitude which climaxes with an interrogation
v. 24 — let justice roll down as waters
and righteousness as a mighty stream . . . personification of justice and righteousness and a simile.

CHAPTER 6

- v. 3 — you that (try to) put away the evil day . . . ellipsis and cause the seat of violence to come near . . . metonymy (cause stated and effect understood)
v. 8 — abhor excellency of Jacob . . . metonymy (nation called by name of founder)
v. 12 — shall horses run upon rocks?
shall one plow the sea with oxen? . . . interrogation
6:12b compare with 5:7

FIGURES OF SPEECH

CHAPTER 7

- v. 1-3 — locusts . . . vision
- v. 4-6 — fire . . . vision
 eating up the land . . . personification
 Jacob so small, how shall he stand? (vv.2, 5)
 metonymy and interrogation
- v. 7-9 — plumbline . . . vision metaphorical
- v. 10 — the land is not able to bear Amos' words . . . personification
- v. 16 — You say, Drop not your word against Israel . . .
 figurative for Do not preach, as in R.S.V.
- v. 17 — an unclean land . . . metonymy (the lack of purity
 before God is represented as an actual dirty mess.)

CHAPTER 8

- v. 1-3 — summer fruit . . . vision metaphorical
- v. 4 — you that swallow up the needy . . . verbal metaphor
- v. 6 — you buy the poor for silver and the needy for shoes
 . . . maybe literal, or a verbal metaphor
- v. 8 — land trembles for this . . . personification of land
 it rises up like the River, is troubled and sinks
 again . . . simile
- v. 9 — the sun goes down at noon
 darkens earth in the clear day . . . maybe literal
 or metaphor
- v. 11 — send a famine of God's word,
 seek it from sea to sea
 seek it from north to east
 run to and fro and will not find it . . . climax
 and personification of the Word.
- v. 13 — fair virgins and young men faint for thirst (for the
 word) . . . ellipsis
- v. 14 — they will fall and never rise up again . . . verbal
 metaphor

CHAPTER 9

- v. 1 — Lord standing beside the altar . . . vision
 smite the capitals, shake the thresholds and break them
 on their heads . . . verbal metaphors
- v. 2 — dig into Sheol . . . verbal metaphor (want to die
 climb up to heaven)

AMOS

hide in Mt. Carmel

hide in bottom of sea

go into captivity before enemies, but GOD
WILL BE THERE!

These are climactic parallelisms and verbal metaphors.

- v. 4 — the Lord's eyes are set upon them for evil . . . anthropomorphism
- v. 5 — the Lord touches the land and it melts . . . anthro. and verbal met. compare 5b with 8:8.
- v. 6 — God builds his chambers in Heaven
founded his vault upon the earth
calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out . . . see 5:8
This is anthropomorphism and metaphor.
- v. 7 — are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me?
both simile and interrogation
- v. 8 — the eyes of the Lord are on this sinful kingdom . . . anthropomorphism
- v. 9 — I will sift Israel among the nations as a grain if sifted in a sieve, not a kernel will fall on the earth . . . similitude
- v. 11-15 — These are Messianic, see Acts 15:16-18.
- v. 11 — raise David's tabernacle, close breaches, raise up ruins, build it as in the days of old . . . metonymy—covenant people meant
- v. 12 — they may possess Edom's remnant . . . synecdoche
- v. 13 — the plowman shall overtake the reaper
the treader of grapes him that sows seed . . . metaphor
mountains shall drop sweet wine
hills shall melt . . . personification and metaphor
- v. 14 — the returned captives:
shall build the waste cities
inhabit them
plant vineyards
drink wine from them
make gardens and eat the fruit . . . climax of metaphors
- v. 15 — God will plant them upon their land and they shall no more be plucked up . . . metaphor.

SPECIAL STUDY ELEVEN

THE LOVE OF GOD AND HIS DIVINE PURPOSE OF LOVE AS MANIFESTED IN THE PROPHETS

by Gerald Sappington

"For the Lord is a God of justice . . ." (Isaiah 30:18c).

"And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance . . ." (Micah 5:15).

"For the Lord is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host, he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter." (Isaiah 34:2).

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Behold, evil is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth!

"And those slain by the Lord on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground.

"Wail, you shepherds, and cry, and roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come, and you shall fall like choice rams. No refuge will remain for the shepherds, nor escape for the lords of the flock. Hark, the cry of the shepherds, and the wail of the lords of the flock! For the Lord is despoiling their pasture, and the peaceful folds are devastated, because of the fierce anger of the Lord. Like a lion he has left his covert, for their land has become a waste." (Jeremiah 25:32-37).

"For behold, the Lord will come in fire, and his chariots like the stormwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will the Lord execute judgment, and by his sword, upon all flesh; and those slain by the Lord shall be many." (Isaiah 66:15, 16).

"Now the end is upon you, and I will let loose my anger upon you, and will judge you according to your ways; and I will punish you for all your abominations. And my eye will not spare you, nor will I have pity; but I will punish you for your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the Lord." (Ezekiel 7:3, 4).

These and other passages in the Old Testament present a concept of God that to many seems irreconcilable with the picture of the loving

SPECIAL STUDY

Father that is woven through the pages of the New Testament. Some speak of the existence of two Gods, one of the Old Testament, and one of the New Testament. Others speak of the evolution of the God-Concept. Even many church members think God somehow underwent a personality change during the intervening years between the Old and New Testaments. However, upon closer examination of the scriptures the truly poignant love of God is seen in no greater depth, and with no greater clarity, than in the Old Testament, especially in the prophets.

In the bloom and elegance of the poetic language of these forth-tellers to Judah and Israel, we have the Love of God revealed through six euphuistic pictures.

THE SHEPHERD

Isaiah speaks of God's bestowing the tender love and care of the shepherd. "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." (Isaiah 40:11). This picture of God is not unlike that given in Luke 10 of the Good Shepherd. Indeed, these two passages seem to indicate no evolution of the concept of God, but, rather the uniformity of expression of God's love for His people.

SAVIOR AND REDEEMER

Throughout the Prophets we find God as a loving Savior and Redeemer of His people.

"For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, every one who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 45:3-7).

"For he said, Surely they are my people, sons who will not deal falsely; and he became their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved thee; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old." (Isaiah 63:8, 9).

Every prophet gives forth with a call to repentance that God might be their Savior and Redeemer; and, that He might ultimately use them to bring forth the "root of Jesse" to be the Savior of the world. God's love as the righteous and faithful Redeemer of His wicked and faithless people is unfathomable.

THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE PROPHETS

HUSBANDMAN

God is a husbandman says the prophet Isaiah. "Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He digged it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes." (Isaiah 5:1, 2). God showed his love to Israel and found his love spurned. The extent of God's love in this allegory can only be imagined in His cry of despair in verse four. "What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?" And yet God's love was so great He was still striving to draw them back and renew the cords of love.

A MOTHER

In most cultures the love of a mother is exalted as being the highest and purest emotion. And surely as William Makepeace Thackeray wrote, "Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children." And as the divinely inspired prophet spoke to the wayward childlike citizens of the nation of Israel, he appeals to this figure of God as a loving mother in yet another effort to call them to repentance. "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you." (Isaiah 49:15). "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you . . ." (Isaiah 66:13)

A HUSBAND

Another beautiful figure of God's love is the love of a husband for his wife. "For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name and the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I forsook you but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer . . . For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you . . ." (Isaiah 54:5-8, 10a).

The prophet Hosea gives further reality to this figurative description of God. The story of Hosea is one of tragedy, the tragedy of a man with an unsearchable love for an unfaithful wife. His beloved Gomer

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had gone after other lovers, caring not for her former husband. However, as time passes her paramours grow weary of her and cast her into slavery. But, because of his deep love for her, Hosea "Bought her . . . for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer and a half of barley," looking forward to a renewal of the love and happiness that they had once experienced.

Israel was truly the betrothed of God, but committed adultery with the idols of Baal. Yet, God too was willing to take His wandering beloved back to his bosom. Hosea pictures God as being so deeply in love that he would not be turned aside in His search for His people. He would not let go until love had had its way. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt." (2:14, 15). "I will heal their faithlessness; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them." (14:14). Just as Hosea went to the market place to buy back his wayward wife and take her again into his home, so would the great Lover redeem and take back His beloved Israel. The prophet sees a vision of God waiting, yearning, pursuing, wooing, winning, redeeming, and restoring His wandering bride.

God's love for Israel is typical of the same love that Christ has for his bride, the church. Surely, this Old Testament concept of God's love is not one degree inferior to the concept of His love as presented in the New Testament.

THE LOVING FATHER

One final figure, the most common, and perhaps the most meaningful of all is the figure of God as the loving Father. Again, it is suggested by the uninitiated that the idea of a God as a loving Father is inherent to the New Testament and completely foreign to the Old Testament. However, the one who is not satisfied with a quick superficial examination of the scriptures quickly sees the Fatherhood of God was as much a part of the Old Testament concept of God as it is a part of the New Testament concept. "For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name." (Isaiah 63:16). "Yet, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter; we are all the work of thy hand." (Isaiah 64:8). "With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which

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they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn." (Jeremiah 31:9). "I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him." (Malachi 3:7b).

For the most touching description of the love of God as a Father we again refer to the writings of Hosea. "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them . . . How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboim! My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy." (Hosea 11:1-4, 8, 9).

Here we get a glimpse into the tender heart of God, the loving Father, who has His heart broken into bits by ingratitude, immorality, ignorance, and rejection. We have pictured the affectionate care with which the Father redeemed his young unattractive slave boy from the land of Egypt. In spite of all the blessings bestowed by the Father, the boy rebelled and broke the Father's heart. Then comes the loving, despairing cry of the crushed father, "How can I give thee up?" Surely God's love for His son Israel, in spite of all his weaknesses and failings, dwarfs any love that an earthly father can have for his son. And it is out of this divine emotion that God brought forth discipline and punishment upon his wayward son, just as an earthly father punishes his erring child out of his deep love for that child.

CONCLUSION

God in the Old Testament, especially as revealed by the Prophets, was the God of Love. His love was so great that His constant purposes of proclamation of His message by the prophets was the redemption of mankind. This not only included Israel, but all living, for we often find God sending messengers to the pagan nations in the pre-Christian era. And in His love, coupled with discipline, He prepared a people and a world to receive perfect redemption. "For God so loved the Israelites, the Assyrians, the Philistines, and the Egyptians, as well as the Americans, the Russians, and the Africans, that in the fulness of time He sent forth His only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but live in the eternal presence of this great God of Love!"

SPECIAL STUDY TWELVE

SHOW ME HOW TO PREACH MORE EFFECTIVELY FROM THE PROPHETS

delivered at Central Christian College of the Bible
Moberly, Missouri — November, 1967

by Paul T. Butler
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I want to commend your President, brother Spratt, and those who assisted him in placing this long neglected, but most important subject matter on the rally program. I have tried for some time now to convince the planners of the OBC Preaching Convention that a whole convention on expository sermons and exegetical lessons from the prophets would be edifying as well as attractive.

To say that there is a revived interest in prophecy would, in some evangelical circles, be the understatement of the year. Coupled with the cataclysmic wars of the past decade or two, the economic revolutions, the ideological mutinies and the very evident headlong plunge downward of morals, we now have impetus for renewed interest in prophecy supplied by a prosperous and victorious nation of Israel rumored to be in the process of gathering materials for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. One must agree with John P. Milton in his book "Prophecy Interpreted," when he states in his introduction, "This *is* an age of fear. There have been times of fear before, great fear, and widespread; but the words of Jesus in Luke 21:26, 'men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world,' seems to me uniquely relevant to the situation in the world today."

Since this is an age of fear it is not strange that there should be an increased interest in prophecy. We might call it an interest in eschatology, or "last things." The motivating force at the center of this new prophetic thirst is the same thing that "killed the cat," curiosity. The natural curiosity to know what lies ahead. In times of anxiety or distress it often becomes a cry of fear, "What will the end of these things be?" It expresses the hope for some assurance—some sure word of God, to calm fear. It has always been that way in times of great distress and danger. It is so today.

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Fear, anxiety or curiosity are, I suppose, legitimate motives for leading a person to study the prophets. It certainly is not a motive, especially for Christian people, worthy of what the prophets really have to offer. It will be the shame and eternal regret of the Christian church that its preachers and teachers have neglected to give the proper time and effort to a thorough, correct, and an experiential study of the prophets. All too often the emphasis in the study of prophecy is such as to increase rather than to allay fear. There are preachers and students of prophecy who seem to delight in playing on the fears and anxieties of people. They magnify the threat to peace and say little of "the things that make for peace." They are much concerned to identify men and nations and events today in terms of some specific Biblical prophecy. They focus attention on "antichrists" rather than on Christ; and they seem more concerned to prove what prophecy says about Russia, or about Israel, than to proclaim what it says about the kingdom of God. Dr. Jack P. Lewis, professor of Bible at Harding College Graduate School says in his little book, "The Minor Prophets," "There are still those who think that by diligent search they may find in advance in the prophets what they will read in the papers tomorrow. They search for automobiles, atomic bombs, airplanes, tire rationing, and the rise of world dictators . . . they read these things into the prophets instead of out of them . . . this approach is a frame of mind that tends to blind the student to the true and lasting values in the prophets. It leaves the prophet's message a puzzle to the prophet's hearers rather than being a revelation to them."

This emphasis more often than not leads to an almost "end of the world hysteria." Men delude themselves into presuming to predict "times and seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority (Acts 1:7)." Men "go to seed" on this wrong emphasis and so immerse their minds in elaborate systems and exaggerated interpretations that they soon let this mania sidetrack them from their real calling to preach the good news. It has been reported to me that one preacher in a Christian service camp in teaching premillennialism from the O.T. Prophets so disquieted a group of young people that they went home nearly hysterical. The prophets never intended such consequences from their messages and neither has God. God said to Isaiah, "Comfort my people, says your God." (Isa. 40:1).

Now I have not the time, nor is this the place to debate the various millennial views. Someone has in all seriousness said, "I am neither pre' nor post'. I'm pro." Personally, I prefer Wm. Hendriksen's view of amillennialism. Although it is not my purpose to enter into a lengthy discussion of millennialism, I cannot, by the very nature of the subject

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assigned to me, completely disregard the subject. Whatever I have to say about it will be only secondary, however, to offering what, in my opinion, is a more effective way to preach from the prophets. I should like to pursue the subject, from these three aspects: Interpretation, Analyzation, Application.

INTERPRETATION

Governor George Romney is not the only person who has ever been "brain-washed." Quite a number of preachers have had their prophetic-reflexes so conditioned by radio preachers and correspondence courses on prophecy that they have thrown sound judgment and axiomatic hermeneutical principles to the wind. It is an almost foregone conclusion that when a preacher announces he is going to preach a series of sermons on prophecy the congregation is about to hear such subjects as the Jews today, Russia, the Roman Catholic church, Red China, Anglo-Israelism and other like subjects discussed. This is because we have too long allowed ourselves the dangerous luxury of complacency in proper exegesis and exposition of the Old Testament Prophets. It is always easier to preach from the prophets from a presupposed exegetical basis than it is to spend long hours of study to get the true, hermeneutically-sound, apostolically-sanctioned interpretation. There are quite a few principles of interpretation which are peculiar to prophetic literature only, as well as other general principles of interpretation. The most helpful books I have found on this particular aspect are: *Prophecy Interpreted* by John P. Milton; *The Grammar of Prophecy* by R. B. Girdlestone; *God's Prophetic Word*, by Foy Wallace; *Preaching From the Prophets* by Kyle M. Yates; *Prophecy and The Church* by Oswald T. Allis; commentaries by Edward J. Young, Keil and Delitzsch; and Peter Lange. I have borrowed Mr. Milton's terminology for the titles to some of the principles of interpretation I shall discuss:

a. **TIMES-COLORING, OR, HISTORICAL CONTEMPORANEITY:** The first significance of prophecy is as a message for the prophet's own day. The function of the prophet was first of all that of a preacher and teacher of the will of God for his contemporaries. The prophets were men upon whom God called in a critical point in His plan of redemption. Their urgent task was to stem the downward rebellious plunge of the people with whom God had covenanted to bless the world. The prophets were sent to call out from this decadent, idolatrous nation a faithful remnant; a holy people through which God might deliver the Messiah. Now in order to do this God was going to use a chastening process—captivity. But, lest the people despair, while in the servitude of captivity

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for two generations, the prophets were commissioned to preach (along with their condemnations of sin and warnings of judgment), a message of hope in the future fulfillment of God's covenant in the birth of the Messiah and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. So, you see, even the messianic prophecies were given primarily for the people to whom the prophets spoke. Now it should be apparent with only a moment's reflection that the prophets could not have communicated to people of their day in a New Testament dialogue or terminology. The book of Hebrews is very implicit in pointing out that the fathers, to whom the prophets spoke in divers portions and divers manners, were instructed on kindergarten level spiritually speaking. The law was but a shadow of the good things to come. The tabernacle, was a "*parabole*" of the better things. In other words, when the prophets wanted to build hope in the hearts of the Jews—when they wanted to exhort them to have faith in God's ultimate fulfillment of what He had promised to Abraham, they had to "times-color" it, they had to couch it in terms the people of their day would understand. The prophets were not commissioned to paint a chaotic, kaleidoscopic, disjointed eschatological picture puzzle to be assembled later without regard to historical contemporaneity. This you must understand! With this principle you must begin if you are going to preach effectively from the prophets because upon this and the principles to follow depends, in my opinion, the God-intended application or relevancy of the prophetic message for our day! Yes, even the predictive element of the writings of the prophets must be interpreted from within this framework of its contemporaneity. The prophets were poets, in a sense. They painted word pictures. And theirs was contemporary art! The colors (words) they had to use were dictated by the times in which they lived. So the words of the prophets cannot always be interpreted literally. For example, when Obadiah says that Jacob will possess Mount Esau, he is really telling the people that God is someday going to fulfill His covenant promise and bless all people through His covenant people. Amos prophesies the same thing—that when the tabernacle of David is rebuilt the covenant people will not only possess Edom but all nations and we have a divinely inspired interpretation of that by James in Acts 15. James said it was being fulfilled by the response and reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God. Baalam made a similar prophecy in Numbers 24:1-17. This also has its ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah and messianic kingdom. Another example; when Isaiah and other prophets speak glowingly of the future glories of Zion, although they talk in terms which some people feel must be fulfilled literally, we know from Hebrews 12:18-29 that Christians have come to Mt. Zion. The church is the object of all the glorious

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things said of Zion by the prophets! Well, I might go on for hours with examples of this principle but these two have brought me to the next principle.

b. COVENANT BACKGROUND: The covenant is, if not THE major theological idea in the Bible, one of the most important ideas. Jesus Christ, is, of course, the central figure and every doctrine, institution, or historical event focuses on Him (which, by the way is a later principle we shall deal with). He is Malachi's "messenger of the Covenant," so the whole Bible, from Gen. 3:15 to Rev. 22 is one majestic, sublime treatise on the fulfillment of God's covenant of redemption. God, in certain sovereign acts, chose to carry out His redemptive activity in history and so the prophets (as well as other books of the Bible) record their history on a background of covenant fulfillment. When we realize that God acted in history to fulfill His covenant we realize also that history as the prophets interpreted it would be purposive—it would have a goal—fulfillment of this covenant. A right understanding of the covenant will help us in rightly interpreting prophecy, for every prophecy must be seen within the setting of the covenant promise and hope. Every prophecy should be studied against the background of the covenant of blessing with Abraham, which through Moses became the national covenant with God's people Israel and through Jesus Christ found fulfillment in a universal covenant. A thorough study of Galatians and Hebrews is imperative if one is to understand the prophetic message of God's future fulfillment of His covenant. It becomes evident (if one will study the prophets without a presupposed theology) that these men spoke of the covenant of God in more than mere temporal ideals. They were well aware that the fulfillment of that covenant concerned more than a physical land and physical nation. They just did not know *who* the "messenger of the Covenant" would be or *when* it would be." (I Pet. 1:10-12). It ought to be apparent even after a cursory study of their writings that they were concerned with spiritual things. They were borne along by the Holy Spirit to interpret all the history of Israel, past, present and future, in the light of this covenant and its ultimate fulfillment.

c. ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Because the covenant of God presupposes a divine activity in history which looks forward to a future fulfillment or a goal, there is a forward-looking perspective or eschatological aspect to all Old Testament prophecy. Predictive prophecy (even that long span of 600 years of world empires predicted by Daniel) has relevance primarily only as it relates to the divine purpose of fulfilling

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the covenant, Daniel was not writing this history 600 years before it happened just to titillate the curious. He wrote it to strengthen the people of God then and today in the faithfulness of God to keep His word as He kept His covenant. Milton puts it this way: "The prophets were not predictive sharpshooters who sought merely to satisfy human curiosity with respect to the future. They were preachers who sought to renew faith in the ultimate fulfillment of the promises stated . . . in the making of the covenant with Abraham and with Israel. This being true, that predictive prophecy is rooted in covenant theology, it is also true that prophecy is wider in scope than mere specific predictions. In other words, there is a difference between the Messianic hope and specific Messianic predictions. All of prophecy looks forward to the messianic hope—even that which was intended to come to pass in the captivities or restoration. Again, there is a difference between the enunciation of a divine principle of judgment, which may find repeated expression in history, and in the prediction of a specific judgment in time; yet both are forward-looking and both belong to a proper understanding of the prophetic message. The very faith in a God of covenant fulfillment who is actively engaged in judgment and redemption, who can always be counted on to act "in character" reacting in similar situations in the same divine way, is predictive throughout. The theology of the prophets is pregnant with what may be called "the future hope." Specific prediction may be classified in a two-fold way. There may be predictions of events which are quite near, even imminent (judgments, usually). On the other hand, there may be predictions of events which are still in the remote, even indefinite, future (redemption, usually). Biblical eschatology cannot be divorced from the covenant nor the Biblical covenant from eschatology. The one illumines the other. It is equally true that we cannot divorce predictive prophecy from historical contemporaneity. No Old Testament prophecy completely rids itself of the local "times-coloring." But the "times-coloring" does not belong to the essence of a prophecy—it is rather the historical form in which the abiding truth of the prophecy is temporarily clothed."

d. **THE SHORTENED PERSPECTIVE:** The prophets, because the Holy Spirit chose to reveal it that way, sometimes depict the fulfillment of the covenant soon. In some places it seems to be expected right after, and in direct relation to, the historical situation of the moment to which the message of the prophet is directed. Joel 2:27 and 2:28 is a good example of this shortened perspective. Joel interpreted the locust plague and the drought as the Day of Jehovah to bring the covenant people to repentance. Their repentance would sanctify them unto God's purpose

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and then God promised to redeem their land from the ravages of the plague—restore their crops, etc. Then suddenly, wham, he compresses or narrows down or shortens his perspective to focus on the Day of Pentecost, oblivious of all the history that transpires between. This he does from one verse to the next one. There is this "*sequence of purpose*" in the prophetic literature which may easily be confused with a calendar of times and seasons. The prophets were men of faith in the living God, who is the faithful God of covenant promise; because they believed that God is faithful they hoped for a glorious experiential fulfillment of the covenant, and they declared this hope as if it were on the horizon just beyond the present judgment.

e. THE DOUBLE EMPHASIS IN PROPHECY: Our interpretation of prophecy must be guided by a clear recognition of the two chief points of emphasis in Old Testament prophecy; Judgment and Redemption. God's goal is to fulfill His covenant made with Abraham to bless all nations through the seed of Abraham. Ever since the creation and the fall of man it has been God's active desire to bless all men in "Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." Gen. 12:3 and Eph. 1:3-14 are like the two ends of a golden string. A composite picture of the fulfillment of this covenant from the prophetic artists would look like this: a spiritually responsive people at last; the law of God finally written upon their hearts; a realization at last of the perfect fellowship between God and men envisioned by the covenant words "their God" and "my people;" a universal knowledge of God in the deep inner and experiential sense which the prophets always had in mind when they spoke of "knowing the Lord;" a complete and permanent experience of the forgiveness of sin which in itself stood as the wall of partition in the way of true covenant fellowship with God; peace, safety, fruitfulness one flock with one shepherd. In one form or another this is the closing note of almost every prophetic book. Get the picture now as the prophets paint it: the victory of God and His kingdom over every foe; unbroken fellowship between a people sanctified and holy to the Lord and their ever present faithful God a new administration of God's covenant which does not supplant but fulfills, completes, perfects, reaches the goal God had set for the Old. SUCH IS THE GOAL OF HISTORY AS THE PROPHETS SEE IT. Now, how does God, acting in history, move towards fulfillment of this goal—preparing a people? HE DOES SO THROUGH SUCCESSIVE ACTS OF JUDGMENT AND REDEMPTION/ Judgments upon the Gentiles, upon the recalcitrant covenant people all are relevant only in view of God's over-all purpose to sanctify a people. Isa. 10:5-19 illustrates this principle. The Assyrian king had it in his

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heart to dethrone the God of Israel and Judah, but God allowed him to make war on them and used Assyria's rebellion to chasten Israel. At the same time God warned Assyria that when He was finished using them He would punish them also. Parallel to and projecting beyond the motif of judgment is that of redemption. God moves forward towards the goal of His covenant with men by redemptive acts, act of goodness and deliverance ("Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" Rom. 2.4). The primary purpose of the prophetic preaching of judgment and redemption was repentance; but often there was no repentance. God is not mocked. When men do not repent at the preaching of the prophets, He acts. The very events of history are made to speak His will—events such as war, famine, plague, drought, pestilence, epidemic, captivity, catastrophic forces of nature. The divine purpose of the judgment is chastisement rather than destruction, and the divine goal is still a penitent people that will truly seek the Lord. It is only in persistent impenitence that the judgments of God become destruction upon the rebellious—and even then the destruction becomes a testimony of the victory of God over all who oppose His holy will and His kingly power. The prophetic phrase, "the day of the Lord," in a special way embodies this judgment motif. In this phrase the chastening judgment of God is seen as contemporary, near, repeated, having a covenant-related purpose, in the far distant future of Messianic times, all toward the purpose of final and complete redemption. While "the day of the Lord" usually relates to judgment it also relates to historical acts of redemption. Malachi 2:17—3:5 speaks of the "messenger of the covenant" who will come suddenly to His temple and judge and purify the sons of Levi. Before this messenger comes another is to appear who is to prepare the way before Him. This can be none other than John the Baptist and Christ. So, you see, even the first coming of Our Lord is spoken of as a judgment. Jesus Himself said, "For judgment am I come into the world . . ." Jn. 9:39. And yet His first advent is always thought of in terms of the great redemptive action of God—which indeed it truly is—but it is also The Day of Jehovah.

f. THE UNIFYING FOCAL POINT: This preceding point brings us naturally to this one. All prophecy has one central focus—God's redemptive purpose and activity in history which is focused on Jesus Christ, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). The Incarnation is the dividing line between the Old and the New. In terms of Biblical interpretation it is the dividing line between prophecy and fulfillment. If Christ and the Church be indeed the *real goal* then

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His person, His life, His mission, His teaching, is like the funnel in the hour-glass; in order to be valid and relevant in the new age every prophecy must funnel through the illuminating and transforming reality of the Incarnation and of Pentecost. We shall demonstrate the validity of this as an hermeneutical principle in our next point of discussion. This means that prophecy is significant only in relation to God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. Israel as a political entity is not the significant thing in prophecy: the focus is on Israel as a religious community, which God has chosen to call "my people." As such Israel is representative of the people of God in the new age (spiritual Israel, Rom. 2; Gal. 3-4-5). Even that which was intended to be fulfilled literally and contemporary with the time the prophets wrote it, ultimately focuses on the final work of redemption done in Christ. Even that which Daniel prophesied concerning a succession of four world empires over a span of 600 years finds its focus point on the kingdom of God (Dan. 2:44). Just as all the ritual, doctrines, and institutions of the Mosaic law were "shadows of the good things to come," so prophecy all finds its relevance only as it focuses on Christ and the Church.

g. NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION: In interpreting the prophets there are many principles to follow and many characteristics to consider, but it cannot be stressed too much that the surest and plainest guidelines for interpreting them are to be found in the inspired interpretations of Christ and the apostles. They not only tell us when these prophecies were fulfilled but how and in Whom. There are at least 35 large, New Testament contexts which one may use as specific guidelines in forming principles of interpreting O.T. prophecy. I want to deal with only four to illustrate. The first one is in Luke 1:68-75. What do we find here? We find Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, prophesying the glorious nature of the circumstances that are to follow as a result of the birth of his son John. Zechariah is announcing that the time of God's redemption has come, "as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." He even uses the phraseology of the prophets saying that God's redemption is to be a time when His covenant people would be "saved from their enemies." This was to be the time when God would fulfill the covenant He made with Abraham. So you see, even when the O.T. prophets spoke of the glorious future of God's people as being a time when they would be safe and secure and victorious over their enemies—it was to find its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 2:14-15 and Rom. 8:31-39). I haven't time to amplify this so I will go on to the next illustration. Luke 4:16-21—Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, having

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read from the scroll of Isaiah (ch. 61:1-2), said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." It is impossible to miss the fact that even Jesus interpreted Isaiah 61:1-2 as a figurative description of the work of the Messiah, Jesus did not go around opening literal prison houses setting at liberty those who were oppressed. This certainly shows us that much of what the prophets spoke concerning the future glory of Zion and its inhabitants cannot be assumed to have a literal fulfillment except as it focuses on the Incarnation of Christ, His redemptive work in history, and the church of Christ. Next consider Acts 3:17-26. Here Peter says that "what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled . . . whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old . . . And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days . . ." **THE PROPHETS WERE NOT CONCERNED WITH ANYTHING EXCEPT THE WORK OF REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED BY THE INCARNATE WORK OF CHRIST AND THE ESTABLISHING OF THE CHURCH, THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD.** Heaven must receive Christ until that be accomplished. Then He is coming again, not to establish a Jewish economy, reinstitute the sacrifices, rebuild the temple, and offer the disobedient Jews another opportunity to repent. When He comes the **SECOND** time He is not coming to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Heb. 9:28). The fourth N.T. scripture is found in Hebrews 12:18-29. Here the apostle Paul says to Christians, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . ." Had they come to the Jewish temple then? No, this is exactly the opposite of what Paul was trying to teach them! Did Paul mean to say they had already arrived at heaven? No, they knew they weren't there from the persecutions they were enduring. What did he mean? He meant that these beleaguered Jewish Christians, enduring all sorts of pressures and persecutions, beginning to wonder if they had found in Christianity what their illustrious prophets had promised concerning Mt. Zion, the Messianic kingdom, **HAD INDEED COME TO THE MOUNT ZION THE PROPHETS SO GLOWINGLY PORTRAYED!** The church is Mount Zion! The church is the redeemed of God! The church is what the prophets saw and painted in words contemporary with their own times! (Isaiah speaks of the future glory of Zion throughout his book.) The church is New Israel and members of the church are Jews who are Jews inwardly, spiritually and not literally, (cf. Rom. 2:28-29). Well, I could go on and on, multiplying scripture after scripture from Matthew to Revelation

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showing you that the prophetic promises of God were intended to be fulfilled in Christ and the church, but there are a few other things I would like to say. Suffice it to say here as unequivocally and firmly as I know how—THE CHURCH IS NOT A PARENTHESIS . . . IT IS NOT A STOP-GAP MEASURE! THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS . . . THEY HAVE BEEN EVER SINCE THE CHURCH WAS ESTABLISHED AND WILL BE UNTIL THE CHRISTIAN AGE IS OVER . . . AND THEN WILL COME AN END TO THE AGES . . . THERE ARE NO MORE AGES AFTER THIS ONE! I suggest for a thorough study of New Testament Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecy that you buy for your own library a copy of a book by the same name, authored by James D. Bales. Another discussion of this subject is contained in a series of articles in "The Voice of Evangelism," by Burton W. Barber, Spring of 1957, entitled, "Christ is Now Sitting Upon David's Throne."

h. LITERARY ASPECTS OF PROPHETIC WRITING: The prophets, being Oriental, were more poetic than prosaic. Even their prose was written poetically. The prophets were not interested in producing an "objective, news-reporting" type of literature. They were called to stir the complacent, terrify the impenitent, enrage the indifferent, encourage the downtrodden and strengthen and comfort the disheartened. They were called upon by God to paint such a vivid picture of the future glory of Zion that their contemporaries and generations to follow could endure the onslaughts of materialism, idolatry, and even the maniacal rage of Antiochus Euphron (Epimanes the Jews called him). Prophecy, as found in the Old Testament, best fits the description of poetic literature, when we consider its creative results. Prophecy is able to stimulate emotion and draw a definite response from the one who reads. He may dislike it, he may hate it, he may never touch it again, but he reacts. A man may not like the O.T. Prophets because they lay bare his heart, he may love them for their beauty and pristine sacredness, but once reading, he will never be the same. Poetry, whether found in the Bible or elsewhere, is granted a license of extravagance. Prophetic figurative language furnished gorgeous chariots for the conveyance of the emotionally-intended message God had for His people. Many figures of speech were used. Inanimate objects acted or reacted. Parallelism is an outstanding characteristic of Hebrew prophecy as well as Hebrew poetry. Proverbs, parables, fables, hyperboles, types, symbols, doom song, rhapsody vision, drama—all were used to get people excited, to move them to action concerning the very critical hour in which they lived.

HOW MAY I PREACH MORE EFFECTIVELY FROM THE PROPHETS? THIS IS THE FIRST STEP!

HOW TO PREACH FROM THE PROPHETS ANALYZATION

Under this heading I want to discuss briefly a topical analyzation of the prophets. John P. Milton in his book, "Preaching From Isaiah," suggests a number of subjects which might also be discussed from the view of all the other literary prophets. Kyle M. Yates in his book, "Preaching From the Prophets," lists at the end of each chapter a number of "Practical Lessons Of Permanent Value," which would help a great deal in suggesting sermon material. There is also the wealth of biographical material available on most of the prophets. Be careful, however, that you have become thoroughly acquainted with a man like Jeremiah, his times, his writings, before you begin to preach about him as a person or you will not do his biography justice. It is an almost unforgiveable sin for a preacher to get up a hastily prepared sermon from any part of the prophets without thorough preparation as to the background of the time, understanding of the prophetic way of expression, and all the other principles I have discussed.

Some of the themes that might be considered for preaching from the prophets—which by the way are as relevant today as they were then—are:

a. **THE HOLINESS OF GOD:** He is the absolute One, there is none other like Him. He is absolutely pure, righteous, just, merciful, tender and loving and longsuffering (Hosea). He will not tolerate rebellion in any form unless it is repented of. His holiness includes His transcendence. Isaiah saw Him, high and lifted up. It includes His objective personality. God cannot be reduced to ideas or feelings. He cannot be forced into a "buddy-buddy" relationship with man. He is not merely a psychological necessity. His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. My, how this needs to be preached today!

b. **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD:** The God of the O.T. prophets is not provincial. He is not, as one Disciples of Christ publication, depicts Him, the patriarchal God of the mountains whom Moses went up and rescued and put in a box (the ark) and then had carried over into the Promised Land whom the prophets then rescued from the box. The prophets depict God as sovereign over all the thoughts, feelings and deeds of all men everywhere. Amos reveals that the heathen nations surrounding Palestine were specifically held responsible by God for their sin. Daniel offers no equivocation when he tells Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar that they are responsible to Jehovah God for their wickedness. God is the Sovereign of the universe. No one escapes respon-

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sibility to Him. Any action against His Word or against His people is an action against Him, for which the rebel will have to answer!

c. **SIN:** Many sins are listed by the prophets, vividly, disgustingly, in all their horridness and terrifying consequences; drunkenness, idolatry, adultery (each one neighing for his neighbor's wife), cheating, lying, robbing, bribery, murder. But these are simply the symptoms of what the prophets depict sin to really be: unfaithfulness to His covenant! This, of course, is a result of pride and an attitude of independence from the One who took them as a foundling child from the doorsteps of Egypt, nurtured them into a beautiful maiden, married them, then to have them commit adultery (spiritually speaking)—this is Hosea's and Ezekiel's picture of their sin! We could go on and on with this subject. Sin should be denounced today like the prophets did. God made Ezekiel into old "flint face" so that he might preach against sin unflinchingly, courageously and impartially. We should also use the prophetic literature to preach to our contemporaries of the anarchistic, destructive, death-dealing consequences of sin. Both Israel and Judah ended their national existence in a state of political, social and religious anarchy because of the rampages of unchecked sin against the Word of God.

d. **REPENTANCE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS:** The prophets plainly show that repentance and righteousness are a direct result of faith in Jehovah God. Hosea paints a horrible picture of decadence . . . "There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder . . ." (Hosea 4:1-2). In order that people might live righteously they must have faith in God (depicted by the prophets as trust which issues forth in obedience to His revelation). In order to have faith, they must know Jehovah. In order that they may know Him, they must have His omniscience and omnipotence proven to them. They must be convinced of His authority. Hosea gives the reason for their reprobation. Ephraim has played the harlot (that is, spiritual adultery, idolatry, going after other Gods). "Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of harlotry is within them, and they know not the Lord" (Hos. 5:4). How will they be turned from this spirit of harlotry? How will God win back their affections? How will it be shown them that there is only one God? This brings me to the next topic which is most certainly worthy of being preached upon from the O.T. prophets.

e. **EVIDENCE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE; HIS NATURE; THE IMMUTABILITY OF HIS WORD:** Peter knew what he was talking about when he wrote, "And we have the prophetic word made more sure . . ." (II Pet.

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1:19). The fulfillment of prophecy is an even more sure evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ and the infallibility of His word than the things Peter and others witnessed with their own eyes. Fulfilled prophecies are demonstrations to our very own eyes and mind of the supernatural nature of this Word of God. There is simply no way to rationally, scientifically argue against it. You may subjectively deny it, but you cannot objectively disprove it! Isaiah challenges the false gods of Israel, "Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods . . . Behold you are nothing, and your work is nought; an abomination is he who chooses you . . ." (Isa. 41:23-24). Again, Isaiah, "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel . . . I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it, let him declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be . . ." (Isa. 44:6-7). Ezekiel reminds his readers that when they finally see his prophecies come to pass, "Then they will know that I am the Lord." Over and over the prophets themselves appeal to fulfillment of God's word in order to bring the people back to their senses. This is certainly imperative in our day.

f. WORSHIP: Some of the most exalted phrases of all the literature available to man are found in the prophets. Why? Because these men were overwhelmed and lifted to the heights of glory by the revelation of God and His plan they were given. What preacher in the Christian Church has not wished he could teach his congregation to be more reverent? We have lost, or have never had, that reverence, awe, respect for God which the prophets of old had. They beheld His Majesty, Glory, Omnipotence, Awfulness, and prostrated themselves bodily before Him, and were never quick to speak in His presence lest they be found irreverent. Words of reverence, adoration, praise, thanksgiving were ever on their lips. Let us then, by preaching from the prophets, reveal to men and women the majesty, glory and holiness of God—let us overwhelm them with the love of God as He is seen fulfilling His covenant according to the prophets, and bring men and women to worship God truly.

Now the best way to preach on these topics from the prophets is to preach expository sermons. This takes work. There is no easy way to preach effective, true-to-God's-word expository sermons. You must thoroughly study the background of history for each prophetic book. You must read and read and read the book until you are empathetic with the prophet. You must analyze and synthesize. You must take each book apart, chapter by chapter, paragraph by paragraph, analyze the

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context, outline it, put it back together again, view it in the proverbial "birds-eye-view," (i.e. each chapter in light of the overall purpose and background of the book). Remembering that its first purpose was its message for the people of the day of the prophet; secondly that everything the prophet said had also an eschatologically forward look to the time of the Messiah and His kingdom; thirdly that the revelation of God's immutability, love, faithfulness in all this is what is most relevant for us. I would suggest that you study some good Old Testament Survey books on the prophets before you begin to preach from them—books like G. Campbell Morgan's, "The Unfolding Message of the Bible;" "The Doctrine of the Prophets," by Kirkpatrick; "Bible Survey," by William Hendriksen; even Edward J. Young's, "An Introduction to the Old Testament," would be helpful. Be careful of selecting books on the prophets written by those with premillennial presuppositions. This a priori approach so clouds the thinking that it obscures the real place each of the books of prophecy has in the overall scheme of God's revelation of His plan of redemption.

APPLICATION

When you have learned to interpret the prophetic message by using correct hermeneutical axioms, and when you have become familiar with the content of their writings then you will begin to grasp one of the greatest truths the Bible has to offer man—a God-centered philosophy of history. This is as relevant as anything could possibly be. It is imperatively contemporary! A philosophy of history determines the political philosophy, social philosophy and religious philosophy an individual or a nation of individuals will take. The reason for so much sin, materialism or complete sensuality is a perverted philosophy of history. On the other hand the hippie anti-mind mood and their anarchistic rejection of mores so necessary to an adhesive society is simply due to a perverted philosophy of history.

In his essay "A Free Man's Worship," Bertrand Russell says that "man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving." The human venture, he says, is the outcome of "accidental collocations of atoms." Consequently, the whole edifice of man's achievement must eventually be "buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins."

The Marxist philosophy of history with its godless dialectical materialism has poisoned millions of minds today. Spengler, who wrote "The Decline of the West" in 1917, said, there is first a "dictatorship of money," followed by man becoming "the slave of the machine," followed

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by the growth of absolutism in government, which leads to race suicide. Schweitzer said, the "suicide of civilization is in process." Sorokin says we are passing through a "grim transition" from sensate values toward social, economic, political, intellectual and moral decay." According to Sorokin we cannot stop the transition from taking place;" we can only hasten the change and make it less violent . . . there is no alternative."

Since the pages of history are strewn with the wrecks of past civilizations, man is forced to ask questions concerning the meaning of history and the relation between specific events and the course of history as a whole. Are there ends that are being achieved and values that are being built up? Is there progress in the direction of rationality, liberty, individuality, justice and human welfare? Is there pattern, order, a plot, a theme, a development that we can discern? What do all these historical events mean? Why do we have the rising and falling of great cultures and civilization? Why do we have wars, famines, natural calamities? Is there any purpose or goal to these things or are they chaotic, unconnected, purposeless events gradually grinding the human race into oblivion?

God knew that the people of the days of the prophets, if they were to be awakened to repentance for their sins on the one hand and brought to trust in the faithfulness of God on the other hand, must be given a God-centered philosophy of history. They must be shown that there is purpose, God-controlled purpose, in all the cataclysmic events falling upon them; plagues of locusts, droughts, earthquakes, wars, captivities and redemptions. If there was to be any people to carry on the purpose of God in the earth, they would have to be made aware that what appeared to be inevitable doom was filled with hope because God was in control of all of it! So God, through the prophets, revealed His omnipotent, omniscient hand in all of history. The rising and falling of world empires, wars, famines, earthquakes, captivities, redemptions—all were shown to be under the control of God and being used to serve His purpose. History is purposeful! It is to have a climax and a consummation. History is headed for a completion which God has planned. History is the process by which God has chosen to reach that goal.

The prophets speak of God as being completely sovereign in history to work His will. There is no realm in which God does not work. He is the Dynamic behind daily events as well as historic happenings of world-wide import. If the prophets teach one thing, it is that God's sovereignty in history cannot be challenged. Though evil empires may rise, still God controls. Though world-shaking events transpire, God still is on His throne. His ultimate victory is inevitable. No one will ever

dethrone God. Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Darius, Alexander the Great, Antiochus Ephiphanes, Ceasar, all tried, but God's purpose and plan was not in the least hindered. His plan reached its climax exactly at the time, in the place, and in the manner in which it was foretold.

History is not chance, but plan; not fate, but God. History is purposeful. There is a design and a Designer in the course of events. When one studies the prophets, he cannot but help cry out with the hymn writer of old, "Faith is the Victory!" What is the goal of history? It is: Redemption! Man has sinned, but through history God is effecting redemption. With every event, God is bringing history to a logical conclusion. His goal and His purpose is immutable. Though world powers come and go, they shall never deter God's purpose; that being to effect redemption, and to establish forever His supremacy. It is evident that each event is not a separate entity in itself, but is an integral part of the whole course of events. Prophecy views events in their relation to the total Divine purpose.

Fairbairn in his book "Prophecy" says, "History is the occasion of prophecy, but not its measure; for prophecy rises above history, borne aloft by wings which carry it far beyond the present, and which it derives, not from the past occurrences of which history takes cognizance, but from Him to whom the future and the past are alike known. It is the communication of so much of His own supernatural light as he sees fit to let down upon the dark movements of history, to show whither they are conducting. For the most part, the persons who live in the midst of events are the least capable of understanding aright the character of their age. But God is elevated above it, and, by the word of prophecy, he so informs the minds of his people in respect to the end that they come also to know better than they could otherwise have done the beginning and the middle."

Edward J. Young in his book "The Study of Old Testament Theology Today," says, "It is necessary today to stress the importance of history. Remove from it its historical basis and there is no true Christianity. For the Christian religion is founded squarely upon certain things which God did in history. Remove from it its historical basis and there can be no true study of Old Testament theology . . . in the fulness of time, God entered the realm of history in a unique way. He sent forth His Son, and the second person of the Trinity became man. To Him the kings, and priests, and prophets of the Old Testament dispensation pointed. And in Him was the fulfillment, for He was the true Prophet, Priest and King, and it was He who by a definite act in history, namely His atoning death and resurrection healed the breach between man and God and brought salvation to the earth."

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Merrill C. Tenney, in his book "The Reality of the Resurrection," says, "The historical evidence supporting the resurrection, because it is forever engraved in history's archives, is still as valid as it has ever been . . . Because this divine act is a part of recorded experience, it is proof in understandable terms that God can transcend death by life and that He has opened a new dimension of existence to believers in Christ . . . The resurrection demands the attention of those who contemplate the basic problems of death and life, for it has thrust into them a new factor which must be included in evaluating the whole of human experience . . . Any attempt to explain the processes of history will be incomplete without it . . . the resurrection is permanently relevant to any scheme of thought . . . THE EVENT IS FIXED IN HISTORY, THE DYNAMIC IS POTENT FOR ETERNITY!"

This is what the prophets had to say to the people of their day! In God's own good time He was going to historically fulfill the covenant promise He had made with Abraham. In the meantime, the prophet's whole purpose was to interpret for the people of their day the historic events of the past and the present and predict historic events of the future all in a matrix of a God-controlled and God-purposed philosophy of history. This they did by showing great spans of secular history, as much as 600 years at a time (Daniel), leading to the greatest of all historical events, the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom.

Isaiah prophesies, "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth for the Lord has spoken." Isa. 25:6-8. This, my friend, was the climax of all the history toward which the prophets depict God moving relentlessly, immutably, actively, lovingly. It was climaxed when God swallowed up death forever in the resurrection of Jesus Christ the greatest event ever to transpire (excluding, of course, the second Advent).

This is what our world needs today! This is the application of O.T. prophecy we must make today! God-consciousness! Every individual must come to know intellectually and experientially that God's purposes are going to be served; that His purposes are holy, righteous, just, eternal and joyous. The world must surrender to a God-centered philosophy of history. Then it will be able to overcome all the fiery darts of the evil one. Then it will stop its headlong plunge into spiritual schizophrenia!

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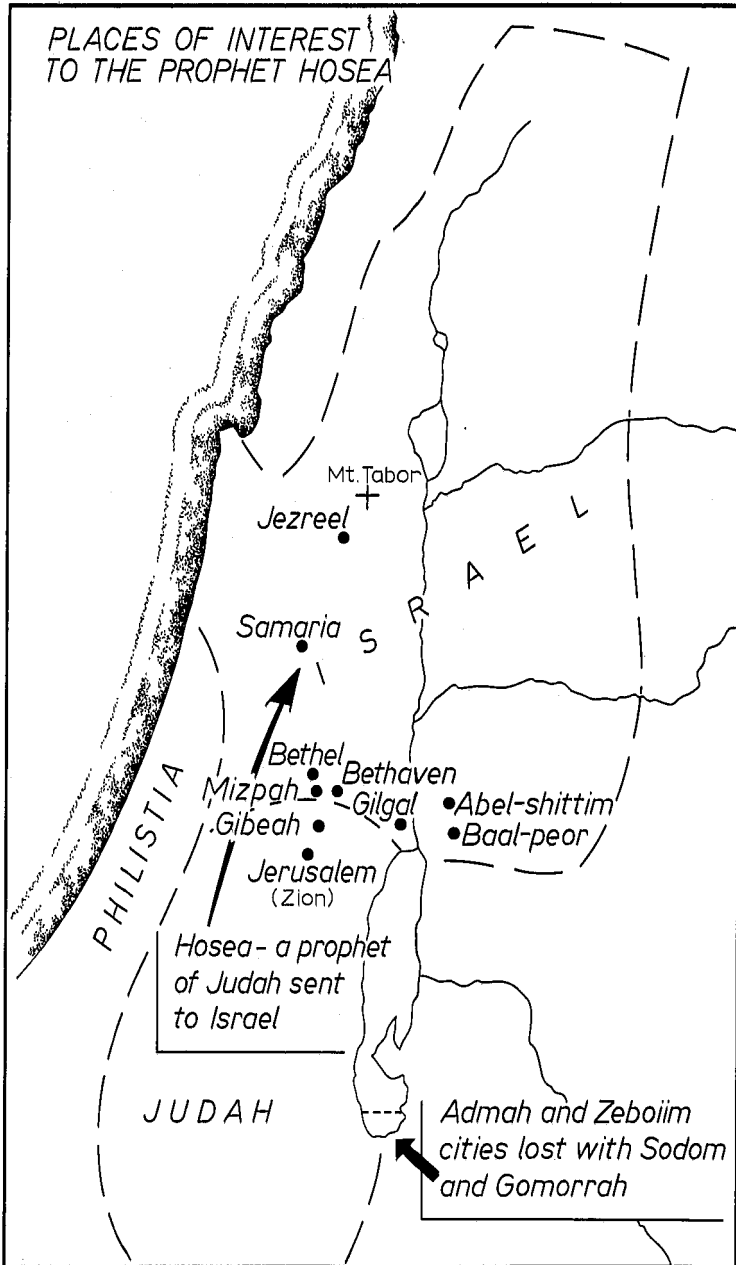
It will lose its debilitating pessimism! It will break its bitter bonds of hopelessness! Then men and women will be able to say with Habakkuk:

Though the fig tree do not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the product of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet will I rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my
salvation.

God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like hinds'
feet,
he makes me tread upon my
high places.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

MINOR PROPHETS





Hosea 14:1-4

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

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

Hosea 11:8, 9

1 O Asrael, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

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

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

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

HOSEA

INTRODUCTION

Author: Hosea means "Jehovah Saves" or "Salvation." Hosea appears to have been a gentle man but one of deep and fervent feelings. He expresses himself with many of the same emotions as Jeremiah. He has been compared with the apostle John of the New Testament because of his emphasis on the love of God. He was the son of Beeri (meaning either "fountain" or "one who explains"). He began his prophecy in the last days of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, and probably preached until the early days of Hezekiah, king of Judah. He was a young man when Amos was almost through with his preaching. While Hosea was preaching to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom, Isaiah was preaching to Judah, the southern kingdom.

Date: We have assigned the probable date of the writing of Hosea's book somewhere between 790-725 B.C. The opening verses of the book itself (1:1) give us a basis for this period of time. Furthermore, its place in the canon indicates it was one of the earliest books. A tradition recorded in the Jewish Talmud places the book among the earliest of the prophets.

Background: At the beginning of Hosea's ministry Jeroboam II, the last strong king of Israel died. He was succeeded by Zechariah, his son, and this ended the dynasty of Jehu. Zechariah was murdered after only six months on the throne by Shallum (cf. II Kings ch. 15, 16, 17). Shallum was in turn murdered by Menahem after only one month on the throne. Menahem reigned for ten years and was succeeded by his son, Pekahiah. In two years Pekahiah was murdered by Pekah. Hoshea murdered Pekah and reigned nine years and then the kingdom of Israel came to a disastrous end in the Assyrian captivity about 722 B.C.

Hosea's ministry also overlapped the reigns of Tiglath-Pilezer, Shalmanezar IV and Sargon II, all of Assyria. Uzziah's long rule in Judah took place during the time of Hosea.

Although Hosea predicts, but does not record, the actual captivity of Israel which took place in 722 B.C., he still may have lived through the event. He would have been very old. The time of Hosea's early ministry was a time of material prosperity (cf. 2:8-13), but it was a society falling apart at the seams morally. The entire land, except for a very small remnant, was decadent and utterly corrupt. The evil which Amos had condemned earlier had grown worse. Religious apostasy and refusal to know God led to social and moral anarchy.

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Kings and princes are entertained by the people's misbehavior and sin (7:2ff); a degenerate priesthood wrings its hands in greedy glee over the sins of the people because its coffers are enriched through them (4:6-8); virtue and uprightness is gone and killing, stealing and bloody violence has come to the land (4:1-2; 6:8; 7:1; 10:4; 11:12); sin is rampant (8:1); the people will not tolerate rebuke (5:4) but persecute and revile the true prophets who are sent to them.

While Amos was sent from Judah to Israel as a stranger, it would appear that Hosea was a native of the northern kingdom. Hosea writes as one perfectly familiar with the internal condition of Israel socially, morally, politically, religiously and even geographically. As Kirkpatrick says, "The picture is drawn with a force and feeling which attest an eyewitness; and an eyewitness who does not merely view things from the outside as a stranger, but is keenly and bitterly alive to the sense that his own country is being dragged headlong down to ruin by the sins and crimes which he rebukes but cannot reform."

Hosea's Marriage: It is well to deal with the problem of Hosea's marriage before any attempt is made at exegesis of the text for such exegesis is necessarily based upon one's interpretation of the marriage.

Lange says, "The question . . . is encumbered with difficulties so great as to seem almost insuperable, and it is probable that it will never be satisfactorily settled. Instances might even be quoted of the same interpreter holding directly opposite opinions within a very short period of time." We recognize that competent Bible-believing scholars have held to the symbolical or allegorical view but we prefer, on the basis of what appears as good evidence, the literal view. Note:

- (a) The whole narrative bears the stamp of reality.
- (b) Only by literal interpretation does the narrative of the first chapter receive its natural meaning.
- (c) Only by literal interpretation do we get the connection between Hosea's life and his teaching which is the true key to his writings.
- (d) The name of the wife strongly indicates literal interpretation for if the story were allegorical we would expect the wife's name to bear some symbolical or allegorical significance but there is no such significance attached to the name Gomer whatsoever.
- (e) There is not the slightest hint or inference in the book itself that the marriage is allegorical.

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- (f) An allegorical interpretation does not relieve the supposed moral difficulty for if God's commanding Hosea to marry a literal harlot or adulterer would raise a moral difficulty, it would raise the same difficulty to Hosea's mind, or to anyone's, to command him to do so allegorically.
- (g) The exegesis based upon a literal marriage involves no wresting of the rest of the texts as, we believe, an allegorical marriage does.

Purpose: Hosea is the prophet of "unrequited love." His great commission was to break the hearts of the people of Israel unto repentance.

He plunges the plow of God's righteous indignation into the fallow ground of their calloused hearts. Sometimes tenderly, sometimes roughly, but always purposely he paints vivid, dramatic pictures of their unfaithfulness to the God who so passionately loved them. Kirkpatrick says, "Hosea's personal history supplies the master-key to his teaching." Indeed, it was his own heartbreaking experience with the infidelity of Gomer that branded on Hosea's soul the message God wished conveyed to the unfaithful bride, Israel. Hosea learned something of God's feelings through his own personal experience. G. Campbell Morgan writes, "The great burden of Hosea is first a recognition of sin, and sin in its ultimate and worst form, infidelity to love. The supreme sin is disloyalty to the love of God, and it is all here in Hosea."

But Hosea not only shows the ugliness of such sin, he also warns of the terrible and perfect wrath of God upon the impenitent. *Perfect love must* punish the impenitent rebel.

Yet the great undertone running all through the book of Hosea, breaking through over and over again, is that of the constancy of God's love. As Dr. Morgan points out, Hosea validates the lines of Shakespeare which go—"Love is not love . . . Which alters when it alteration finds." The most touching and beautiful picture of God's love toward the people is in the dialogue between the penitent people and Jehovah with which the book closes (chapter 14). The people approach Him in a prayer of repentance, confessing their sin and promising no more to turn to worldly powers or material forces for help. Back comes the tender, gracious promise of God to "heal their faithlessness, . . . love them freely . . ."

Hosea's message is not as specifically Messianic as Isaiah. That it was intended to find its overall and ultimate focus on the Messiah and the Messianic kingdom, however, is plainly evident from the few quotations interpreted for us by the divinely guided apostles (Rom. 9:25-26; Matt. 2:15; II Pet. 2:10).

Hosea's book, in our opinion, falls into four main divisions as we have outlined below:

Theme: The Love of God

I Love Rebuffed, 1:1—2:13 and 4:1—8:14

A. Gomer's Ingratitude

1. Spirit of harlotry, 1:1-9; 1:10-11; 2:1-5
2. Spurious Lovers, 2:6-8
3. Shame Revealed 2:9-13

B. Israel's Ingratitude

1. Lack of knowledge, 4:1—6:11
2. Love of Sin, 7:1-13
3. Lament of the Lord, 7:14—8:14

II Love Rebuking, 9:1—13:16

A. Reproving ("Thou hast sinned"), 9:1—10:11

1. Forsook God, 9:1-9
2. Followed Baal, 9:10-17
3. Fell into anarchy, 10:1-11

B. Remonstrating ("Seek Jehovah") 10:12—11:12

1. Renovate "fallow ground" 10:12-14
2. Recognize the Lord's compassion, 11:1-9
3. See Judah's unfaithfulness, 11:10-12

C. Requiring ("I will destroy"), 12:1—13:16

1. Ephraim has provoked, 12:1-14
2. God will punish, 13:1-8
3. Israel will perish, 13:9-16

III Love Reconciling, 2:14-23; 3:1-5; 14:1-8

A. Penitence Required, 2:14-23

1. Lured, 2:14-15
2. Laved, 2:16-20
3. Loved, 2:21-23

B. Pardon a Result, 3:1-5

1. Lured, 3:1-2
2. Laved, 3:3-4
3. Loved, 3:5

C. Peace Remains, 14:1-9

1. Lured, 14:1-3
2. Laved, 14:4-6
3. Loved, 14:7-8

IV Postscript, 14:9

LOVE REBUFFED

GOMER'S INGRATITUDE—
SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

TEXT: 1:1-8

- 1 The word of Jehovah that came unto Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.
- 2 When Jehovah spake at the first by Hosea, Jehovah said unto Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom; for the land doth commit great whoredom, departing from Jehovah.
- 3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; and she conceived, and bare him a son.
- 4 And Jehovah said unto him, call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease.
- 5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.
- 6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And Jehovah said unto him, call her name Lo-ruhamah; for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, that I should in any wise pardon them.
- 7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by Jehovah their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.
- 8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.
- 9 And Jehovah said, Call his name Lo-ammi; for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

QUERIES

- a. Was it right for God to command Hosea to marry an immoral woman?
- b. Why would God command Hosea to do so?
- c. Why did God command Hosea to give such names to his children?

PARAPHRASE

The word of the Covenant God came to Hosea and took possession of him during the reigns of these four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; and during the reign of Jeroboam, son of Joash,

who was king of Israel then. The Lord commanded Hosea, Go and marry a whorish woman and have children of the same character by her. This experience will symbolize the actions of Israel who has committed spiritual whoredom against Me by worshipping other gods. So Hosea married a whorish woman by the name of Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Now the Lord commanded Hosea, Name the child Jezreel (God disperses or God scatters) for I am about to punish the dynasty of Jehu and avenge the blood shed in the valley of Jezreel at which time I will make Israel into a "Jezreel" (dispersed or scattered). That is when I will strip Israel of her military power—I will do it in the very valley of Jezreel. Soon Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Jehovah commanded Hosea, saying, Name this child Loruhamah (She finds no sympathy) and let her name symbolize the fact that I will not show Israel any more mercy to forgive her again. I will, however, have mercy on Judah and save her by My own Mighty Arm—and without any help from her armies or weapons. Now just as soon as Gomer weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to another son. God commanded Hosea, saying, Name this child Lo-ammi (not mine) and let his name symbolize the fact that Israel is not My people any longer and neither will I be their God any more.

SUMMARY

Hosea is commanded to marry a "whorish" woman which symbolizes the attitude of the people of Israel toward God. The prophet is further commanded to give his children symbolical names depicting God's attitude toward the idolatrous people.

COMMENTS

v. 1 THE WORD OF JEHOVAH THAT CAME UNTO HOSEA; The word "came" is from a Hebrew word which is often used to mean "took possession of," and is so used of the evil spirit sent by the Lord upon Saul (I Sam. 16:23; 19:9). What Hosea says to Israel is not simply Hosea's idea of what he thinks God might want to say to Israel—what Hosea says is exactly what God put into his mind to say. Peter writes (II Pet. 1:21), "Being borne along by the Holy Spirit, men spake from God" (translation by Edward J. Young in "Thy Word is Truth"). The prophets possessed the Spirit of Christ (I Pet. 1:10-12), were possessed by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21), so what they wrote did not come by the impulse of men, did not

originate in their minds; what they spoke and wrote originated in the Mind of God and they became the spokesmen. Warfield says, "The term 'borne' is very specific . . . not to be confounded with guiding, directing or controlling or even leading . . . it goes beyond all such terms . . . The things which they (the prophets) spoke under this operation of the Spirit were therefore His things, not theirs." That individuality of expression is apparent in the Biblical writings is obvious. Peter does not express God's message with the same vocabulary and style as John or Paul and vice versa. But this cannot be construed as evidence to deny their infallibility. We quote again from B. B. Warfield: "Revelation is made in both words and deeds; it is necessary therefore that both the words and deeds be recorded inerrantly. If the Lord makes any revelation to man (or through man) He would do so in the language (and style) of the particular man He employs as the organ of His revelation . . . The accommodation of the revealing God to the several prophetic individualities . . . is a concursive operation. The Spirit works confluent in, with and by them elevating them, directing them, controlling them, energizing them, so that, as His instruments, they rise above themselves and under His inspiration (influence) do His work and reach His aim. The product, therefore, which is attained by their means is His product through them . . . Although the circumstance that what is done by and through the action of human powers keeps the product in form and quality in a true sense human, yet the confluent operation of the Holy Spirit throughout the whole process raises the result above what could by any possibility be achieved by mere human powers and constitutes it expressly a supernatural product . . . Even the very words were God's intended words—the apostles were acutely conscious that they were citing immediate words of God; (cf. Gal. 3:16) here Paul hangs an argument on the very words of Scripture and so does Jesus (cf. Jn. 10:34; Mt. 22:32, 43).

Hosea means literally, *Salvation*, or, *the Lord saveth*. His father's name, *Beeri*, means, *my well or welling-forth*. We have already considered the background of the time in which Hosea prophesied (cf. Introduction). There can be very little doubt as to the time of the composition of this book and Hosea's ministry for it is specifically declared to be in the reign of Jeroboam II (see Introduction).

v. 2 JEHOVAH SAID UNTO HOSEA, GO, TAKE THEE A WIFE OF WHOREDOM AND CHILDREN OF WHOREDOM; We have discussed in our Introduction to this book whether Hosea's marriage was an actual,

historical event or whether it was visionary and symbolical. Our view is that it was an actual event which was intended to symbolize the then existing spiritual relationship of Israel to God. G. Campbell Morgan, emphasizing the phrase in this verse "spake at the first," says, ". . . notice very carefully that little phrase, 'at the first.' The writer was looking back, from the end of his ministry, when he was writing out his notes, committing them to manuscript form, and said in effect: When away back there my ministry began, when, before the tragedy came into my life, Jehovah spoke with me, it was He Who commanded me to marry Gomer. The statement distinctly calls her a woman of whoredom, but it does not tell us that she was that at the time. It certainly does mean that God knew the possibilities in the heart of Gomer, and that presently they would be manifested in her conduct, and knowing, He commanded Hosea to marry her, knowing also what his experience would do for him in his prophetic work. When Hosea married Gomer, she was not openly a sinning woman, and the children antedated her infidelity. The earlier life of the prophet was in all likelihood one of joy and happiness."

So Dr. Morgan believes that Gomer had the spirit of harlotry in her heart before Hosea married her but that she did not actually commit adultery until after the children were born. This would be one way to solve the seeming incongruity of God commanding Hosea to marry a woman who had already become a harlot—a command which some think would put God in the position of violating His own Holy Nature. Others say that God simply commanded Hosea to marry a woman of Israel—equating "a woman of whoredom" with the spiritual harlotry of all Israel at that time—and that she became an adulteress after the marriage. The visionary or allegorical interpretation of the marriage does not solve the alleged moral problem here since a command from God to engage in such a relationship would have been just as contrary to the thinking of Hosea as to command the actual thing (see Introduction). Furthermore, as Kirkpatrick points out, ". . . if the prophet had a faithful wife, it seems incredible that he should have exposed her to the suspicion of infidelity, as he must have done by using an allegory which certainly does not bear its allegorical character upon the face of it." Kirkpatrick's view of the situation is like that of G. Campbell Morgan's. Pusey deals with the moral difficulty thusly, "Holy Scripture relates that all this was done, and tells us the births and names of the children, as real history. As such then, must we receive it. We must not imagine things to be unworthy of God, because they do not commend themselves to us

(cf. Isa. 55:8-9). . . . as Sovereign Judge, He commanded the lives of the Canaanites to be taken away by Israel . . . He has ordained that the magistrate should not bear the sword in vain, but has made him His minister, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Rom. 13:4) . . . He willed to repay to the Israelites their hard and unjust servitude, by commanding them to spoil the Egyptians (Ex. 3:22) . . . The Prophet was not defiled, by taking as his lawful wife, at God's bidding, one defiled, however hard a thing this was."

God is absolute Sovereign. He may supercede "natural law" as He wishes. He is Lord of all and may command men and nature to do what seems to finite thinking unjust, perhaps immoral, while in His omniscience He is not at all self-contradictory.

Laetsch says that even if Gomer had been guilty of harlotry before Hosea married her, his marrying her would still not have constituted an immoral act for, ". . . An act is immoral, . . . only if it violates a clear command of God. There is no divine commandment forbidding such a marriage, hence no reason to condemn it as immoral, particularly since God *commanded* this marriage. Only priests were forbidden to marry a harlot (Lev. 21:7) . . ."

Kirkpatrick writes, "The true view, which at once relieves the moral difficulty, gives the natural explanation to the narrative, and supplies the key to Hosea's teaching in the experience of his life, is that while we have in these chapters a record of actual facts, Gomer was as yet unstained when Hosea took her to be his wife. The expression used in chapter 1:2 is peculiar. She is not called a harlot, but a *wife* or *woman of whoredom* ("a wife of harlotry," R.S.V.). The hideous tendencies to evil were latent in her heart. The prophet's love did not avail to restrain them . . . She abandoned him for the wild orgies of the licentious worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. Then, as he sat in his homeless home, and pondered over this . . . as he 'watched the ghastly ruins of his life,' he saw that even this cruel calamity was not blind chance but the will of God . . . Then he recognized that it was by God's command that he had chosen the wife who had proved so faithless."

Lange adds, ". . . it is one thing to have intercourse with an unchaste woman, in order to practice fornication with her, and quite another to marry such a woman. The one is as assuredly sinful as the other is in itself not so, any more than it was for Jesus to be a friend of publicans and sinners. For the prophet would not have

entered into such an alliance that he might be assimilated to the woman, but in order to raise her up to his own level, to rescue her from her sinful habits . . ."

It would seem to us that whether God commanded Hosea to marry a woman who, until after marriage had not committed harlotry but who had the spirit of harlotry hidden in her heart—or whether Hosea married a woman whom he knew to already have committed harlotry—God cannot be represented as commanding Hosea to do something immoral for two reasons: (a) To marry even an unchaste woman was not a sin in the Old Testament; (b) to obey any command of God is not immoral—to disobey is immoral.

Whatever the case, the prophet is commanded by God to take a "woman of harlotry" to wife for the express purpose of mirroring to the people of Israel their spiritual relation to Jehovah. It was intended to shock the people's consciences. That which would be shocking enough (a prophet marrying a whorish woman) in the temporal realm representing what they were actually doing in the spiritual realm! Symbolizing the shameful whoredom of Israel in going after (worshipping) calf-gods and Baal is the express purpose of Hosea's marriage to a "woman of whoredom." As a part of this symbolizing, Hosea was to have children by this unchaste woman and to give them symbolical names.

v. 3 SO HE WENT AND TOOK GOMER . . . DAUGHTER OF DIBLAIM; AND SHE CONCEIVED . . . "Gomer" means, "completion; completed whoredom." "Diblain" means, "Daughter of fig-cakes," or some say it may mean, "daughter of embraces." However, there is not the slightest indication from the text that these two names were to have any symbolical significance. We have here a simple statement of historical facts. Hosea married Gomer, she conceived and bare him a son. Lange says the latter part of this verse should be translated, "and she conceived and bore *to him* a son." This removes all doubt, says Lange, as to the father of the child. He was Hosea's child—not an illegitimate one. Laetsch disagrees with Lange; he says that the child was illegitimate but was presented by Gomer to Hosea with the demand that this illegitimate child be accorded all the privileges of one who was his own child. This, says Laetsch, better symbolizes the brazen impudence of Israel. The individual Israelites (illegitimate children of their harlot-mother, Israel) acting with the same impudence demanded recognition from God as children of His while in fact they were not!

v. 4 . . . CALL HIS NAME JEZREEL . . . I WILL AVENGE THE BLOOD OF JEZREEL UPON THE HOUSE OF JEHU . . . In II Kings 9:1ff you may read of Jehu's purging Israel of the prophets of Baal and in II Kings 10:30 you may read where God commended him for carrying out His orders. Yet here Hosea is told that God is going to avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu. Why? Plainly because Jehu is held responsible for the present "whoring" of the whole land in that he perpetuated the calf-worship and Baalism. After Jehu gained the throne through this uprising against Baalism, he arrogantly "struck out for himself a false path" by returning to the worship of the calves. This shows that Jehu's obedience to Jehovah's command was motivated from the very beginning by selfishness and pride. Jezreel means "to sow." God will "Sow" the nation of Israel among the heathen in captivity—He will disperse them. Its opposite use is found in 1:11.

God is about to visit upon the idolatrous offspring of the idolatrous Jehu extermination—the same judgment Jehovah visited, through the hand of Jehu upon the house of Ahab. This promised judgment, symbolized by the name of Hosea's first born, followed not long after the death of Jeroboam II in the murder of his son through the conspiracy of Shallum (II Kings 15:8ff). But God's punishment will not end with the extermination of the dynasty of Jehu, He is going to "cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease." When Shallum murdered the son of Jeroboam II, there began a plunge into political anarchy from which Israel never recovered. Only Menahem had a son for a successor. All the rest of the kings of Israel were overthrown and slain by conspirators. The fall of the house of Jehu was the beginning of the end for Israel.

v. 5 . . . AT THAT DAY . . . I WILL BREAK . . . ISRAEL . . . IN THE VALLEY OF JEZREEL. When the kingdom falls it is to happen in the valley of Jezreel in which the city of Jezreel lay near Mount Gilboa. Ahab built a palace there. Jezebel met her death by being thrown from a window of this palace, and her body was eaten by dogs (II Kings 9:30-35). The valley of Jezreel was the natural battlefield of the northern kingdom (cf. Judges 4:5; 6:33). No definite enemy of Israel is named as the executor of the judgment here pronounced but in the second part of the book of Hosea we learn it will be Assyria. It is not mentioned in the books of the Kings where Assyria dealt the final blow but we must assume Hosea knew where it would occur.

v. 6 . . . SHE BARE A DAUGHTER . . . LO-RUHAMAH . . . I WILL HAVE NO MERCY Lo-ruhamah means literally, "she finds no pity," or, "is not compassionated." It may be significant, as Lange points out, that a female child was chosen to be given this symbolical name for the female can usually find pity when no more is given to men. It makes the fact that God will soon withdraw His compassion all the more emphatic. The prophesied withdrawal of pity here is simply an enlargement of the punishment coming upon Israel foretold earlier by the symbolical name of the son, Jezreel. The ten tribes of Israel would shortly be cut off from the tender mercy of God and scattered by Him, never to be restored as a whole nation. Only those of the ten tribes who returned with Judah in the restoration or were subsequently united to Judah found a place in the holy land again. How long God had suffered with this rebellious and stiff-necked people! How long He had withheld His terrible wrath! How long He had compassionately sent them warning after warning; prophet after prophet; but they would not hearken.

v. 7 BUT I WILL HAVE MERCY UPON THE HOUSE OF JUDAH . . . This verse was intended to be a rebuke to Israel. If Israel had only been like Judah they too would find compassion. Israel was a rebel from its very inception as a nation. It began with idolatry and continually grew more idolatrous and decadent. Judah, on the other hand, retained the true place of worship, the lawful priesthood and the God-ordained lineage of the monarchy. Judah was on the whole, a true witness to God. Judah still trusted in Jehovah for her security and deliverance from her enemies (cw. also Hosea 11:12). The latter half of this verse found fulfillment more than once. When Assyria besieged the city of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah God delivered Judah not by the military might of Judah but by His Own power in sending the death angel to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Furthermore, it was not by battle or military strength that Judah was delivered from her captivity in Persia, but God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to send the people of Judah back to their promised land (cf. Ezra 1:1ff; II Chron. 36:22-23). This verse probably has its ultimate fulfillment in the deliverance to the "Jew who is one inwardly," in Christ since the whole context here is interpreted by both the apostles Paul and Peter as Messianic (cf. Rom. 9:25ff; I Pt. 2:10ff). We will comment at length upon this in verses 10-11 below.

v. 8-9 . . . SHE BARE A SON . . . LO-AMMI . . . FOR YE ARE NOT MY PEOPLE . . . Lo-ammi means literally, "I will not be for you, i.e., not be yours, not belong to you." The covenant relationship between God and His people is to be completely dissolved. They are no longer His. They have "rejected for themselves the counsel of God . . ." and "judged themselves unworthy of God's covenant." They spurned His love. They broke the covenant. They deliberately chose other gods. Therefore, they are not His people. It was their own doing. The blame for their judgment is not to be placed upon God. They are responsible. Their sin is not excusable by ignorance at all! Remember the original covenant God made with Israel was "I will be your God, and you shall be My people . . ." (Lev. 26:12; Ex. 6:7). But when they wilfully rejected Him as their God, how could they any longer be His people?!

QUIZ

1. What does verse one tell us of the method of prophetic revelation and inspiration?
2. Was Hosea's marriage an actual marriage or symbolical or visionary? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Would it be wrong for God to command a prophet to marry a "woman of whoredom?" Explain!
4. Were the children born those of Hosea or were they illegitimate?
5. What symbolical significance is attached to the name "Jezreel"?
6. What does Lo-ruhamah mean and what application does it have to Israel?
7. Why did God say of Israel, "ye are not my people, and I will not be your God"?

GOMER'S INGRATITUDE— SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

TEXT 1:10-11

- 10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass that, in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.
- 11 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

QUERIES

- a. When would they be called "sons of the living God?"
- b. How will they be "gathered together?"
- c. Who will be the "one head" appointed over them?

PARAPHRASE

Yet in spite of the judgment of God that is surely coming, God will just as surely keep the covenant He made with Abraham when He promised that his descendants would be as innumerable as the sand of the sea. It shall come to pass that just as it has been said Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto all, both Jew and Gentile, who follow the example of Abraham's faith, Ye are the sons of the living God. And all the people of God, whether Jew or Gentile, shall be united together in one spiritual nation and they shall have one Leader, the Messiah, over them and they shall be delivered from their bondage. Out of the "sowing" (Jezreel) of judgment God will bring a great, victorious day of "sowing" (Jezreel), a new "sowing of a new Israel.

SUMMARY

Immediately upon the announcement of the complete judgment and rejection of the northern kingdom of Israel follows an announcement of deliverance and covenant fulfillment to spiritual Israel.

COMMENT

v. 10 . . . ISRAEL SHALL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA . . . AND . . . IT SHALL BE SAID UNTO THEM, YE ARE THE SONS OF THE LIVING GOD. It is very interesting to note here that the opening phrase of this verse is almost verbatim the words of the covenant promise made to Abraham in Gen. 22:17; 32:13. This confirms our Introductory principle of interpretation called "Covenant Background." All the events of history, as interpreted by the Prophets, take place on a *covenant background*. Even the future restoration of the Jews to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity in the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, and, the future kingdom of God under the Messiah, the New Testament Church, is portrayed as the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham.

Hosea announces the complete rejection of Israel, the northern kingdom, from being God's people. Some of the faithful remnant might then conclude that God had forgotten His immutable covenant with Abraham. So Hosea is directed by God to write that Jehovah will

eventually fulfill His covenant with Abraham (to make of Israel an innumerable people), even though the physical nation of Israel would be forever overthrown.

Perhaps this received its initial fulfillment in the restoration under Zerubbabel when a few of the Ten Tribes returned to Palestine in company with the nation of Judah. But its primary fulfillment is to be found in the founding of New Israel, the Christian Church, under the Messiahship of Jesus Christ. This cannot be misunderstood! It has the sanction of apostolic pronouncement (cf. I Pet. 2:10; Rom. 9:25). The restoration of the Jews in 536 B.C. was only typical of the New Israel to be instituted on the Day of Pentecost.

Lange says, "As to the main application of these verses, it is probably best to regard its promise as partially and but to a very small degree fulfilled in the case of those out of the Ten Tribes who returned to Jerusalem after the Exile, and to be constantly undergoing its fulfillment in the increase of the true Israel until the 'great multitude which no man could number of all nations' (the 144,000, the mystical number of those sealed of the *twelve* tribes of Israel), shall be completed. That the Messianic application is almost exclusively the true one is evident both from the grand comprehensiveness of the promise, and from paucity of evidence as to subsequent reunion to any extent of the representatives of the two kingdoms."

Pusey says, "Both St. Peter and St. Paul tell us that this prophecy is already, in Christ, fulfilled in those of Israel, who wear the true Israel, or of the Gentiles to whom the promise was made . . ."

Peter applies the prophecy to "the exiles of the Dispersion" in his day while Paul specifically applies it to the Gentiles in Romans 9:25. The Gentiles, formerly called "not My people," would henceforth, by believing in the Seed of Abraham, be called "My people."

v. 11 . . . JUDAH . . . AND . . . ISRAEL SHALL BE GATHERED TOGETHER . . . ONE HEAD . . . UP FROM THE LAND . . . GREAT . . . THE DAY OF JEZREEL. Pusey says, "A little image of this union was seen after the captivity in Babylon when some of the children of Israel, i.e. of the ten tribes, were united to Judah on his return, and the great schism of the two kingdoms came to an end. More fully, both literal Judah and Israel were gathered into one in the one Church of Christ, and all the spiritual Judah and Israel; i.e. as many of the Gentiles, as by following the faith, became the sons of faithful Abraham, and heirs of the promise to him."

Ezekiel symbolizes the union of all God's people under the leadership of one shepherd, David (the Messiah) in Ezekiel 34:1-24. Ezekiel symbolizes the same Messianic union by the two "staffs" in Ezekiel 37:15-28, (cf. also Jer. 3:15-18; Isa. 11:12-13). This, of course, finds its fulfillment in such N.T. scriptures as Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:4-11; etc.

The name Jezreel loses its stigma. Henceforth it will be great. Jezreel means, as we have pointed out before, "sowing." There, in 1:4 it meant God would disperse them in judgment. Here in 1:11 it is used in an exactly opposite way to mean that God will, out of the wreckage of former Israel, make a new sowing or planting and raise up a New Israel.

QUIZ

1. How do these two verses fit into our principle of interpretation called "Covenant Background."
2. Where in the New Testament do we have an inspired interpretation of the fulfillment of these two verses?
3. How can the Gentiles be included in the fulfillment of these verses?
4. What other O.T. scriptures refer to the union of Israel and Judah in a Messianic sense?
5. What does the name Jezreel signify used in this context as compared to Hosea 1:4?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

TEXT: 2:1-5

- 1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.
- 2 Contend with your mother, contend; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband; and let her put away her whoredoms from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts;
- 3 lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.
- 4 Yea, upon her children will I have no mercy; for they are children of whoredom;
- 5 for their mother hath played the harlot; she that conceived them hath done shamefully; for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

QUERIES

- a. What is the meaning of "Ammi" and "Ruhamah?"
- b. How were her children, "the children of whoredom?"
- c. Who were her "lovers"?

PARAPHRASE

Oh Jezreel, rename your brother and sister. Call your brother *Now You Are Mine* (Ammi); name your sister *Beloved* (Ruhamah), for now God will have mercy upon her. Plead with your mother (Israel); for she has committed spiritual adultery and married another; I am no longer her husband; she is no longer my wife. Reason with her to stop her spiritual adultery, to quit giving herself to other gods. If she doesn't, I will strip her naked of all that she calls her own; everything will be taken from her and she will be like she was when she was first born as a nation in Egypt; I will also make her desolate like a wilderness, arid like a dry land, and she will die because I shall withhold the life-giving water. Furthermore, I will take away the special favors from the people of Israel for in worshiping idols they show that they are her children. Israel, their mother, has committed spiritual adultery. She did a shameful thing when she said, I am determined to go and join myself to and consort with other gods for they are the ones who supply me with things I enjoy.

SUMMARY

Israel's apostasy is portrayed here under the figure of a wife leaving her husband for paramours. The Prophet pleads with the people to reason with one another and repent of the spirit of religious harlotry (idolatry) in their hearts.

COMMENT

v. 1 SAY . . . UNTO YOUR BRETHREN, AMMI; AND TO YOUR SISTERS, RUHAMAH. The Hebrew text of the O.T. makes 1:10-11 to become 2:1-2 and thus as we have it here in the English version would be 2:3 of the Hebrew text. This preserves the continuity of context and is to be preferred above our present English version. In other words 2:1 as we have it in the English version, belongs contextually to 1:10-11. Our present 2:2 begins another context and so the division in the English version leaves much to be desired. The English version has followed the arrangement of the Septuagint (LXX) and the Latin Vulgate in dividing the context as it has.

Ammi, means "My people." *Rubamah*, means "Pited or Beloved." The victory which is accomplished (1:10-11) at the fulfillment of the covenant and when *all* Israel (spiritual Israel) is gathered together under one head will so change man's relationship to God and God's relationship to man that redeemed man would thereafter be called "God's people," and God would thereafter "have pity upon them." So this is the conclusion of that which would be accomplished according to 1:10-11 and rightfully belongs to that context.

v. 2-3 CONTEND WITH YOUR MOTHER . . . LET HER PUT AWAY HER WHOREDOMS . . . LEST I STRIP HER NAKED . . . The word *contend* would be better translated, *reason, persuade, plead* or *beg*. The "mother" is Israel the nation. The children are the individual Israelites. This is simply a rhetorical mode of expression. Although the nation, regarded as a whole, had fallen into idolatry, a very few faithful formed a remnant and to these the Prophet pleads. They are the last hope for the nation. They must persuade the nation to "put away its whoredoms."

"Whoredom" here probably refers to the idolatry practiced by the nation. Israel had entered into the covenant with Jehovah its God; Israel had joined itself to God as a woman joins herself to a husband. When it went after other gods its idolatry became a breach of the faithfulness which it owed to its God. Its idolatry was even more deplorable than that of the heathen for the idolatry of Israel constituted rebellion and ingratitude against greater privilege, more blessed circumstances, and greater revelation. Idolatry is referred to as "whoredom" (cf. Ex. 34:14-15; Lev. 17:7; 20:5-6; Num. 14:33; 15:39; Deut. 31:16; 32:16, 21).

Actually, this section (2:2-5) would better fit our outline under I. B. 2., "Israel's Ingratitude, Love of Sin." But that would place it out of its textual order and since we wish to deal with the text in the order it is given, the outline must become secondary.

The "face" can mirror or display either modesty or immodesty, shamelessness or shame (cf. Jer. 6:15; 8:6; 9:21). It was customary even in that day for the harlot to "paint" her face with cosmetics to attract and allure lovers. Nationally speaking, Israel was in some way displaying outwardly the face of a spiritual harlot. The harlot also adorned and exposed her breasts in order to allure. We have here a synonymous parallelism; an exhortation that Israel should correct the outward display of idolatrous practices for they exhibit the spirit of harlotry and rebellion that is within her national heart.

Israel is warned that if she continues in idolatry, God will "strip her naked . . . like she was the day she was born." When Israel was "born" as a nation, she came from a disorganized, penniless, mass of slaves then serving the Egyptian pharaoh. She had no worldly goods, no worldly position or nationhood and no land she could call her own, (cf. Ezek. 16). God took her from Egypt, gave her a land, blessed her with material abundance, gave her national prominence and influence. But now that she has been unfaithful, God is going to "disinherit" her and cast her off and take away from her all that He has given. She will once again become the slave of a foreign nation; once again she will be without nationality and without material abundance. Israel as a nation will *be like* a land that has become arid, desolate. As a nation she will become worthless, cease to produce and die.

v. 4-5 . . . UPON HER CHILDREN WILL I HAVE NO MERCY . . . THEIR MOTHER HATH PLAYED THE HARLOT . . . SHE SAID, I WILL GO AFTER MY LOVERS, THAT GIVE ME MY BREAD . . . We like the statement of K & D, "The fact that the children are specially mentioned after and along with the mother, when in reality mother and children are one, serves to give greater keenness to the threat, and guards against that carnal security, in which individuals imagine that, inasmuch as they are free from the sin and guilt of the nation as a whole, they will also be exempted from the threatened punishment." The nation and its leadership (civil and religious) played the harlot by becoming idolaters and they led the people into the same sin. The "children" were not forced into "whoredom." They "loved to have it so," and willingly followed the leading of the nation.

The "mother," however proud and vain she might represent herself, did a shameful thing when she was unfaithful to her God. "I will go after" could be literally translated, "Let me go," or, "I would go after." She does not wait to be enticed or allured or seduced. She brazenly goes, uninvited, unsought and contrary to the instinctive feelings of woman, after those who make no overtures to draw her and away from her Husband (God) who has loved her and beckoned her. Enviously she regarded the surrounding nations (Phoenicia, Egypt, Assyria) who did not worship Jehovah, yet possessed far greater political power and prestige, worldwide commerce, huge riches, marvelous luxuries, and far greater freedom from moral restraints than God's people. The spirit of worldliness made Israel think of her God as a cruel and unloving taskmaster and of His law as an unbearable yoke. She began to worship idols. Then as her prosperity and

political prestige grew she rationalized that "her lovers" had supplied all these things she so greedily wanted. In the days of Jeroboam II idolatrous Israel suddenly gained power and riches rivaling those of David and Solomon. It seemed that idolatry paid better wages than service to Jehovah. God had warned them against such pride and ingratitude and idolatry in plain words (Deut. 8:1ff). It is interesting to note that the people of Judah said the same thing of their idols (Jeremiah 44:15-18); they attributed their prosperity to the heathen gods they worshipped rather than Jehovah. It is frighteningly true that people in so-called "Christian" America (and other "Christianized" nations) have not learned much from Israel and Judah. A great number of people today attribute the material and political affluence and prestige to their idols of science, man, sex or some other philosophy. This is just as brazen and shameful and just as much spiritual whoredom as Baalism was in the days of Hosea. Let us take the exhortation of Hosea to heart and "plead with our mother" that she "put away her whoredom from her face."

QUIZ

1. What is the proper division of chapters 1 and 2? Where should 2:1 go?
2. Who is the "mother" and who are the "children"? What literary form is being used here?
3. What is the "whoredom" of which both "mother" and children are guilty?
4. How will God "strip" Israel naked?
5. What makes Israel's going after other gods so shameful?
6. Why did Israel think her heathen gods supplied the things she wanted?
7. How do nations act the same way today as Israel acted then?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— SPURIOUS LOVERS

TEXT: 2:6-8

- 6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns and I will build a wall against her, that she shall not find her paths.
- 7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.

- 8 For she did not know that I gave her the grain, and the new wine and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.

QUERIES

- a. Of whom is the prophet speaking in this context?
- b. Why did "she" not find the lovers "she" was seeking?
- c. Why did "she" now know the person supplying her grain and wine?

PARAPHRASE

So, because Israel insists on playing the harlot I am going to put an obstacle in her way to finding her lovers. She will pursue her false gods but she will not catch up with them; and she will search for them but she will not find them: then, having realized they are impotent and spurious lovers, she will have learned her lesson and say, Oh, it was so much better for me when I was with my first husband—I will humble myself and return to Him, seeking His forgiveness. She became a harlot because she allowed herself to forget that I gave her the food, clothing and enjoyments of life; she allowed these gifts of Mine to be employed in worshipping Baal.

SUMMARY

God is going to make Israel realize the impotency and spurious nature of its false lovers, their idols.

COMMENT

v. 6 . . . I WILL HEDGE UP THY WAYS . . . AND . . . BUILD A WALL AGAINST HER . . . Is the prophet speaking of Gomer or Israel here? We believe the context insists upon Israel being the object of this warning. It is possible that Hosea took a similar action toward Gomer in an attempt to reclaim her before she sold herself completely into slavery (cf. ch. 3). However, the primary object of this prediction is Israel. God is going to place such an insuperable obstacle between Israel and continued idol-worship that she will not be able to find any way to worship idols again. The path leading to idol worship was going to be blocked with a solid wall of resistance. The "hedge of thorns" probably refers to the intense suffering they endured in the captivities. This was a lesson they never forgot. The Jews never again worshipped idols! Over and over again Ezekiel

repeats the phrase "Then will you know that I am Jehovah . . ." referring to the lessons they would learn from the sufferings of their captivity.

v. 7 . . . SHE SHALL FOLLOW AFTER HER LOVERS, BUT SHE SHALL NOT OVERTAKE THEM . . . THEN SHALL SHE SAY, I WILL GO ANE RETURN TO MY FIRST HUSBAND . . . At first, when they are in distress and tribulation at the judgment of God in the siege and captivity they will search with zeal for some comforting oracle or action from their "lovers"—the false gods. But they shall not even find their idols for the king of Assyria will come and take their idols away and then Israel will realize that there is no deliverance or comfort to be found in these false gods. She will wake up to the utter nothingness of idols. Although Israel was taken into the midst of an idolatrous empire (Assyria), and there had even more opportunity to practice idolatry, it learned the worthlessness of all trust in idols quickly and was thus impelled to turn to the Lord God Jehovah, her first Husband, in faith and repentance, seeking His mercy. While in her captivity she came to herself and saw the shame of her former religious promiscuity. She said, like the prodigal in Jesus' parable, "I will return." This is the purpose in all of God's "hedges of thorns" and His "walls"—to bring us to say, "I will return."

Augustine wrote, "I escaped not Thy scourges, for what mortal can? For Thou wert ever with me, mercifully rigorous, and besprinkling with most bitter alloy all my unlawful pleasures, that I might seek pleasure without alloy. But where to find such, I could not discover, save in Thee, O Lord, Who teachest by sorrow, and woundest us, to heal, and killest us, lest we die from Thee." This is somewhat the same as Paul wrote in II Cor. 1:3-10 and II Cor. 12:7-10; Hebrews 10:32-39; 12:1-11. This was the experience of Job and countless others whom the Lord loved enough to chasten. The Lord loved Israel "with an everlasting love" and so he chastened them. The moment of crisis was when they decided, "I will return."

v. 8 . . . SHE DID NOT KNOW THAT I GAVE HER THE GRAIN . . . WHICH THEY USED FOR BAAL. Israel should have known the source of her blessings for the law of Moses in all its institutions of sacrifices and offerings and its precepts was intended to remain them. However, the law, the word of the Lord had been forgotten. Israel's ignorance was wilfull and culpable (cf. Amos. 7:10-16; Hosea

4:1-6, 5:4; Micah 2:6-11; Jer. 6:10, 14, 16-19). She deliberately ignored the word of God and used what God provided to worship and perpetuate the religion of Baal. But her captivity restored her to sanity. She was taught again Whom she was dependent upon for life.

Baal worship was brought into Israel by Jezebel, daughter of a king of Sidon. Jehu destroyed it for a time, because its adherents were followers of the house of Ahab. The worship was cruel, like that of Moloch, immoral and abominable. It advocated (at least by Jezebel) the extermination of worship of Jehovah and its most zealous adherents caused many of the prophets of God to be slain. To such an abominable curse the people of Israel attributed the blessings which only Jehovah could give the people.

QUIZ

1. What is probably meant by the "hedge of thorns" and the "wall?"
2. What is meant by "not finding her lovers?"
3. What is the significance of the phrase "I will return?"
4. Why did Paul say he was chastened or afflicted?
5. Why did Israel not know where her material blessings originated?
6. What is Baal worship?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— SHAME REVEALED

TEXT: 2:9-13

- 9 Therefore will I take back my grain in the time thereof, and my new wine in the season thereof, and will pluck away my wool and my flax which should have covered her nakedness.
- 10 And now will I uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of my hand.
- 11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feasts, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn assemblies.
- 12 And I will lay waste her vines and her fig-trees, whereof she hath said, These are my hire that my lovers have given me; and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.
- 13 And I will visit upon her the days of the Baalim, unto which she burned incense, when she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. How will Jehovah "uncover" the lewdness of Israel?
- b. How would Israel's vines and fig-trees become a "forest"?
- c. Who is the "Baalim"?

PARAPHRASE

And so, because Israel refused to acknowledge Me as Giver of all her abundance, I will more clearly manifest Myself as Giver by taking away my grain and my wool and my flax just at the time when men feel quite sure of harvesting it. This abundance which I gave her is the only thing that kept her from utter destitution and complete barness. Now when I take away the veneer of material prosperity I will expose her to disgrace, miserableness and shame before her idol-paramours and none of her idols shall deliver her from this disgrace which I bring upon her. I, Jehovah, will stop all the feasts, holy seasons and sabbaths from which she gets such joy and festiveness. I will take all her vines and fig-trees, from which she gets her delicacies, which she says are blessings gained from worshipping idols, and unattended and uncultivated they shall become like forests where the beasts of the field roam and graze. Inasmuch as she claimed to be wise she became a fool and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles, therefore I will give her up in the lusts of her heart to the consequences of the life of sin she has lived in worshipping and serving the Baals. She dressed and groomed herself immodestly and consorted promiscuously with these idols and spurned My love.

SUMMARY

Because Israel has not regarded the material blessings she received as gifts of Jehovah God, and has not used them for His glory, Jehovah will take them away and her folly in worshipping idols will be exposed; she will be disgraced before her false gods.

COMMENT

v. 9 THEREFORE WILL I TAKE BACK MY GRAIN IN THE TIME THEREOF . . . Just at the time when they would expect to normally reap the regular harvest of grain, wool and flex, God would take it away. At this time the absence of the crops would be all the more significant and striking and thus more clearly the work of Jehovah. K & D say, "If God suddenly takes away the gifts then,

not only is the loss more painfully felt, but regarded as a punishment far more than when they have been prepared beforehand for a bad harvest by the failure of the crop." Since they did not acknowledge Him as Giver when He gave these crops, He will manifest Himself more clearly as such in taking them away! Their material prosperity was a thin veneer covering up the shame and disgrace in which the nation was actually engaged at this time. Take away the material prosperity and what is left—nothing but decadence, weakness, folly. There is no moral fibre in the nation; there is no truth or justice. So, when God takes away the outward appearance of well-being which covers her nakedness, her shame will be exposed.

v. 10 . . . I WILL UNCOVER HER LEWDNESS IN THE SIGHT OF HER LOVERS . . . The hypocrisy, weakness, decadence will be fully exposed even to her "lovers." The word translated "lewdness" means literally, *wicked folly or sexual depravity*. As soon as God strips the veil of prosperity off their sin, and her folly is apparent, even her "lovers" will despise her. Her "lovers" are the heathen gods (idols) she worshipped. We wonder why Hosea personifies an idol as a "lover." An idol may be loved, but does an idol love? If not, to what purpose is the uncovering of Israel's lewdness in the sight of her lovers? Could it be that Israel's folly or lewdness will be exposed to the demon-spirits who are persons associated with idols (cf. I Cor. 10:18-22)? When one worships an idol there is more involved than doing obedience to a piece of wood or stone! Idol worship (it makes no difference what the idol may be; whether an object or a philosophy), involves worshipping the "god of this world," Satan and his demonic hosts! Yes, Israel, stripped of her false power and wealth, brought low, will be despised even by the Devil and his demons whom they formerly worshipped and trusted! Some commentators believe her "lovers" to be heathen nations with whom she made alliances (esp. Assyria).

v. 11 I WILL ALSO CAUSE ALL HER MIRTH TO CEASE, HER FEASTS . . . NEW MOONS . . . SABBATHS . . . SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES. It appears that even though Israel worshipped idols she still retained the outward formalities of Jehovistic worship such as feasts, new moons and sabbaths. Even while disobeying God they kept enough of the outward forms to soothe their consciences. Evidently they regarded these days and kept them in a very festive, merry-making, mood. God will cause all this revelry and merry-making to cease. There will be no more such gatherings for sensual indulgence.

v. 12 . . . I WILL LAY WASTE HER VINES AND FIG-TREES . . . AND . . . MAKE THEM A FOREST . . . The vine and the fig-tree are the finest productions of Canaan and afford the choicest delicacies (cf. Joel 1:7-12). Israel's paths to superficial pleasure must be barricaded; her diversionary interests must be obscured; the objects of her indulgences must be removed. Her own stupidity will mock her in her remorse. That which she said were payments from her idols for the worship and adoration she accorded them, God would make desolate and ruined. Her vineyards and fig-tree orchards would be left unattended after the captivity and become overgrown with brush and weeds like a forest and the beasts of the field would tramp through them grazing.

v. 13 AND I WILL VISIT UPON HER THE DAYS OF THE BAALIM, UNTO WHICH SHE BURNED INCENSE . . . *Baalim* is the plural of *Baal*. There were many Baals; Baal-berith, Lord of covenants or oaths; Baal-zebub, Lord of flies; Baal-Peor, Lord of sin. In our *Paraphrase* we used phrasing from the first chapter of Romans because we feel this is what Hosea means. The Israelites had so joined themselves to these idols, they became like them. Hosea specifically says so in 9:10, "But they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to Baal, and became detestable like the thing they loved." When man, by the exercise of his own free will, refuses to have God in his knowledge and exchanges the truth of God for a lie and worships the creature rather than the Creator, God can do nothing else but give man up to serve these evil passions and natures. Paul wrote that when men *take pleasure* in unrighteousness and *have no love* for the truth, God sends them a strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, if that is what they want (II Thess. 2:10-12). The very evil, wickedness, depravity and foolishness which was represented by the Baalim they worshipped would be visited upon them in all its foulness and ugliness and self-destructiveness! Such was the actual case of both Israel (in 721 B.C.) and Judah (in 586 B.C.). Anarchy, treason, murder, theft, crimes of sexual passion were rampant in the last days of these two nations (and in many nations since). If a nation or a people sows the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind! If a nation plays with fire it will get burned! In Jeremiah's day society was so corrupt one could not trust his neighbor, his brother, not even those of his own household (cf. Jer. 9:36-; 20:10). Let every nation and every individual beware of the vicious circle of ignorance of God which leads to sin and depravity which in turn leads to deeper darkness and ignorance and then to deeper sin! Only if we fellowship (share)

with God and the Light which He alone gives may we be freed from falsehood and sin (cf. John 8:12-38; I John 1:5-10; 2:1-11).

QUIZ

1. What bearing would the time of God's withdrawal of crops have on Israel?
2. Who were the "lovers" of Israel?
3. What connection does Israel's "mirth" have to her "feasts," "sabbaths"?
4. How important were vines and fig-trees to Israel?
5. In what way did God visit upon Israel "the days of the Baalim?"

LOVE RECONCILING— ISRAEL IS LURED

TEXT: 2:14-15

- 14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.
- 15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall make answer there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

QUERIES

- a. Where is the "wilderness" where God will bring Israel?
- b. Where is the valley of "Achor"?

PARAPHRASE

Because I am the faithful Covenant God who never retracts His promise, and because you have forgotten Me, I am going to make love to you again and woo you by speaking words to your heart when you are in your despondency in captivity. Out of her deprivation shall come again to her prosperity; out of her tribulation and trouble shall be opened to her a door of hope. And she shall compose and sing her songs of faith in answer to My Love as she did in her early days of deliverance from Egypt.

SUMMARY

God will use the judgment which Israel brought upon herself to woo her back to Him. Out of her tribulation will come an open door to hope.

COMMENT

v. 14-15 . . . I WILL ALLURE HER . . . GIVE HER . . . VINEYARDS . . . AND THE VALLEY OF ACHOR FOR A DOOR OF HOPE; AND SHE SHALL MAKE ANSWER THERE . . . "Therefore" points back to v. 13. Not only in spite of, but because Israel forgot God and went "a whoring" after other gods, Jehovah-God initiates action designed to allure or "woo" Israel back to Him. "Love divine, all love excelling . . ." "Oh, what mercy, and what grace!" Israel had played the fool. Headlong she had plunged into idolatry which was the path of self-destruction. Headstrong and stiff-necked she rejected Jehovah and delighted in perverting His Law and blasphemously keeping His feasts and sabbaths. And *because of this* God loved her! We are reminded of the song:

"The love of God is greater far
 Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
 It goes beyond the highest star,
 And reaches to the lowest hell . . .
 "Could we with ink the ocean fill,
 And were the skies of parchment made;
 Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill,
 And ev'ry man a scribe by trade;
 To write the love of God above
 Would drain the ocean dry;
 Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
 Tho' stretched from sky to sky.

by F. M. Lehman

It also reminds us of Francis Thompson's poem, "The Hound of Heaven." This beautiful poem about the ever-seeking love of God is reproduced at the conclusion of this book. Please read it and re-read it until you feel it.

The phrase, ". . . the valley of Achor for a door of hope" is an interesting figure of speech. Two ideas are placed in close connection and declared to be inter-related—Troubling and Hope. God would have Israel understand that her "troubling" in captivity is the reason she may have "hope." In Joshua 7:26 we find the valley named "Trouble" because of the terrible and swift judgment of God which fell upon Achan, the man who "troubled" Israel because of his secret sin. It was only when Joshua dealt with this trouble that hope and victory returned to Israel.

Many are the New Testament passages which teach us to understand that our "tribulation" gives us reason to "hope." In Hebrews 10:32-39

we are told that our tribulation builds confidence; we have need of endurance so that we may do the will of God and receive what is promised. In Hebrews 12:3-11 we are told that only through chastening may we have hope that God loves us as sons. If God did not chasten us and trouble us what would happen to us? We would be left to our own self-destruction and most certainly destroy ourselves! Paul relates in II Cor. 1:3-11 that he was brought to despair of life itself in tribulation in order that he should be brought to rely not on himself but upon God! Read Paul's revelation in II Cor. 12:7-10 in this connection also.

These two verses use the history of Israel's deliverance from Egypt to typify God's future deliveries of His New Covenant people through Christ, the Messiah. Just as the wilderness wanderings of Israel in the days of Moses were days of probation and trial wherein God was training a people by want and privation to the knowledge of its need of Divine help, and on the other hand by miraculous deliverance in the time of need to trust to His omnipotence, so the entire time from the captivities (of both Israel and Judah), through the restoration, culminating in the coming of the Messiah would be a time when God would "allure" a *New Israel*. God would test and try this New Israel and speak "comfortably" to her through her prophets of the exile; through the post exilic prophets; through His acts of redemption and material blessing and finally through the coming of the Messiah. This would be the "return of her vineyards from thence."

The valley of Achor is a type showing how God restores His favor to His people after the expiation of guilt by the punishment of the transgressor. God will so expiate the sins of man, and cover them with His grace by punishing them in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), that the covenant of fellowship with Him will no more be broken by transgression—victory for His people will be assured. The *New Israel* (the church of Christ) will then "answer" the Lord in praise and promise by keeping the *new* covenant just as Israel did in the days of her youth at Sinai (cf. Ex. 15; Ex. 24).

QUIZ

1. What did the bringing of Israel into the wilderness have to do with alluring her back to God?
2. How did God speak "comfortably" to Israel?
3. What does the name "Achor" mean and how could it become a door of hope?
4. In what way did Israel "make answer . . . as in the days of her youth . . ." ?

LOVE RECONCILING— ISRAEL IS LAVED

TEXT: 2:16-20

- 16 And it shall be at that day, saith Jehovah, that thou shalt call me Ishi (That is, My husband), and shalt call me no more Baali (that is, My master).
- 17 For I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be mentioned by their name.
- 18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the birds of the heavens, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely.
- 19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betho thee unto me in righteousness, and in justice, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.
- 20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. What "day" is Hosea speaking of in verse 16?
- b. Why make a covenant for Israel with the beasts?
- c. When did Jehovah betroth Israel to Himself in righteousness?

PARAPHRASE

And when that day comes, the day when Achor becomes a door of hope, you, Israel, will have become a chastened wife and you will return to Me and dwell with Me and I shall become your Husband, saith Jehovah. You shall no longer be in bondage to your idol-masters, because I will have delivered you from all association with the Baalim. And when this is accomplished, I will remove the curse I put upon all creation in the beginning because of man's sin; I will conquer all the enemies of My people and they shall have peace and safety. At this time I will make a new marriage covenant with a new people. The character of this new relationship will be righteousness, justice, loving-kindness and abundant mercy. I will display My everlasting faithfulness in this new relationship, and My new people will know Me, each one, personally, and in a new, tender, experiential way!

SUMMARY

This is the "shortened perspective" again. From the "allurement" in the former section which refers to the captivity and return, we come in this section to the new relationship established by the Messiah.

COMMENT

v. 16-17 . . . THOU SHALT CALL ME ISHI . . . I WILL TAKE AWAY THE NAMES OF THE BAALIM . . . The phrase, "at that day," refers back to the former section—the "day" when "the valley of Achor would become a door of hope." When the Suffering Servant of Jehovah came and was punished for our transgressions, His troubling became the door of hope for all mankind; "that day" refers to the coming of the Messiah. At that time the Israel which has been purged of idolatry by its captivities and "allured" through all its testing and blessing (culminating in the One in whom we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places) will turn to Jehovah-God in a new relationship of Husband. The church calls God Husband when she stands in right relation to Him. On the other hand people call God Baal when they place the true God on the level of the Baals and worship other gods along with Jehovah, or obliterate the absolute distinction between Jehovah and the Baals. The new life in righteousness which is to belong to this *new* Israel (cf. v. 19-20 and Zech. 13:2ff) is depicted as the extermination of idols because idolatry was the principle form in which ungodliness manifested itself in Israel.

v. 18 AND IN THAT DAY WILL I MAKE A COVENANT FOR THEM WITH THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD . . . AND WILL MAKE THEM TO LIE DOWN SAFELY. "That day" refers again to the day when God will climax His redemptive labors in Christ—the "day" when He will fulfill the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel), swearing, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." That covenant of redemption for fallen man was uttered first in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15), just prior to the pronouncement of God's curse upon man and upon the earth for man's sake. In his innocence man was given dominion over all the earth and over all the creatures of God's creation. But that dominion was taken from man when he fell in sin. Jesus removed the curse that was pronounced upon man (Gal. 3:10-14) and has *potentially* (though not yet in reality) restored man to his God-given dominion (Heb. 2:5-18). Jesus did this by becoming Man and living a sinless life in the flesh, condemning sin in the flesh, winning for man the victory and dominion man had previously lost by surrender-

ing to sin in the flesh. God, through Christ, made peace between Himself and man. Man is no longer at enmity against God or the law of God if he is *in Christ*. Man need no longer fear any enemy if he is in Christ. He is more than conqueror through Christ who loved him. Christ has despoiled the principalities and powers triumphing over them. He has delivered man from the bondage of the devil. What glory it will be when it is all consummated in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

This figure of speech (taming of the wild beasts and causing war to cease) is a favorite way of the prophets in describing the peace, security and harmony of the coming Messianic kingdom (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 9:1-7; 11:1-10; 35:8-10; Ezek. 34:20-31; Micah 4:1-4; Zech. 9:9-10). The Christian *now* enjoys a peace, security and harmony with God and His purposes which is incomprehensible to the sinner ("the peace which passeth understanding") and will, in the future, realize it in all its realness and eternity.

v. 19-20 AND I WILL BETROTH THEE UNTO ME FOR EVER . . . IN RIGHTEOUSNESS . . . IN JUSTICE . . . IN LOVINGKINDNESS . . . IN MERCIES . . . IN FAITHFULNESS . . . AND THOU SHALT KNOW JEHOVAH. This describes the work of God as He redeems His wife (the covenant people) and changes her into a *new* woman! Indeed, Ezekiel speaks of the fact that the covenant nation will be given a new heart and a new spirit and resurrected, as it were, from the dead, a new people (Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:25-26; 37:1ff). The new covenant people would be cleansed from all impurity (cf. Zech. 13:1). The mercy of the Lord will be so all-encompassing it will not only forgive, it will forget (cf. Micah 7:18-20; Isa. 1:18-20) our transgressions. When God performs this work of regeneration in those who will permit Him to do so, those who are "betrothed" to Him *know* Him in the fullest sense of the word! Righteousness, justice, lovingkindness and mercy describe the results of God's transforming work in the *new* Israel; faithfulness of God is the method of bringing it about. God will demonstrate His faithfulness in sending Christ, the Messiah. He will demonstrate His trustworthiness in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the establishment of the church through sending the Holy Spirit. So, through the preaching of the gospel (the good news) of God's faithfulness demonstrated in history through Christ, men will be "betrothed" to God forever. Men will know God and be known of Him. Men will know that God is love; that God is truth; that God is above all and in all. Men will know God as Father and Divine Friend. Read the writings of John, the apostle, for a glorious revelation on the knowledge of

God. It is through this renewed knowledge of God that we are able to fellowship (share) in His divine nature (cf. II Pet. 1:3-11; I Jn. 1:1-4).

QUIZ

1. What "day" is Hosea referring to here in this section?
2. How did God "make a covenant with the beasts"? Cite other scriptures.
3. What did God promise to do for His *new* Israel? How did He do it?
4. To what extent is the knowledge of God promised here?

LOVE RECONCILING— ISRAEL IS LOVED

TEXT: 2:21-23

- 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, saith Jehovah, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth;
- 22 and the earth shall answer the grain, and the new wine, and the oil; and they shall answer Jezreel.
- 23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth: and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

QUERIES

- a. What is the point in giving answer to "Jezreel"?
- b. How is God going to "sow" her in the earth?

PARAPHRASE

And on that day when I make a new people, says Jehovah, I will hear. Yes, I will hear the heavens as they pray to Me to allow them to supply the earth with fertility. The heavens will, in turn, hear the supplications of the earth and supply what the earth asks for. The earth will hear the needs of the grain and the vine and the olive tree and supply them with sustenance. The crops of the earth will hear the supplications of the changed Jezreel, and give to her in abundance. At that same time I will take the Israel I "scattered" and "gently sow" a new seed for a harvest of My own. I will pity those who are Not Pitied, and I will call those who are not My people, Now You are My People. They will respond and say, You are our God!

SUMMARY

In highly figurative language the prophet now describes the overflowing love which Jehovah promises to shower down upon the *new* Israel

COMMENT

v. 21-22 . . . IN THAT DAY, I WILL ANSWER, SAITH JEHOVAH . . . AND THEY SHALL ANSWER JEZREEL. The phrase "in that day," refers to the same time as the preceding section—which is the Messianic age. This is plainly evident from I Peter 2:10 where the apostle quotes Hosea 2:23 as being fulfilled in the establishment of the church and calling of men and women to become a "royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people . . ." There is *double* apostolic confirmation of this section in Hosea being a Messianic prophecy. The apostle Paul says (Romans 9:19-26) that Hosea 2:23 is a prophecy of the receiving of the Gentiles into the scheme of God's redemption through their faith in Christ.

The word "answer" should be translated "hear." Hosea uses highly figurative language here to depict the shower of blessings upon this new betrothal of God to new Israel. The betrothal having been completed (in Christ, Eph. 5), the prophet now represents heaven and earth standing nearby ready to serve the Bridegroom as He showers His bride with presents. The heavens and the earth are represented as earnestly asking the Husband (God) which presents are to be showered upon the Bride. The Husband *hears* and directs that all the riches of His domain be given Her. So the church is blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). K & D say, ". . . the prophet represents the heaven as praying to God, to allow it to give the earth that which is requisite to ensure its fertility; Whereupon the heaven fulfills the desires of the earth, and the earth yields its produce to the nation . . . all things in heaven and on earth depend on God . . . without His bidding not a drop of rain falls from heaven, and consequently all nature would . . . be barren, unless He gave it fertility by His blessing."

The name *Jezreel* (formerly used figuratively to predict God's "scattering" of Israel in the captivity—in the sense of judgment) is now used in the good sense to denote a *new* sowing. This is evident from the context and the following verse (v. 23). So the figure represents God, the Husband, showering down gifts upon His Bride, the Church, through the agency of His whole creation. The reader should read in connection with this Ephesians 1:3-23 and Colossians 1:9-29.

v. 23 AND I WILL SOW HER UNTO ME IN THE EARTH . . . AND I WILL HAVE MERCY . . . AND . . . SAY TO THEM . . . THOU ART MY PEOPLE . . . The new Israel comes as a result of a *new* sowing—one of Divine grace instead of Divine judgment. The former references to "Jezreel" (1:4, 5, 11) had to do with "scattering" or "dispersing" rebellious Israel by the judgment of God in captivity. But now, through the "seed of Abraham" (singular, cf. Gal. 3:16), God sows a new covenant nation, the one noted in I Pet. 1:9-10 and Romans 9:19-26. So the name "Jezreel" is turned into something blessed, just as the names in Hosea 1:6, 9; 2:1 were changed into blessing. Lange says of this section, "The fulfillment is not to be seen in the return of the Jews from the exile. This was, to be sure, a fulfillment, but only a small and feeble beginning. For the promise is to be regarded as essentially Messianic . . . in Christ the new 'betrothal' of God to his people has already taken place . . . Israel, to whom salvation is here promised by the Prophet, comes into view, not according to its natural nationality, but according to its divine destiny, or according to its typical significance as the *People of God*." This we heartily endorse because to interpret it otherwise would be to contradict inspired, apostolically confirmed fulfillment, as we have shown before.

QUIZ

1. What specific historical age does "in that day" refer to here?
2. What confirmation do we have as to the fulfillment of this section?
3. What does the figurative language represent here?
4. What new meaning is given to the name "Jezreel" here?

LOVE RECONCILING— GOMER LOVED

TEXT: 3:1-5

- 1 And Jehovah said unto me, Go again, love a woman beloved of her friend, and an adulteress, even as Jehovah loveth the children of Israel, though they turn unto other gods, and love cakes of raisins.
- 2 So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer of barley, and a half-homer of barley;
- 3 and I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be any man's wife: so will I also be toward thee.

- 4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim:
- 5 afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness in the latter days.

QUERIES

- a. Who is Hosea's command to "Go again" and "love"?
- b. Why did Hosea insist that they must live in continency?
- c. What is the connection between Hosea's action and God's?

PARAPHRASE

Then the Lord said to me, Go, get the wife whom you love, that woman who has been an adulteress, and bring her back and love her again. This will symbolize the love Jehovah has for His wife, the spiritually adulterous nation of Israel, which has turned to other gods and has sensually worshipped them. So I bought her back from her degradation for the price of a slave, fifteen shekels of silver and fifteen shekels-worth of barley, and I told her, You must live in complete conjugal abstinence for many days; you must not again play the harlot nor shall you be permitted to have intercourse with your husband and I, your husband, will act the same towards you. This will symbolize the many years of captivity that are coming upon Israel when she shall dwell without civil leadership, without religion and without a revelation from God and without any idols. After their period of chastening the children of Israel shall turn and seek Jehovah their God, and their Messiah-king, and they shall come trembling at their own unworthiness and at the holiness and goodness of Jehovah in the Messianic dispensation.

SUMMARY

This very short chapter completes the heart-rending account of Hosea's marriage. Hosea redeems Gomer; Gomer is chastened in order that she may repent; the account ends leaving us to assume Gomer's reconciliation. It all is to symbolize God's dealing with adulterous Israel ending in Messianic blessings.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . GO AGAIN, LOVE A WOMAN BELOVED OF HER FRIEND . . . This chapter opens with an authentic note—a command from Jehovah. Hosea is commanded to love again a "woman beloved of her friend." The word in the original for "friend" would better be translated here *companion*, for it denotes a friend or companion, with whom one cherishes intercourse and fellowship, one with whom another lives in the closest intimacy. The woman beloved of such a "friend" can only be Gomer and the friend can only be Hosea. Gomer is called a woman *ishab*, not, thy wife, *ishteca*, in order to describe the state of separation in which she was living. Hosea is bidden to take the initiative and act toward Gomer with love even when she was unloved and unloveable! Hosea was to love her freely, just as God loved Israel freely (cf. Hosea 14:4). God took the initiative and "lured" Israel wooing her back to Himself (cf. Hosea 2:14ff). It is plain that what Hosea will experience in loving "again" his wife is to symbolize what God's experience is with Israel when He shall have redeemed her from her captivities and loved her again in the Messiah. Raisin cakes are delicacies, figuratively representing that idolatrous worship which appeals to the senses and gratifies the carnal impulses and desires (cf. Job 20:12 and Jer. 7:18). Loving such carnal indulgence is the reason Israel turned to other gods!

v. 2 SO I BOUGHT HER TO ME FOR FIFTEEN PIECES OF SILVER . . . Evidently, Gomer had fallen to such depths as to be sold from one owner to another like a common slave. Perhaps her first paramours, having satisfied themselves, grew tired of her and sold her into slavery. This is always the end of illegitimate love, or false love. Sensual love or carnal love always tires and grows cold. True love is altogether different. True love always seeks the good of the other person. True love is a love that loves with the mind, the heart, the will and not just with the flesh. True love is described in I Corinthians, chapter 13, and the parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15, and the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10. Gomer thought her paramours loved her, but she was to find out that only Hosea truly loved her.

What Hosea paid for her (since at that time an ephah of barley was worth one shekel and Hosea paid 15 pieces of silver and 15 ephahs of barley) was the price of a slave, 30 shekels (cf. Ex. 21:32). It is interesting indeed that the price paid for Jesus' betrayal was 30 pieces of silver (cf. Zech 11:12). Gomer was redeemed for 30 shekels and

our redemption (though His blood was more precious than all the silver and gold ever coined) was obtained for 30 pieces of silver.

v. 3 . . . THOU SHALT ABIDE FOR ME MANY DAYS . . . AND THOU SHALT NOT BE ANY MAN'S WIFE . . . Gomer is to abide in the house of Hosea in a state of conjugal abstinence for many days. She is not to be allowed to engage in sexual intercourse with any man for a long period of time, not even with her husband, and especially not with other men. This is to be a period of chastening and testing. It is done out of love for her in order to reform her and train her up as a faithful wife. She must prove her fidelity and repentance before she is restored to full wifehood.

v. 4 FOR THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL ABIDE MANY DAYS WITHOUT KING . . . Now we see that Gomer's experience symbolized the experience of Israel during her captivities and afterward until the coming of Christ (David their king). "King and prince" represent civil government. Israel's polity ceased at the Assyrian captivity in 721 B.C. "Sacrifice and pillar" represent Israel's syncretistic religion. Israel's religion was obliterated with the captivity. "Ephod and Teraphim" represent the two means (Mosaic and idolatrous) of receiving religious revelations.

And so for 700 years the 10 northern tribes (except those who returned to Palestine with Judah in 536 B.C.) waited for God, as Gomer waited for her husband, kept apart from God under His care, yet not acknowledged by Him; not following after their idolatries, yet cut off from the sacrificial worship which He had appointed, cut off also from revelations from Him. Into this estranged condition Israel was brought by the Assyrian captivity (721 B.C.) and ever since they have remained in it, unless they have turned to "David their king."

v. 5 AFTERWARD SHALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL RETURN, AND SEEK . . . DAVID THEIR KING . . . IN THE LATTER DAYS . . . After Israel has been estranged from God for a long season she will *turn back* (the meaning of the original) and seek God. The Hebrew word for *seek* is the intensive seeking like that seeking which Christ enjoins in the Sermon on the Mount, "Keep on seeking and ye shall find . . ." It means a diligent search.

"David their king" is no other than the Messiah, the Son of David. K & D say, "we must not understand it . . . as referring to such historical representatives of the Davidic government as Zerubbabel, and other earthly representatives of the house of David, since the return of

the Israelites to 'their King David' was not to take place till (the end of the days.)" Every school of the ancient Jews (Talmudic, mystical, Biblical or grammatical) explained this prophecy of Christ, the Messiah. They even paraphrased it thus: "Afterward the children of Israel shall repent, or turn by repentance, and shall seek the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey the Messiah the Son of David, their King." Such an interpretation is found in some of the Targums and the Midrash and by such authors as Ibn Ezra and Kimchi. (cf. also Ezek. 34:23-24; Jer. 23:5-6).

The "fear" with which they come is a reverence and holy awe which causes them to "flee to Him for help." It is a reverent dependence upon Him which impels them toward God for fear of losing Him.

The "latter days" is, in Hebrew *acbarith bayyamim*, and means the final dispensation of God. That final dispensation is, of course, the Gospel dispensation. There will be no other age after the second coming of Christ (Heb. 9:27-28). Even the Jews (Kimchi so interpreted it: "Whenever it is said in the latter days, it is meant the days of the Messiah." This prophecy has been fulfilled ever since the coming of Christ and the establishment of the church when Jews of all tribes obeyed the commands of Christ and the apostles and became christians. All the Israel that is ever going to be saved (Rom. 11:26) is the "Israel of God" (including Gentiles) who seek God through the Son (David's son according to the flesh) during the Gospel dispensation. When Jesus comes again, the Gospel dispensation will be over—all dispensations of time will be over—and all Israel will then have been saved. Anyone found outside of Christ at that time will not belong to the Israel of God and there will be no further offer of salvation—only judgment. These are the latter days! (cf. Isa. 2:2, etc.)

QUIZ

1. Who is the "woman" whom Hosea is to love?
2. Who is the "friend" of the woman?
3. How much did Hosea pay for this woman? What did this signify?
4. Why did Hosea require her to live in conjugal abstinence?
5. How long did Israel remain estranged from God?
6. Who is "David their king?"
7. What are the "latter days?"
8. What symbolical relationship does all this have to God and Israel?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

TEXT: 4:1-5

- 1 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye children of Israel; for Jehovah hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land.
- 2 There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood.
- 3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.
- 4 Yet let no man strive, neither let any man reprove; for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.
- 5 And thou shalt stumble in the day, and the prophet also shall stumble with thee in the night; and I will destroy thy mother.

QUERIES

- a. Why was there "no knowledge" of God in the land?
- b. What does the prophet mean, "blood toucheth blood?"
- c. What is wrong with "striving with the priest?"

PARAPHRASE

Listen to the word of the Lord, you children of Israel. The Lord has an indictment against you and is going to bring judgment against you because there is no truthfulness, nor goodness, nor personal knowledge of God in the hearts of the people of the whole country. On the other hand there is false swearing and covenant breaking, murdering, stealing, adultery everywhere! There are men breaking in and robbing and one bloody death after another throughout the whole land. When the Lord brings drought and famine upon you for your sins, the whole land will mourn. The people and even the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens will grieve—yes, even the fish of the sea will perish. When all this happens let no man blame anyone else for such disaster—every man is equally to blame. And so, God's judgment will come, unceasingly; the slaughter of an unfaithful people and of the false prophets who led them will have no respite neither day nor night—and I will destroy national Israel.

SUMMARY

These first five verses form the first stanza of a long ode of Judgment. They contain the theme of the whole remaining section of the book of Hosea, and especially this fourth chapter—cause and resultant judgment of God.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . JEHOVAH HATH A CONTROVERSY WITH THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND . . . There is a similar arrangement of the covenant people (Judah in this instance) in Micah 6:2ff. God is personified as both the Plaintiff, Prosecutor and the Judge. God has a case against the covenant people. They are arraigned. God presents His case listing the many ways and instances by which the people broke His covenant. He proves their guilt and pronounces sentence. In His prosecution God even bears witness to the cause—there is no knowledge of God in the land. This specially blessed and favored people certainly could not claim ignorance of the terms of the covenant as an excuse (for the terms of God's covenant were reiterated over and over and they were plain enough for the dullest child to understand, cf. Deut. 8:19-20). They could not claim that God had not warned them for He sent one prophet after another attempting to call the people back to covenant keeping—all to no avail.

A nation is almost beyond hope when "there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land." Jerome said, "Truth cannot be sustained without mercy; and mercy without truth makes men negligent; so that the one ought to be mingled with the other." When there is no truthfulness no one trusts another (cw. Jer. 9:3-4).

Truth is the basis of all morality. The Bible, God's revealed will, is the only infallible standard of objective truth. Morality cannot be determined on any subjective basis. Morality cannot be determined on any humanistic basis. Morality cannot be reasoned on any philosophical basis. Morality must be determined by an objective standard and this standard must be infallible, supernatural truth. All other attempts to determine what is moral must ultimately end in complete moral anarchy (which leads to political anarchy) and the "autonomous man." The "dark ages" of the covenant people, during the period of the Judges, was a result of "every man doing that which was right in his own eyes!" When the divine standard of truth, God's revealed word, is rejected moral and political suicide is the result. This is exactly what

was happening to Israel in Hosea's time and also what happened to Judah in Jeremiah's time—complete moral and political anarchy! The same will happen to any nation which rejects God's Word, the Bible.

Hosea depicts the situation in Israel as one in which there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God. The "knowledge of God" is an experiential knowledge, to be sure, but this experience of God in our hearts only comes as a result of knowing God from His revelation of Himself through His written Word. That God does exist may be known from nature (Rom. 1:20-21; Psa. 19; Acts 14:14-18; etc.), but we must also know that He is a "rewarder" (Heb. 11:6). In other words, we must know what kind of a Person God is. This can only be known by a knowledge of what He says about Himself and how He has proved Himself through His marvelous deeds in the past (cf. II Pet. 1:3-9, where we "know" Him through His "precious and very great promises," and also become partakers of the divine nature). Of course, when God tells us what He is like and promises us that His will put to practice in our lives will give us certain blessings such as peace, love, joy, fruitfulness, forgiveness and etc., we cannot "know" such blessedness until we *do* what He says. Then our knowledge of God becomes experiential. First, however, our knowledge of God must be intellectual, based upon facts of history which record God's deeds. We must be able to trust Him with our reason before we can experience Him with our hearts. We must know He is historically trustworthy before we can be convinced that what He says to do is the right thing to do!

Israel had long ago taken the revealed truth of God away from the people. They built false "calf gods" and instituted a false priesthood. The verbal revelation of God in the Mosaic Law was no longer revered or practiced. So the inevitable consequences of moral rotteness followed.

v. 2 THERE IS NOUGHT BUT SWEARING AND BREAKING FAITH, AND KILLING, AND STEALING, AND COMMITTING ADULTERY . . . AND BLOOD TOUCHETH BLOOD . . . Here the prophet merely enumerates the sins of the nation. In later chapters he describes in detail the immoral practices of the people. In this list we find violations of five of the ten commandments of the decalogue. The people are guilty of false witnessing, covenant breaking, murder, theft, and adultery. And this is on a national scale. There are not just a few isolated cases of such crimes but the prophet says, "to the contrary, there is nothing else going in the land but such criminality!" One bloody deed follows another ("blood toucheth blood.")

v. 3 THEREFORE SHALL THE LAND MOURN . . . Such flagrant violations of all that is moral, right, good, reasonable and true inevitably bears fruit. God created the universe and sustains it through inexorable laws, both moral and physical. When those laws are transgressed the penalty must be paid. Where there is no penalty, there is no law; so where there is law there must be penalty. The penalty for violating a physical law of the universe is usually death or some other disastrous consequence. The penalty for violating a moral law is moral ruin, moral darkness, injustice, greed, cruelty, distrust and all the other decadent practices resulting from falsehood.

In Israel's case God brought pestilence, drought, plague and other forms of divine chastisement upon them. Not only does the inanimate creation suffer in consequence of the sins and crimes of men, but the moral depravity of man causes the physical destruction of all other creatures through such punishments of God. Even the beasts of the field, the birds and fish, mourn.

v. 4-5 . . . LET NO MAN STRIVE . . . REPROVE . . . THOU SHALT STUMBLE IN THE DAY . . . The fundamental requirement of God's covenant was willing, unfaltering, obedience (Ex. 19:5; 23:20-22; Deut. 6:1-25; I Sam. 15:22). Three times the people had solemnly pledged obedience (Ex. 19:8; 20:19; 24:3-7). But alas, they rebelled only forty days later and continued to rebel until their rebellion was culminated in the divided kingdom. Hosea writes to the people and tells them they are like those who strive with the priest. This is a reference to the Mosaic ordinance which prohibited people from striving or rebelling against a priestly decision (cf. Deut. 17:8-13). It may also indicate that the people were trying to blame the priests for their waywardness. In any case, the nation is a nation of rebels, rebelling against the rule of God. They are like the wicked servants of the parable Jesus told concerning the "pounds" (cf. Lk. 19:11-27) who said, "We do not want this man to reign over us."

So they would have to bear the consequences of their rejection of the light of God's truth. When the divine Light is rejected the darkness of falsehood and lie must follow. When people love the darkness they will refuse to come to the Light (cf. Jn. 3:18-21). When such people have their say they prefer "teachers after their own lusts" (cf. II Tim. 4:3-5) and they will be like the "blind leading the blind" (cf. Lk. 6:39), they will both fall into the pit! This goes on all the time—day and night. And God is going to destroy the "mother"—the whole nation.

QUIZ

1. What picture does the figure of speech "controversy" paint for us?
2. What was the cause of God's controversy against the nation?
3. Why is truth the basis for all morality?
4. Why must we have a divine, objective standard of truth?
5. When does one's knowledge of God become experiential?
6. Why does the land mourn when people sin?
7. How were the people like those "that strive with the priest?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— FORGETTING THEIR GOD

TEXT: 4:6-10

- 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children.
7. As they were multiplied, so they sinned against me: I will change their glory into shame.
- 8 They feed on the sin of my people, and set their heart on their iniquity.
- 9 And it shall be, like people, like priest; and I will punish them for their ways, and will requite them their doings.
- 10 And they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall play the harlot, and shall not increase; because they have left off taking heed to Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why are the people to be destroyed for "lack of knowledge?"
- b. Who is feeding "on the sin" of Jehovah's people?
- c. What does the phrase "like people, like priest" mean?

PARAPHRASE

My covenant nation is destroyed because they have no knowledge of Me, and so I will reject it from being a priestly nation because it has refused and rejected My law. Since this nation has forgotten My law, I will forget to bless its children. The more the population of My people increased, the more they sinned against Me. I will take all

their present glory and turn it into shame upon them. The priests grow fat because of the sins of my people. They set their heart on the people increasing their sins because as a result the sin-offerings which go to the priests for food, will also increase. Therefore, what is going to happen to the people, will also happen to the priests, they will perish with the nation because of their greed. And because they have stopped paying heed to the law of Jehovah, Jehovah will withdraw His blessing from both priests and people so that they may eat but they shall not be satisfied and they may commit whoredom but they shall not produce off-spring.

SUMMARY

The destruction of the nation of Israel is inevitable. Israel has stopped giving heed to God. God is going to stop blessing Israel. It is just as simple as that. When blessings are deliberately spurned, when the laws of God are purposely disobeyed, disaster inexorably follows. It all comes from a deliberate lack of experiential or covenant-knowledge of God.

COMMENT

v. 6 MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE . . . The knowledge of God which the people lacked was, of course, an experiential knowledge of God. But even an experiential knowledge of God must come from, first, a knowledge of God's existence and God's will as God is pleased to reveal Himself. In other words, there is no way to come to an experiential knowledge of God except first coming to an intellectual knowledge of Him through His verbal and natural revelation of Himself. We must first *know* that He exists (through the various proofs of His existence in both nature and His Word); then we must *know* what He is like and what He invites us to be and promises we may be; and then, when we have trusted Him to be what He is and able to do what He promises, and when we have done what He commands—we really begin to know Him as we ought to know Him! Such a knowledge as this brings peace, joy, forgiveness, satisfaction, fulfillment, purpose and eternal life. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" Jn. 17:3. But, conversely, to lack such knowledge of God is to be lost in ignorance, despair, hopelessness, guilt, purposelessness and eternal separation (death) from God. See our comments on the preceding section, Hosea 4:1-5. One is led to think of the terrible

condition of the Gentiles described in Romans 1:18ff when one sees the knowledge of God rejected. They "refused to have God in their knowledge . . ." "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie . . ." and so God gave them up to serve the enslaving and degrading passions of their bodies. One is also reminded of II Thess. 2:10-12 where those who have no love of the truth are given over by God to self-delusion and to believing a lie. And this is, for all practical purposes, the condition Israel had come to—enslaved, degraded, and self-deluded!

And so God has rejected this nation, this nation with which He had covenanted, from being a priestly nation. God had chosen this nation for a special purpose, to be "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). They stood in a privileged position to both God and the rest of mankind. They were a "bridge" between God and all of creation over which the rest of mankind would eventually be reached by God through the Messiah. But now they were no longer fit for such a calling and God rejects them until they are purified and cleansed and made fit again for the bringing in of the Messiah.

V. 7 AS THEY WERE MULTIPLIED, SO THEY SINNED AGAINST ME . . . As their population increased, so their prosperity and, apparently, their power increased. But, so did their sin! Prosperity and power does not solve the problem of sin, crime and immorality. Prosperity without God only increases the problem! Why? Because prosperous man without God loses spiritual perspective. Affluent man without God deifies "man, the flesh and the devil." Prosperous man without God deludes himself into thinking he is self-reliant, self-made and self-contained. That is the crucial problem—SELF! Soon, it is every self for self, and the devil take the hindmost! God created man to be more than flesh. So when man concentrates on the flesh to the exclusion of the real man—the spirit—he is out of harmony with the eternal purpose and out of harmony with himself, with the world, with his fellow-man, and is thus a true schizophrenic. The man who persuades himself that the physical is the ultimate and refuses to acknowledge the spiritual is the true schizophrenic—withdrawn from reality! He is afraid, he is guilt-ridden, he is neurotic (deep down in his soul), and so he actually goes out of his way to seek self-destruction. He, "having itching ears, heaps to himself teachers after his own lusts and is led away into foolish myths . . ." (II Tim. 4:3-4).

So, what God intended for glory (Israel) or, what Israel intended for her own glory (which we are not certain), would be changed into shame when they should be taken into captivity and slavery by Assyria.

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE — FORGETTING GOD 4:6,7

v. 8 THEY FEED ON THE SIN OF MY PEOPLE . . . The Hebrew word that is used here for "sin" *chatt'ath*, is also translated "sin offering." Evidently the priests of Israel (a mongrel priesthood to begin with) were eager to see the people sin since when they sinned they brought sin-offerings for atonement. The sin-offering was, of course, to go to the priest for a part of his sustenance according to the Mosaic law (Lev. 6:26; 10:17.) Figuratively speaking, then, the priests were "feeding on the people's sins." To "set the heart on" the iniquity of the people means to "long for the people to commit iniquity." We are reminded of the 11th century when the Roman Catholic pope Leo X and Tetzal sold "Indulgences" and used the money to build St. Peter's cathedral. The leaders of religion feeding on the sins of the people.

v. 9 AND IT SHALL BE, LIKE PEOPLE, LIKE PRIEST . . . Since the priests were as corrupt and, perhaps, even more debased (longing for the people to commit sin in order that they might profit), they would be destroyed with the nation. The sins of the religious teachers and leaders would certainly not go unpunished, for the one called to such a high responsibility as that must know that he will receive the more severe judgment (cf. Rom. 2:1-9; 2:17-25; James 3).

v. 10 AND THEY SHALL EAT, AND NOT HAVE ENOUGH . . . Whatever they shall do will not prosper. All their attempts at self-dependency shall end in vanity and emptiness. They will find the same thing Solomon found and about which he wrote in Ecclesiastes. Money, fame, power, sensual indulgence—all is vanity—all is unsatisfying without God. The "whole of man" is to fear God and keep His commandments. When men stop paying heed to God, God's only alternative is to withdraw His proffered blessings. God's blessings are given conditionally, when man refuses those conditions, God will not force His blessings on him. When that happens, man is left frustrated, lost and hopeless. Man cannot hope to defeat God so man, the enemy, is defeated!

QUIZ

1. What "knowledge" of God did the people lack and how did it destroy them?
2. What did their population explosion and prosperity have to do with their sin?
3. Why did the priests "set their heart" on the iniquity of the people?
4. How were they to "eat and not have enough?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— SPIRIT OF IDOLATRY

TEXT: 4:11-14

- 11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding:
 12 My people ask counsel at their stock, and their staff declareth unto them; for the spirit of whoredom hath cause them to err, and they have played the harlot, departing from under their God.
 13 They sacrifice upon the top of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks, and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters play the harlot, and your brides commit adultery.
 14 I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go apart with harlots, and they sacrifice with the prostitutes; and the people that doth not understand shall be overthrown.

QUERIES

- a. What are the "stocks" from which the people ask counsel?
- b. Why were the people burning incense under the trees?
- c. Why would God *not* punish the woman for harlotry and adultery?

PARAPHRASE

Licentiousness and debauchery is robbing men of their reason and understanding. My people seek wisdom and religious revelations from their divining sticks. The spirit of promiscuity and sensuality in their hearts has caused them to depart from Jehovah and the truth and to worship idols. They indulge in the immoral and vain pagan worship on the mountain tops and in the pleasant groves. Their daughters and wives have become prostitutes and priestesses in such heathen worship services. But why should I punish them when you men are so reprobate and, as leaders of society, have corrupted the women by your own indulgence in sexual immorality and idolatry. So this people which has allowed its understanding to be taken away by drunkenness and paganism will be cast headlong into destruction.

SUMMARY

In one quick stroke, Hosea tells the nation why they have no knowledge of God. They have allowed debauchery to take away their understanding.

COMMENT

v. 11 WHOREDOM AND WINE . . . TAKE AWAY THE UNDERSTANDING . . . Licentiousness and debauchery robs man of his reasoning power and of his will-power. Sexual excess and alcoholic addiction will reduce any self-assured man or woman to abject, whimpering, slobbering slavery. The Bible has a great deal to say about self-control in both sex and alcohol (cf. I Cor. 7; Prov.20:1; 23:20, 31; Isa. 5:11, etc.). Many an individual, home and nation has been destroyed because of one or both. Belshazzar lost an empire because of this; Alexander the Great died a debauched profligate at the apex of his power; the Roman empire of the Caesars disintegrated because of this—and in our day the British empire is about to fade away because men in high places betrayed their country after they had become enslaved to such excesses. And let Americans tremble when they think of the drunkenness, the the partying, the carousing and whoring that goes on in high levels of government, business and the arts in her own fair land! How can we trust men with such tremendously cataclysmic responsibilities in places of political leadership to make the true, good and right decisions when their minds are sated with sensual excess?! These two excesses are "demons"! They literally possess men and women! Men who are so possessed will compromise and surrender, they will pervert and poison, they will even steal and kill to satisfy their lusts. They become senseless (cf. Rom. 1:18ff).

v. 12 MY PEOPLE ASK COUNSEL AT THEIR STOCK . . . AND THEIR STAFF . . . This is a demonstration of the preceding statement. Men who lose their reason by allowing themselves to be overcome with sensual excess turn to falsehood to deliberately shield themselves from the truth! It sounds impossible but it is true nevertheless (cf. Jn. 3:19-21). The people of Israel turned deliberately to dumb, speechless, powerless idols in order to rationalize their lust for licentiousness. Men today are not any wiser. Men who delight in sensual indulgence will turn to dumb or dead gods of scientism, psychology, philosophy, liberal theology, or some pagan cult in order to rationalize and find credence for their indulgences. Many form their own philosophy or system of ethics (all relative, of course) and turn to "fate" or the "stars" to ask counsel. Some have made "love" a god (their definition of love, of course, precludes any discipline or moral responsibility). God is love, but love is not God! People will turn to every source under the sun for counsel but the divine revelation of God propositionally delivered and inerrantly recorded in human language

in the Bible. This is too objective for people, too restrictive for those with "the spirit of whoredom."

The "spirit of whoredom" is that spirit of promiscuity, license, libertinism or anarchy which desires to be free of all reasonable, moral and physical restraint. It is a totally selfish spirit for it considers only its own pleasure or satisfaction. It is a spirit of envy, greed and covetousness for it desires to possess that which does not rightfully belong to it. It is a spirit of rebellion, a spirit of pride which says, "I know better than God and His law." It is the spirit which is susceptible to being led astray into ignorance, lie, and spiritual death by the devil.

This describes the people of Israel in Hosea's day. So they were turning to their "sticks" for revelations and wisdom. Cyril of Alexandria says this refers to a practice which was an invention of the Chaldeans where two rods were held upright and then allowed to fall while forms of incantation were being uttered; and the oracle or message was inferred from the way in which they fell, whether forwards or backwards, to the right or left, or (if they had inscriptions) which inscription was facing upward, (cf. also Isa. 44:9-20; 45:20; Jer. 10:3-11). What foolishness men will succumb to when they allow their minds to be thus darkened!

v. 13 THEY SACRIFICE UPON THE TOPS OF THE MOUNTAINS, AND BURN INCENSE UPON THE HILLS . . . AND YOUR BRIDES COMMIT ADULTERY . . . The "sacrificing upon . . . the mountains" refers, of course, to Israel's practice of pagan idolatry. They were infected with the paganism of Jezebel, the heathen wife of Ahab (I Ki. 16:32; 18-19), early in their history as a nation. Earlier than this though, Jereboam I started the nation in idolatry when he built golden images for the nation to worship. In the pleasant, shady, cool groves they indulged themselves in the grossly immoral religious rites of Baalism (cf. Jer. 2:20; 3:6, 13; II Ki. 16:4; 17:9-18). According to Henry H. Halley, in the Pocket Bible Handbook, in the religion of the Cananites, 'Priestesses were temple prostitutes. Sodomites were male temple prostitutes. The worship of Baal, Ashtoreth, and other Canaanite gods consisted in the most extravagant orgies; their temples were centers of vice . . . Under the debris, in one of the High Places, Macalister (of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1904-09) found great numbers of jars containing the remains of children who had been sacrificed to Baal. The whole area proved to be a cemetery for new-born babes. Another horrible practice was

what they called 'foundation sacrifices.' When a house was to be built, a child would be sacrificed, and its body built into the wall, to bring good luck to the rest of the family. Many of these were found in Gezer. They have been found also at Megiddo, Jericho, and other places. Also, in this High Place, under the rubbish, Macalister found enormous quantities of images and plaques of Ashtoreth with rudely exaggerated sex organs, designed to foster sensual feelings."

The literal meaning of the word *baal*, is "possessor, husband." Very lascivious rites accompanied the worship (I Ki. 14:23-24). Sometimes priests, dancing around the altar in a state of frenzy, slashed themselves with knives (I Ki. 18:26-28). When people commit themselves to *worship* (which really means to adore, to practice and believe in something or someone as the reason for existence and the motivating center of life) in such immoral, fleshly indulgence, one can understand why the society became politically corrupt and falls apart.

J. N. D. Anderson, in "The World's Religions" states (from his own knowledge as a missionary) that in India today young girls are still provided in Hindu temples to serve as religious prostitutes. If a worshiper visits the temple prostitute he is doing only what is customary and taking advantage of what is provided for him by his gracious gods.

v. 14 I WILL NOT PUNISH YOUR DAUGHTERS . . . AND THE PEOPLE THAT DOTHT NOT UNDERSTAND SHALL BE OVERTHROWN . . . God does not mean to say that He will not *ever* punish the adultery and harlotry of the women of Israel. What is meant is evident from the last phrase of this verse—namely that God is going to leave the people in their deliberate, rebellious ignorance to choose their own course. God has spoken. God has sent calamity after calamity, but the people refuse to hear. There is nothing left for a merciful God to do but "give them up" (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). So, because this is the way Israel wants it, the presence of Jehovah has left them—they are left to their own devices. They are given up in their headlong plunge into utter ruin.

QUIZ

1. How does whoredom and wine take away the understanding?
2. What is the spirit of whoredom?
3. Describe the worship of Baal. Where did it come from?
4. Does such gross immorality occur in the name of religion today?
5. How does verse 14 compare to Romans 1:18ff?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— JUDAH IS TO DEPART FROM HER

TEXT: 4:15-19

- 15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, As Jehovah liveth.
- 16 For Israel hath behaved himself stubbornly, like a stubborn heifer: now will Jehovah feed them as a lamb in a large place.
- 17 Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.
- 18 Their drink is become sour; they play the harlot continually; her rulers dearly love shame.
- 19 The wind hath wrapped her up in its wings; and they shall be put to shame because of their sacrifices.

QUERIES

- a. Why the exhortation to Judah at this time?
- b. What is the meaning of the phrase, "let him alone?"
- c. What does the figure "the wind hath wrapped her up in its wings" mean?

PARAPHRASE

But though Israel has prostituted herself to worship idols, I exhort Judah to keep from offending Me in this way. Stay far away from Israel's centers of pagan worship, Judah, having nothing to do with these places. Do not be guilty even of saying the name of Jehovah in connection with anything idolatrous. Israel is behaving like a stubborn heifer, resisting the leading and protection of the Lord. Now the Lord will have to leave her defenseless to become a prey for her enemies, because, like a stupid and stubborn lamb she has wandered astray. Yes, Israel is joined inseparably to her idols and is headed for inevitable ruin—LEAVE HER ALONE! When the men become so intoxicated they can't drink any more and their wine begins to turn sour, they all go off to find some whores with whom they consort. They actually love shame more than they love honor. The great storm of God's judgment has already encircled Israel and she is trapped. She will find that she has been deceived by placing confidence in her idols and pagan sacrifices.

SUMMARY

Israel has been completely given up by God to self-hardening. Let Judah keep away from her and not be seduced into her idolatry.

COMMENT

v. 15-17 **THOUGH THOU, ISRAEL, PLAY THE HARLOT, YET LET NOT JUDAH OFFEND; . . . EPHRAIM IS JOINED TO IDOLS; LET HIM ALONE . . .** Hosea strikes a note of imperativeness in his warning. There is extreme urgency in his cry to Judah to have nothing to do with Israel! Isaiah was in the southern kingdom preaching his heart out to Judah to make no alliances, neither political, military, economic or religious, with Judah. Hosea attempts to confirm the warnings of Isaiah by sending down to Judah the same word. Although there was some corruption even in Judah at this time, generally speaking the people of the southern kingdom had not become nearly so decadent or religiously corrupt as Israel. There were still a number of faithful people in Judah. This principle of non-union of believers with unbelievers runs all through the Bible. We find it in the New Testament in I Corinthians 6 . . . "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing. What concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever." We agree with a statement made by G. Campbell Morgan in his little book entitled, "Hosea, The Heart and Holiness of God." Mr. Morgan, "the prince of expositors," said:

"A man must be true to his own conscience. I have been asked if I would not go to some meeting at which representatives of other religions were to speak—Mohammedan and Jewish. No. I will respect the Mohammedan, and I will respect the Jewish rabbi, but I cannot stand on a religious platform with them. They are joined to false representations of God. If someone says he is not sure about that, I shall reply, then he is not sure about Jesus Christ, not sure about His finality. So long as we are prepared to compare Him, we are something less than Christian. So long as we put Him into comparison with others, it is because we have not risen to the height of intellectual comprehension concerning Him, to say nothing of volitional surrender to Him. Until we see Him alone as "the Image of the invisible God," filling all the horizon to the uttermost bound, we have not really seen Him at all, and our relation to Him lacks the uttermost of devotion. The hour is coming, nay, the

hour is here, when loyal souls ought at least to stand separate from all complicity with any form of the misrepresentation of God, even though the form be some new presentation of Jesus that denies the things of Revelation. There must be no compromise."

This call to separation did not mean God was at a loss to do something to help Israel, if she would be helped. God, mercifully and purposefully, allows Israel to be carried away into captivity because at the present time Israel will not listen to God. But God will deal mercifully with Israel by and by. Listen to the heart of God speak as the prophet reveals it . . . "How can I give you up, O Ephraim . . ." (Hos. 11:8) . . . "I will love them freely . . ." (14:4). If Israel will repent and learn her lesson from the captivity, God will love her freely. But so long as Israel gives God up, Judah is to have nothing to do with her. The principle is just as true today! Let all who name the Name of God stand clear of all complicity with any false representation of God (cf. II Jn. 9-11).

The people of Judah are especially warned not to frequent any of the religious centers of Israel—Gilgal, Beth-aven, etc. They are also warned not to even speak the name of Jehovah when they talk about such places lest people begin to associate Jehovah with pagan religion.

Every farmer knows how stubborn a heifer can be. When one does not wish to be led, no amount of pulling, persuasion or prodding can move one. A stubborn, balking heifer will often times lie down on the ground to keep from being led. It will absolutely defy its owner to herd it anywhere. This graphically describes the stiff-necked Israel. There is nothing left for God to do but let Israel have its wish like a stupid sheep which insists on straying out into an open, unprotected pasture by itself. God is going to turn Israel loose to go her own rebellious path. She will wander into a "large place." She will be dispersed among the nations. That is where she is headed!

v. 18-19 **THEIR DRINK IS BECOME SOUR . . . THEY SHALL BE PUT TO SHAME BECAUSE OF THEIR SACRIFICES.** The prophet pictures for us men drinking until they cannot drink any more and the wine which they leave in their glasses becoming sour because they cannot drink any more. Then, having poisoned their minds with drink and seared their moral consciences, they go out in search of a prostitute to gratify their sexual lust. They do not have to look long for there

are plenty of loose women. They play the harlot continually. The indictment of the prophet is terrible to contemplate . . . "The rulers *dearly love* shame." They are like those described by Paul in II Thessalonians 2:9-12 who "refused to love the truth . . . but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

God will have them in derision. They shall be put to shame—the word *shame* means they will be confounded, caused to stumble. Literally, they will suddenly realize that they have been deceived by placing confidence in impotent idols. They will learn that their idols are powerless and feelingless. How shameful, how pitiful, how utterly helpless they will be when they realize all this. They will be led away into abject slavery, shamed and mocked by their heathen neighbors.

QUIZ

1. Why was Judah warned to leave Israel alone?
2. Is this a principle for believers today?
3. Why does the prophet say Israel acted like a stubborn heifer?
4. What is the terrible indictment of the rulers by Hosea?
5. How will God put the people of Israel "to shame?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— REBELLION AND TRANSGRESSION

TEXT: 5:1-7

- 1 Hear this, O ye priests, and hearken, O house of Israel, and give ear, O house of the king; for unto you pertaineth the judgment; for ye have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.
- 2 And the revolvers are gone deep in making slaughter; but I am a rebuker of them all.
- 3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me; for now, O Ephraim, thou hast played the harlot, Israel is defiled.
- 4 Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God; for the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not Jehovah.
- 5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in their iniquity; Judah also shall stumble with them.
- 6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek Jehovah; but they shall not find him: he hath withdrawn himself from them.

- 7 They have dealt treacherously against Jehovah; for they have borne strange children: now shall the new moon devour them with their fields.

QUERIES

- a. Why did Hosea direct his prophecy to the priests and king?
- b. How did their "doings" keep them from turning to God?
- c. Why did God withdraw from them when they sought Him? v. 6

PARAPHRASE

Listen to this, you priests and members of the royal family who "dearly love shame;" you are doomed! You have enticed the whole nation, east and west of the Jordan, and they have been trapped like birds in your net of sin. These rebellious people are deeply sunken in excesses; but I, Jehovah, will punish them all because their idolatrous conduct is fully known to me. The demoniacal power of idolatry and its consequent immoral excesses has taken complete possession of their thoughts and actions, and stifled every vestige of knowledge of God. The spirit of promiscuity and anarchy is in their hearts and they refuse to know Jehovah. Israel's arrogance and pride will soon be shown to be vain when God brings her to shame. And because Judah has consorted with her, she too will be brought to shame. The offering of sacrifices will be no help to them. God has withdrawn Himself from hearing their prayers. Their sacrifices are not offered with penitent hearts. This is evident from the rebellion and idolatry of this generation of Israelites. Therefore their hypocritical sacrifices, instead of bringing salvation, will bring upon them ruin and destruction.

SUMMARY

The leaders have enmeshed the people in a net of moral excesses and rebellion. The people are pleased to have it so and refuse to have God in their knowledge. Pride and hypocritical worship testifies that their destruction by God is inevitable.

COMMENT

v. 1 HEAR THIS, O YE PRIESTS . . . AND . . . HOUSE OF THE KING . . . UNTO YOU PERTAINETH . . . JUDGMENT . . . When the light of truth begins to flicker and fade, invariably the social and religious leadership is at fault. Men who propose to lead others

face an awesome responsibility toward truth and morality. They are charged not only with proclaiming the dogmas of truth but with practicing them! (cf. James 3:1ff; Rom. 2:1ff). But not only this, both priest and king were charged with enforcing certain moral standards according to law. This, to certain degrees, is still the responsibility of civil government today. Since their responsibility is so great and their sin of trapping the populace in excess so heinous, the wrath of God is directed at these leaders first and foremost.

The king of Hosea's day was either Zechariah or Menahem; possibly both, since Hosea prophesied in both reigns. However, Hosea's reference to making a military alliance with Assyria (5:13) refers to Menahem (II Ki. 15:19-20). Both of these were wicked kings. Mizpah (Ramah-Mizpah of Gilead) and Tabor are both wooded mountains representing east and west of the Jordan, respectively, thus typifying the whole populace of the nation of Israel. The fact that they were wooded hills makes them noted as places peculiarly adapted for bird-trapping.

v. 2 AND THE REVOLTERS ARE GONE DEEP IN MAKING SLAUGHTER . . . Ephraim (Israel) is deeply sunken in excesses. Delitzsch translates the phrase literally, "they understand from the very foundation how to spread out transgressions." In other words, they have "studied" or "gone to great lengths" to learn how to become more indulgent, more lascivious, (cf. Isa. 31:6). God rebuked them time and time again, through His law, through the prophets, through natural catastrophes, but their revolt was deeply embeded in their hearts, and they were deeply sunken in the mire of their immoralities. There is nothing left now for God to do but to give them up to total destruction and ruin.

v. 3 I KNOW EPHRAIM . . . THOU HAST PLAYED THE HARLOT . . . God was all too well aware of the unfaithfulness of Israel. His heart was broken; their rottenness sickened Him. Be sure your sin will find you out (Num. 32:23)!

v. 4 THEIR DOINGS WILL NOT SUFFER THEM TO TURN UNTO THEIR GOD . . . What they were doing took possession of them. When a man yields the mind and the members of his body to sin, he becomes a slave to that to which he has yielded (cf. Rom. 6:12-23). When one allows himself to be enslaved to falsehood and immoral deeds he at the same time, permits himself to be blinded to truth and goodness. Men love darkness because their deeds are evil (Jn. 3:18-21) and they refuse to come to the light of truth lest their evil deeds be exposed for what they really are—vain, useless, degrading,

etc. It was the same spirit of harlotry that possessed them as is referred to in Hos. 4:12 (see our comments there).

v. 5 AND THE PRIDE OF ISRAEL DOETH TESTIFY TO HIS FACE . . . K & D interpret "the pride of Israel" as "the glory of Israel—Jehovah God." Thus they make God testify to the face of Israel. Lange and Pussey both interpret the phrase simply—Israel's arrogant pride. We prefer the last for it seems to suit the context better. Israel is like those of whom Paul wrote, "claiming to be wise, they became fools . . ." "they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened . . ." "haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil . . ." (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). "Pride goeth before a fall." Pride was the very snare of the devil (I Tim. 3:6-7). Amos 6:8 shows how "the excellency (pride) of Jacob" was the cause of her sin and how abhorrent such pride was to God. Remember that God told Edom "the pride of thine heart hath deceived thee," (Obadiah v. 3). So, Israel, will soon know how foolish her pride and haughtiness was. Soon Israel's insolence will be changed to shame and regret when God's wrath is poured out. Then will her pride testify to her face that all her arrogance was futile, vain and shameful.

Judah, too, will be brought to the same shame. Hosea warned Judah (4:15) not to take part in Ephraim's idolatry. Evidently Judah did not heed the warning and became a partaker in Israel's guilt (cf. Jer. 3:6-11).

The Russian communist Zinovieff boasted: "We shall grapple with the Lord God. In due time we shall vanquish him from the highest Heaven, and where he seeks refuge, we shall subdue him forever." What arrogance, what insolence! American theologians, however, have gone him one better! They have declared God is dead; they have held requiem chorales in honor of his death! This, if anything, is worse than insolence! How longsuffering the mercy of the Omnipotent God! It is a marvel of love and grace that He has not consumed such proud and boastful men with fire as He did of old.

v. 6 THEY SHALL GO WITH THEIR FLOCKS . . . TO SEEK JEHOVAH; BUT THEY SHALL NOT FIND HIM . . . These hypocrites, when disaster seems ready to strike, will bring thousands of lambs to the places of sacrifices, and gallons of oil (cf. Micah 6:6-8), but they will have left off the weightier matters of the law, mercy, righteousness and justice. Their sacrifices will not be offered with penitent hearts, or in faith. Their worship will be ritualistic, from hearts sunken

deep in sin, wishing only to be saved *in* their sins, not saved *from* their sins. God will not honor such worship for the simple reason such worship does not honor Him. He will not hear their prayers for the simple reason such prayers are not directed to Him. Isaiah had a great deal to say about such sham worship (cf. Isa. 1:10-20). It is not the "trampling of the courts" of God that counts with Him so much as "willingness and obedience" (Isa. 1:19). These were a people who honored God with their lips but their hearts were far from Him (cf. Isa. 29:13-16; Matt. 15:1-20).

v. 7 THEY HAVE DEALT TREACHEROUSLY AGAINST JEHOVAH . . . The word translated "treacherously" is *bagad* which means to act faithlessly and is frequently applied to the infidelity of a wife towards her husband. We are not surprised that Hosea would use such a word. Gomer acted treacherously toward Hosea when she deserted him for her paramours. Israel acted like that toward her husband, God, when she went off after her idols. Such idolatry, from the very beginning of the nation under Jeroboam, has produced generation after generation of "strange" children (idolators).

Israel should have produced generation after generation of children worshipping the Lord God in spirit and truth. Quite to the contrary, however, each generation became more idolatrous and immoral than the next. They retained just enough of the Mosaic forms of worship to ease their hypocritical hearts and salve their conscience. But, says God, your hypocritical worship is not going to save you—no, it is going to bring about your destruction. This is the meaning of the phrase, "now shall the new moon devour them . . ."

QUIZ

1. Why do those who propose to be leaders of God's people face an awesome task?
2. How deeply were the people involved in their sin?
3. Why were these Israelites not able to turn to God?
4. Why is pride dangerous? How does it bring men to shame?
5. Why would Israel's sacrifices not be noticed by God?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— REBELLION AND TRANSGRESSION

TEXT: 5:8-15

- 8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: sound an alarm at Beth-aven, behind thee, O Benjamin.

- 9 Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.
- 10 The princes of Judah are like them that remove the landmark: I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.
- 11 Ephraim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgment; because he was content to walk after man's command.
- 12 Therefore am I unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.
- 13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to Assyria, and sent to king Jareb: but he is not able to heal you, neither will he cure you of your wound.
- 14 For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver.
- 15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly.

QUERIES

- a. Why is Benjamin to "sound an alarm" behind himself?
- b. How are the princes of Judah like those who remove landmarks?
- c. Who is king Jareb?

PARAPHRASE

Sound the invasion alarm on the far-sounding horn and let it ring from the lofty citadels of Gibeah and Ramah. Sound the warning, O Benjamin, that the judgment announced by God is knocking already on your rear door. The northern kingdom has been completely destroyed, and made desolate. The princes of Judah, by indulging in idolatry, have transgressed the spiritual boundaries God made, and have become like those who remove the land-marks of fields. Therefore, My wrath will be like a downpour, a cloudburst, and a deluge, upon these people. The northern kingdom is conquered and oppressed because it fulfilled its unholy desire to keep the commandment of Jeroboam to worship the idols he set up for it. On account of this the destruction prophesied in My word, which is intended to call Israel and Judah to repentance, is going to slowly, but surely, be fulfilled and these two nations will be destroyed because they have not repented but hardened their hearts against the purpose of this word. When these two nations became aware of their predicament, instead of taking heed to My word and trusting in Me, they attempted to get help from that Warrior the king of Assyria who is, in reality,

their enemy! But he will be of no help to either of you when I, Jehovah, act to carry out promises of judgment. I will be like the king of beasts, the lion, toward Israel and Judah. I will attack them and tear them asunder and there will be none to stop Me. I will come against them when it pleases Me and I will withdraw when it pleases Me; I will carry them away into captivity when it pleases Me and no one will stop Me! I am going to withdraw My protecting, sustaining Presence from them until they come with dependence once again seeking Me. I know that the affliction they suffer in captivity is the only thing that will move them to earnestly seek Me.

SUMMARY

First Israel, then Judah, because they have broken spiritual boundaries of God's law, must be afflicted in captivity in order that they will repent and seek God's face.

COMMENT

v. 8 BLOW YE THE CORNET IN GIBEAH . . . AT BETH-AVEN; BEHIND THEE . . . BENJAMIN. The "cornet" here is the *shophar*, "far-sounding horn" used to warn of war (cf. Joel 2:1; Amos 3:6). It signaled invasion by enemies or attack by foes. Gibeah and Ramah were cities, about 3 and 8 miles north of Jerusalem, situated on higher terrain than Jerusalem and thus well adapted for sounding such signals to the countryside. Furthermore, since they are near the southern borders of the northern kingdom, Israel, we may infer that the enemy (Assyria) has already conquered the northern kingdom or is at least pressing upon its border. The phrase, "behind thee, O Benjamin," means that Assyria is knocking on the rear doors of Benjamin (northern most territory of Judah). The judgment of God (to be administered through Assyria—cf. Isa. 10) has already broken out in the rear of Benjamin.

v. 9-10 EPHRAIM SHALL BECOME A DESOLATION . . . THE PRINCES OF JUDAH ARE LIKE THEM THAT REMOVE THE LANDMARK . . . The Hebrew word which is here translated "desolation" is the same word found in Deut. 28:59 where it is translated "afflictions severe and lasting . . ." Some commentators say the word means literally, "lasting, enduring." Others (Lange, esp.) say it means . . . true, what will surely be fulfilled, certain. God's judgment upon Israel is certain and complete. The kingdom of Israel will disappear forever. And this sentence of God has been abundantly advertised and preached by one prophet of God after another.

The cause for this severe and lasting judgment upon both Israel and Judah, is that Judah, like Israel before her, is ruled by princes and kings who are like "those who remove the landmark . . ." For the Mosaic legislation against removing landmarks see Deut. 27:17. God set the boundaries of the tribes in the land of promise—they were not to be moved. But the princes of Judah are *like* those who remove boundaries. Evidently the princes of Judah were violating the spiritual, moral boundaries of God's law. By going after idols (like Israel had) they transgressed, broke and set-aside the boundaries or marks of spiritual relationship to Jehovah-God. There is no saving relationship or covenant relationship when God's revealed boundaries are set aside. Those today who would set aside the boundaries of New Testament covenant relationship are as guilty as the princes of Judah. "There is salvation in none other . . ." (Acts 4:12); ". . . no one comes unto the Father except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6); ". . . whoever abides not in the doctrine of Christ but goes beyond it . . ." (II Jn. 9-10) is a boundary-breaker. Any attempt to syncretize Christianity with all the other "isms" of the world religions, or any attempt to built an ecumenical church by taking away the revealed and absolute boundaries of God is judged by God! God will empty the "bowls of His wrath" upon such boundary-breakers—He will pour out his wrath like a cloudburst and they will be drowned in the flood of His vengeance.

v. 11-12 EPHRAIM IS OPPRESSED . . . BECAUSE HE WAS CONTENT TO WALK AFTER MAN'S COMMAND . . . I AM TO EPHRAIM AS A MOTH . . . TO JUDAH . . . AS ROTTENNESS. Moth and rottenness are symbols of destroying influences. Those influences are, of course, the absolute Promises of God which pronounce either blessing or curse depending upon the free-willed response of His creatures. If man responds to the Word of God by obedience and faith, God becomes to man a blessing, a glory, a hope; but if man responds to the warnings of God by rebellion, God becomes to man a destroyer, avenger and judge. So, God directs the oppression and destruction of Israel and Judah because they were content to fulfill their desires and worship the idols Jeroboam and his successors commanded should be worshipped. The people "exchanged the truth of God for the commandment of lying kings and priests," and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. They taught for the commandments of God the traditions of men (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8-9). How shall peoples and nations today escape the judgment of God when their leaders lead them to

be content to walk after man's commandment and set aside the boundaries of God!?

v. 13 WHEN EPHRAIM SAW HIS SICKNESS . . . THEN WENT EPHRAIM TO ASSYRIA . . . Both Israel and Judah are denounced for making alliances with Assyria. It is not so much that alliances or agreements among nations, per se, are displeasing to God, but the motive which prompts them. In the case of Israel and Judah the alliances were an affront to God because they were motivated by an almost complete rejection of Him. Israel and Judah, having enjoyed special revelation, privilege, protection and sustenance from God, now spurned and haughtily disregarded any notion of dependence upon Jehovah. They persuaded themselves that protection, economic prosperity and cultural development could not be found by international cooperation in commerce, politics and, most ruinous of all, religion. See Special Study Five of this commentary for a history of the politics of the divided kingdoms.

When any nation exchanges trust in God for trust in man-made treaties, it only exhibits its ignorance and foolhardiness. In the first place, God's word condemns such misplaced trust (cf. Psa. 118:8-9; Hoesa 7:11; Psa. 146:3; Prov. 14:34, etc.). In the second place, history proves that international treaties are hardly worth the paper they are written upon—and they will always be that way because of the unregenerate hearts of world leaders! General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur, a spiritually-minded man, perhaps the greatest American (both soldier and statesman) who ever lived, said, in his address before joint session of Congress, April 19, 1951:

"Men since the beginning of time have sought peace. Various methods through the ages have been attempted to devise an international process to prevent or settle disputes between nations. From the very start, workable methods were found insofar as individual citizens were concerned; but the mechanics of an instrumentality of larger international scope have never been successful. *Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed*, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at the door. *The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost*

matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past 2,000 years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.

"But once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory—not prolonged indecision. *In war, indeed, there can be no substitute for victory.*" (emphasis our).

This same God-fearing man, who served for over half a century, through three major world conflicts and scores of minor ones, who displayed a statesmanship as great as any the world has ever known in rebuilding the nation of Japan, allowed himself to be guided by this philosophy: ". . . men may be destroyed by what they have, and what they know, but they may be saved by what they are . . ."

America, so fond of boasting of her "economic and military strength—the greatest, most powerful nation on earth," needs to heed the word of God and learn from MacArthur, a great student of history, that greatness comes, "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zech. 4:6).

The word "Jareb" means literally, *contender* and was probably an epithet devised by Hosea to denote the warrior-like nature of the king of Assyria (see our Paraphrase).

v. 14-15 . . . I WILL BE UNTO EPHRAIM AS A LION . . . I WILL GO AND RETURN TO MY PLACE, TILL THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR OFFENCE, AND SEEK MY FACE . . . The figure of God behaving like a lion toward Israel is to depict His ferocity and invincibility. God will be irresistible—like the king of beasts. God rules the universe with an invincible hand. He goes and comes as He pleases—and there are none to gainsay Him or stop Him! He is preparing to carry both Israel and Judah into captivity and all the alliances in the world will not stop Him, (cf. Deut. 32:39; Hosea 13:7-11, etc.).

God is withdrawing His Presence (Shekinah-glory), His protecting, sustaining Presence, from the covenant people. In so doing it is His purpose to discipline them into a humble, penitent, faithful dependence upon Himself. Such action by God always has as its end His perfect love and blessing, in restoring man to his proper relation to God—of sweet communion, fellowship, dominion and glory (cf. Heb. 2:1-18; 12:1-29; 10:32-39; II Cor. 1:3-11; 4:16—5:21, etc.).

The prophet Ezekiel pictured the Presence of God departing from Judah. In Ezekiel chapters 8-10 we see God preparing to forsake the Temple because of the abominations being practiced there. Then, in Ezekiel 11:22-25, God forsakes the Temple, not to return until the Messianic kingdom (the church) is depicted in Ezekiel, chapters 40-48. *Ichabod* means "the glory has departed from Israel" (cf. I Sam. 4:21) and this might be the name emblazoned over the gates of Samaria, Jerusalem and the Temple in the days of Hosea. The condition upon which God promises His return is "acknowledge your offence, and seek my face," and the method by which God plans to bring about this condition is "in their affliction they will seek me earnestly." So, Christian, "Count it all joy . . . when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him." (James 1:2, 12.)

QUIZ

1. What does the "far-sounding" horn signal? Why warn Judah?
2. How were the princes of Judah breaking God's boundaries?
3. In what way was Israel "content to walk after man's command?"
4. What warning did Hosea give Israel and Judah about international alliances?
5. What have great leaders of our own country said about alliances?
6. How is God like a lion in His actions toward Israel and Judah?
7. When did God withdraw from Israel? When did His Presence return?
8. What are the conditions and what is the method God uses to restore His Presence?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— HER INCONSTANCY

TEXT: 6:1-11

- 1 Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.
- 2 After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him.
- 3 And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.

- 4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away.
- 5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.
- 6 For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.
- 7 But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.
- 8 Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity; it is stained with blood.
- 9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way toward Shechem; yea, they have committed lewdness.
- 10 In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing: there whoredom is found in Ephraim, Israel is defiled.
- 11 Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for thee, when I bring back the captivity of my people.

QUERIES

- a. Why the sudden promise of Jehovah's healing?
- b. In what way did God "hew" the nation by the prophets?
- c. Does verse 6 mean the prophets preached abolition of animal sacrifices?

PARAPHRASE

In view of this illuminative word of imminent judgment, and of the fact that in uttering it God has indicated His willingness to leave a door open for our return, Come, let us return to the Lord; out of love our God has afflicted us and so He will heal us if we return to Him. In a very short time, a time certainly determined by God, He will revive and raise up His trusting children and we shall live in His sight. Let us then strive zealously to obtain a heartfelt knowledge of the Lord in keeping His commandments. His response to help us is as firmly established as the dawning of the day. His nurturing us is as certain as the nurturing latter rains which come just before the harvest. But what shall I do with you Ephraim and Judah? Your love is fickle—it is as transient and vaporous as the dewy mists which are dispersed every morning when the sun bears down. And because your love is so fickle, vanishing again and again, I have through the word of the prophets carved on this nation like on a piece of hard wood trying to shape it into a holy nation. Through the pronounce-

ments of the prophets, I have suspended judgment and death over their heads. My judgments were so obvious, so conspicuous, the whole nation should have heeded them and repented. I do not want your sacrifices without love; I do not want your burnt offerings without a heartfelt knowledge of Me. But this nation rebelled against Me, distrusted Me and transgressed My covenant with them just like Adam transgressed the covenant I made with Him. Let me cite an example; the region of Gilead is a rendezvous for all sorts of wicked men and it is full of blood-thirsty men. Gangs of priests rob and kill using Levitical cities as sanctuaries. Those hoodlums also commit lewd and sensual sins in the land. In the land of Israel I see abominations and crimes of every kind being committed. Whoredoms, both literal and spiritual (idolatry) are defiling the people I called to be a holy nation. When I come to punish, in order to root out ungodliness and bring My people back to their true destination, you also, Judah, will be judged and chastened by captivity.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 COME, AND LET US RETURN UNTO JEHOVAH . . . AFTER TWO DAYS . . . ON THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RAISE US UP . . . LET US FOLLOW ON TO KNOW JEHOVAH . . . These three verses should, if we can follow context at all, be a part of the preceding chapter. They should never have been put into another chapter, and thus separated contextually. God has spoken of His withdrawal from the nation of Israel; He is going to leave them to their choice which has been sin. But He leaves the door of repentance open. And Hosea appeals to the people, as one of them, to return to God through that door which God has left open. Hosea's words here are some of the most tender and beautiful words found in the Bible. God wounds in order that He may heal! God chastens in order that He may bless! K & D says, "As the endurance of punishment impels to seek the Lord (ch. v. 15), so the motive to return to the Lord is founded upon the knowledge of the fact that the Lord can, and will, heal the wounds which He inflicts." Every child of God "has need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised" (Heb. 10:36). We have discussed the matter of chastening earlier in this work so we will not go into it in detail here. Suffice it so say that one of the greatest lessons to be learned from the Old Testament prophets is that God chastens like a loving Father in order to bless the penitent and to punish the impenitent.

Two and three days are very short periods of time. The phrase used here in verse 2 expresses the certainty of what is to take place within a short period of time. It is a short time, a time known only to God, but a time definitely established and determined by the omniscience of God. Just as certainly as the Perfectly-Righteous and Perfectly-Just God punishes sin, so He will certainly save those who repent. This is Hosea's main intent in these words. Thus the primary audience is Israel, the northern kingdom. Whether "on the third day he will raise us up," refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Lk. 24:44-46) in either a symbolic or allegorical way, or not, we cannot say dogmatically. However, in the light of Hosea 11:1 (cf. Matt. 2:15) and other such passages, we take the position that this phrase is a prophecy of the Messiah's resurrection. At least it probably refers to the conversion of "spiritual Israel" (the church) to the Lord its God, through faith in the redemptive death and resurrection of the Messiah. This is one of those prophecies with *double emphasis* (see our notes on Interpreting the Prophets).

The knowledge of Jehovah which Hosea exhorts his fellow countrymen to zealously strive for is an experiential knowledge of the heart as well as the head. It is the knowledge of which John the apostles writes, "And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (I Jn. 2:3ff). If Israel knows her God practically, by keeping His commandments, then forgiveness and blessing is sure to follow such knowledge. Again this reminds us of the apostle John, ". . . if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I Jn. 1:9). God is faithful; let us be faithful. Indeed, the faithfulness of God, as demonstrated in His mighty miracles witnessed and recorded in history, is motive enough to inspire us to faithfulness. This is what Hosea is inferring when He says, "his going forth is sure as the morning, etc." This is the refrain running throughout all the prophets as they attempt to direct the attention of the people back in history to God's dealings with their forefathers—God is faithful; let us be faithful. This is the primary reason for the coming of Jesus Christ, to confirm once for all, the faithfulness of God (cf. II Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:17-18). The Lord will rise upon Israel like the morning dawn (cf. Mal. 4:2; Lk. 1:78; Eph. 5:14; II Pet. 1:19). As surely as the dawn follows the night (cf. Jer. 33:20, 25) according to divine government, so surely will blessing follow repentance. As surely as the rain, falling from heaven, nourishes the earth and produces fruitfulness, (Isa. 55:10-13), so will the "going forth" of the Lord

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE — INCONSTANCY 6:3, 4

to bless a penitent people produce fruitfulness. The "latter rain" is the rain which usually comes in Palestine just before harvest-time.

v. 4 O EPHRAIM, WHAT SHALL I DO UNTO THEE? . . . FOR YOUR GOODNESS IS AS A MORNING CLOUD . . . Contrasted with the unchangeable character of God and the absolute certainty of His promises, is the fickleness of Israel. Anyone who has lived on the seacoast or in low-lying areas will appreciate the figure of speech in verse 4. The early morning mists and fallen dew are quickly "burned off" by the hot sun; the mists vaporize and vanish. This is like the righteousness and love of Israel. It comes and goes. It appears for a short time, sporadically, then vaporizes and vanishes when the sun of tribulation or materialism bears down (cf. Matt. 13:20-21). The same figurative use of the word "dew" is to be found in Hosea 13:3. While the same prophet uses "dew" (Hosea 14:5) as a simile to express the refreshing salvation of Jehovah. Usage such as this should make Bible scholars cautious about insisting that a word must always have the same interpretation throughout the Bible! So, Hosea, speaking for God, says, "O, Israel, what else can I do to you to bring you to repentance? I have tried all kinds of chastisement to bring you back to trust in Me. All that is left is obliteration."

v. 5 THEREFORE HAVE I HEWED THEM BY THE PROPHETS . . . Because of their fickleness God had sent prophet-preachers to the nation. Through them God had "hewed" or carved the nation; He had worked it like a piece of carving wood, trying to shape it into a holy nation according to its true calling. But because the people would not be "hewn" the messages of the prophets "slew" them. In other words, their messages pronounced salvation upon the penitent but inevitable judgment upon the impenitent. The nation, for the most part, chose the sentence of death pronounced by the prophetic message. God's call to repentance or judgment is always plain, forthright, unambiguous and bright as "light." There can be no excuses by any man that God's wrath is not revealed (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; John 3:16-21).

v. 6 FOR I DESIRE GOODNESS, AND NOT SACRIFICE . . . This verse does not mean, of course, that God wanted the Jews at this time to cease all Mosaic sacrifices and offerings. Indeed, to the last man of them the prophets insisted that the people return to the law of Moses (cf. our Special Study eight, pages 91-92). What God is protesting as to Israel's sacrificing is the faithless, heartless

manner in which they were being done. The people who were offering the sacrifices were not doing it because they had faith in Jehovah—there was no love in their hearts for God. Their offerings were abominable, revolting, sickening to the heart of God. What God wanted was faith and love to accompany the sacrifices; without this they were vain, useless—even worse than useless (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-17; Micah 6:8; Psa. 50:8ff; Psa. 51:15-17, etc.).

v. 7 BUT THEY LIKE ADAM HAVE TRANSGRESSED THE COVENANT . . . God's first covenant was with Adam, and, subsequently to all mankind as represented in Adam. The promise was life from God; the provision was perfect obedience; the penalty of failure was death. This covenant with Adam expressed its promises and threatenings in visible signs—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man (Adam) fell ("transgressed the covenant") and God, by His great mercy and love, provided a way of salvation apart from man's personal obligation to sinless obedience as the condition of life. God covered man's sin by grace; but man had to appropriate that grace by faith in God and faithful obedience to whatever covenant conditions or dispensation for this grace God imposed at whatever time in history man found himself to be living. Before Moses God administered His covenant of grace through patriarchal-sacrificial mediation. After Moses God dispensed His grace through the Levitical mediation. Both of these dispensations necessitated faith, without which they brought inevitable judgment. Each was a different dispensation (or administration) of the one, overall, covenant of grace begun by God in Gen. 3:15 when man fell from the covenant of perfect obedience. Each dispensation had conditions dictated by God to be kept according to the free moral choice of man. Each dispensation was but a foreshadow, figure, prophecy of that final full and complete dispensation of God's covenant of grace to be realized in the atoning work of Jesus Christ when God interposed Himself (cf. Heb. 6:17; II Cor. 5:17-21). In Christ God discharged all man's responsibility to sinlessness in His own Person. But, in order for man to appropriate this imputed righteousness so freely administered by the covenant of grace, man must respond to the covenant in faith, love and obedience. This Adam did not do; and this the nation of Israel did not do. The question of the moment, however, is, are we responding in faith and love and obedience to the covenant of grace which God so abundantly and certainly revealed in Christ Jesus which is now administered in the conditions recorded in the New Testament?!

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE INCONSTANCY 6:7, 8

v. 8 GILEAD IS A CITY OF THEM THAT WORK INIQUITY . . . Gilead, as a city, is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It is the name of a district standing for the whole territory of the land of the northern kingdom east of the Jordan river. This was probably the "bad lands" of Israel—a rendezvous for robbers and murders.

v. 9 . . . TROOPS OF ROBBERS WAIT FOR A MAN, SO THE COMPANY OF PRIESTS MURDER . . . Gangs of apostate priests were robbing and killing and fleeing to these "bad lands" and using Levitical cities as sanctuaries. These criminals were finding protection by using sacred cities of refuge in which to hide. This verse indicates they were guilty also of unnatural and perverted acts of sexuality ("lewdness"). All such behavior was a natural consequence of Israel's accommodation of the pagan, heathen idolatry of neighboring nations. Moral breakdown always follows rejection of God's eternal truth!

v. 10 . . . WHOREDOM IS FOUND IN EPHRAIM, ISRAEL IS DEFILED. Undoubtedly this is a reference to both physical whoredom (cf. Hosea (cf. Hosea 4:2; 4:13) and idolatry which is called spiritual whoredom (cf. Hosea 5:3-4; 14:8, etc.). To "defile" is to contaminate or pollute. This is what Israel had done. She was contaminated with moral rottenness. She had made herself unacceptable to the holy, righteous, loving God by refusing Him and doing everything within her power to despise Him.

v. 11 ALSO, O JUDAH, THERE IS A HARVEST APPOINTED FOR THEE . . . Judah has disregarded the exhortation of Hosea in chapter 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." The southern kingdom has allowed itself to become defiled by idolatry also. Therefore, when God comes to judge and punish the covenant people (beginning with the northern kingdom, Israel), in order to purge them of this defilement and bring them back to their true destiny, Judah also will be judged and chastened by captivity. This verse has nothing at all to say as to *when* God will "bring back the captivity" of His people; the *when* has to be determined from other passages, which announce the exile of both Israel and Judah, and the eventual restoration of those who are converted to Jehovah (and it includes "all the nations"). Thus we must conclude that the complete "bringing back the captivity" of God's covenant people finds its ultimate fulfillment in the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (the church on Pentecost) when all nations will "come up to Jerusalem." The captivities of both Israel and Judah was the START of God's plan of restoration! This is what is meant in this verse.

QUIZ

1. What do verses 1-3 of this chapter tell about the character of God?
2. What is the primary meaning of "after two . . . three days" in this context?
3. Could these "three" days have reference to Christ's resurrection? How?
4. What does Hosea mean by "knowing" the Lord?
5. How were the people "hewn" by the prophets?
6. Does this chapter teach that the prophets preached cessation of sacrifices?
7. How did Adam transgress God's covenant?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— LOVE OF SIN

TEXT: 7:1-7

- 1 When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood, and the thief entereth in, and the troop of robbers ravageth without.
- 2 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness; now have their own doings beset them about; they are before my face.
- 3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.
- 4 They are all adulterers; they are as an oven heated by the baker; he ceaseth to stir the fire, from the kneading of the dough, until it be leavened.
- 5 On the day of our king the princes made themselves sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with scoffers.
- 6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait; their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.
- 7 They are all hot as an oven and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me.

QUERIES

- a. Why would the king "be glad" about the people's wickedness?
- b. Why the likening of the people to a baker's oven?
- c. How would the king "stretch out his hand with scoffers?"

PARAPHRASE

When I attempted to heal the nation of Israel of her wound, the full extent of her cancerous sinfulness was exposed. Especially is the malignancy resident in Samaria, her capital city. The land is full of liars, thieves and bandits. And what is most disastrous of all, the people are wilfully ignorant of both their own wickedness and of My Perfect Omniscience and Justice. The people have so deceived themselves, they have so encircled themselves with iniquity, they have become slaves to their sins. Their sinful deeds betray them on every side and I am fully aware of it all. Their king takes pleasure in their wicked deeds and the princes of the court are pleased with the lies told by the people. The whole nation is a nation of adulterers. Their burning passion to do evil resembles a furnace which a baker heats in the evening, and leaves burning all night while the dough is leavening, and then causes to burn with a still brighter flame in the morning, when the dough is ready for baking. On special royal holidays the noblemen of the government make themselves sick by drunkenness. The king gathers about himself such drunken fools and scoffers as advisers and confidants. Evil is allowed to smolder and simmer in their hearts like an oven whose fire has been banked for the night. Then, suddenly, the smoldering coals of evil imaginations are fanned into a roaring fire and the evil deeds are committed. These roaring fires of evil thoughts and deeds so consume the people they are oblivious to the fact that every vestige of justice, right, goodness and law and order has fallen as kings and judges are overthrown—they do not see that anarchy is ruling. And in the midst of it all, not one of them has the faith to call on Me!

SUMMARY

The moral depravity of Israel which is leading her inevitably in a headlong plunge into anarchy is pictured by the prophet. The hearts of the people are so passionate for evil they are insensible to it all!

COMMENT

v. 1 WHEN I WOULD HEAL ISRAEL . . . Like the surgeon who begins to dress a wound often exposes hidden contamination, so God as He began to heal Israel by sending the prophets to preach and by sending upon Israel certain providential, natural calamities, to call them to repentance, exposed the full content of the corruption of the nation. Especially was corruption rampant in Israel's capital city, Samaria. We are reminded of Micah's searing accusations against the capital cities.

of both Israel and Judah. Crime and corruption most often germinates in the urban societies. And, just as in the days of the prophets, so now, very often people blind themselves to their own condition.

v. 2 AND THEY CONSIDER NOT IN THEIR HEARTS . . . One cannot help but notice in this chapter how often the phrase "knoweth it not" recurs. Israel persistently ignored their own condition and persistently ignored God. It is dangerous for a nation to sin. But the most perilous condition possible is to sin and "know it not." We shall have more to say about this condition in the next section. But here the prophet depicts the people as blissfully ignorant of God. They refuse to accept the fact that God is aware of their wickedness and that He will judge them for it. Their sin is apparent to everyone but themselves. They have become so captivated, enslaved in evil ways, it is their way of life—they are beset about with it.

v. 3 THEY MAKE THE KING GLAD WITH THEIR WICKEDNESS . . . Pusey writes, "Wicked sovereigns and a wicked people are a curse to each other, each encouraging the other in sin." There are at least two reasons rulers are made happy by the sins of the people: (a) In most cases the rulers profit in a monetary way through the indulgence and excesses of the populace. For this reason evil rulers do all within their power to legalize crime and evil; (b) and furthermore good and serious people would be a reproach to the consciences of the rulers—if therefore the people condone and practice the evil the rulers practice, they are an encouragement to evil to one another. It goes without saying that this is true of every form of government devised by man, including democracy. The only nation where this is not so is the chosen nation of God, the kingdom ruled over by the Holy and Righteous King, Jesus Christ, the church of the living God! The citizens of this nation have been reborn and are being transformed into the image of their King—loving, righteous, holy, pure and just. Their King hates sin and is made to grieve when it occurs and so do His subjects, (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 35:5-10).

v. 4 . . . THEY ARE AS AN OVEN HEATED BY THE BAKER . . . The people allow their hearts to smolder and simmer with evil thoughts and imaginations and plans, like the smoldering fire built by the baker near which he places his kneaded dough ready to bake in the morning when he will fan the coals into a roaring fire. The people go to bed at night with their evil plans smoldering in their hearts to awake in the morning and fan the coals into roaring deeds of evil.

v. 5 ON THE DAY OF OUR KING . . . Just what this "day of our king" was we do not know. It was probably either the king's birthday or the anniversary of his coronation. It was a holiday of some significance devoted to much excess in feasting and drinking. The leaders of the nation spent the day in revelry and carousel over indulging themselves to the point of nausea. The king, drunken with wine, let down his royal dignity and joined the crude, boisterous, sacrilegious scoffers (or blasphemers). "Wine is a mocker (or scoffer)" (Prov. 20:1) and drunkenness removes all restraint revealing the evil which is in the man. The king, rather than stretching out his hand to protect the few in Israel who were being exploited and persecuted for their righteousness, stretched out his hand (or welcomed) to join with these profane, degraded men. How can any society survive when its leaders become examples of corruption and excess? How can any nation hope to be a master of its destiny when it enslaves itself to indulgence and excess? May God raise up prophets of righteous indignation and fearless courage to pronounce the judgments of God upon the leaders of nations today who enjoy wickedness and indulge in excesses because of the profit they make.

v. 6-7 . . . THEY HAVE MADE READY THEIR HEART LIKE AN OVEN . . . THEY . . . DEVOUR THEIR JUDGES; ALL THEIR KINGS ARE FALLEN . . . Now Hosea looks to the consequences of Israel's moral depravity. Perhaps such consequences are already beginning to take place. The leaders and the people are so saturated with sin they do not even let their hearts rest from devising new wickedness. The prophet is probably describing a scene of revelry, debauchery and scoffing which preceded the murder of Zechariah, king of Israel (became king in 753 B.C. upon the death of Jeroboam II). Zechariah was slain through conspiracy publicly in the open face of day, "before all the people" (II Kings 15:9), no one heeding, no one resisting, about 10 years after his coronation by Shallum. From then on it was almost complete anarchy with one king after another being slain in Israel. We quote from Pusey:

"The kingdom of Israel, having been set up in sin, was, throughout its whole course, unstable and unsettled. Jeroboam's house ended in his son; that of Baasha, who killed Jeroboam's son, Nadab, ended in his own son, Elah; Omri's ended in his son's son, God having delayed the punishment on Ahab's sins for one generation, on account of his partial repentance; then followed Jehu's to whose house God, for his obedience in some things, continued the kingdom to the fourth generation. With

these two exceptions, in the houses of Omri and Jehu, the kings of Israel either left no sons, or left them to be slain. Nadab, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Jehoram, Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, Pekah, were put to death by those who succeeded them. Of all the kings of Israel, Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Menahem, alone, in addition to Jehu and the three next of his house, died natural deaths. So was it written, by God's hand on the house of Israel, *all their kings have fallen*. The captivity was the tenth change after they had deserted the house of David. Yet such was the stupidity and obstinacy both of kinds and people, that, amid all these chastisements, none, either people or king, turned to God and prayed Him to deliver them. Not even distress, amid which almost all betake themselves to God, awakened any sense of religion in them. *There is none among them, that calleth unto Me.*"

QUIZ

1. Why was the iniquity of Israel uncovered when God set out to "heal" them?
2. Why was their wickedness so staggering or unnatural?
3. Why were the kings and princes glad at the wickedness of the people?
4. What is the "day of the king?" How did the king behave?
5. How did the people "devour" their judges and kings?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— LOVE OF SIN

TEXT: 7:8-16

- 8 Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned.
- 9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there (sprinkled) upon him, and he knoweth it not.
- 10 And the price of Israel doth testify to his face: yet they have not returned unto Jehovah their God, nor sought him, for all this.
- 11 And Ephraim is like a silly dove, without understanding: they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria.
- 12 When they shall go, I will spread my net among them; I will bring them down as the birds of the heavens; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.

- 13 Woe unto them! for they have wandered from me; destruction unto them! for they have trespassed against me: though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against me.
- 14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, but they howl upon their beds: they assemble themselves for grain and new wine; they rebel against me.
- 15 Though I have taught and strengthened their arms, yet do they devise mischief against me.
- 16 They return, but not to him that is on high; they are like a deceitful bow; their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

QUERIES

- a. What is the meaning of the figure, "Ephraim is a cake not turned?"
- b. What is the meaning of the figure, "gray hairs . . . sprinkled upon him?"
- c. What "shall be their derision" in the land of Egypt?

PARAPHRASE

Israel has so thoroughly absorbed the ways of the heathen he is like a cake not turned—scorched on one side and undone on the other; he is putrid and useless. This heathenish contamination has sapped Israel's intellectual and moral strength and he does not even recognize it! Yes, "gray hairs" or signs of decadence are everywhere apparent in Israel but the nation is unconscious of them! Jehovah is continually testifying to Israel through the prophets and judgments in nature but in spite of all this Israel has not returned to God. Israel, flitting back and forth from Egypt to Assyria for succor, is unaware of the trap they are about to fall into—he is like a silly dove when flying about in search of food, does not observe the net that is spread for it. The trap they are about to fall into will be My judgment. I will bring upon them the chastisement which has been announced by My prophets. Woe shall be upon them because they have flown away from Me. I would like to redeem them still; but they have lied to themselves and others about Me saying I cannot and will not redeem them. Oh, they cry to Me but their cries are not of faith and not from the heart. They howl upon their beds in unbelieving despair at the distress that has come upon them. They huddle together seeking through idolatry to get the corn and new wine I have withheld because their only desire is to fill their bellies. They have utterly rebelled against Me. I have, many times over, tried to deliver them, but whatever I did Israel

continued to scheme and plan to bring dishonor to My name. Oh, they return, but not to God on high. They are constantly changing and turning from one idol to another. They are like a crooked bow; no matter where it is aimed the arrow flies away from the target. Because their princes have lied about God and blasphemed His name they shall die violently. God will have them in derision because they have blasphemously placed their trust in Egypt and not in Him.

SUMMARY

The moral depravity of Israel is exposed by citing various examples of it and picturing the passion with which the people love their sin.

COMMENT

v. 8-9 . . . EPHRAIM IS A CAKE NOT TURNED . . . GRAY HAIRS ARE HERE AND THERE UPON HIM, AND HE KNOWETH IT NOT . . . In these two verses the prophet shows, by vivid figures of speech, the extent of the moral decadence in Israel. The "cake" here mentioned is in Hebrew, *uggab*, literally, "circular," was a thin pancake, to which a scorching heat was applied on one side. Israel had been separated from the nations by the Lord (Lev. 20:24-26), to be a people dwelling alone (Num. 23:9), in order that it might be a holy nation to serve Him. But Israel thought itself wiser than the Lord and mingled with the nations through intermarriage (Ahab and Jezebel), through cultural and economic exchanges, through political alliances, and most disastrous of all through adoption of heathen religions of idolatry. A cake not turned is burned to a crisp on one side and uncooked, putrid, on the other side—it is worse than useless, it is nauseating. This is the first figure to describe Israel's moral decadence. The second figure of speech used by Hosea pictures Israel as a man whose hair is beginning to show signs of physical decadence by the sprinkling of gray hairs appearing. The phrase, "and he knoweth it not" is interesting. As G. Campbell Morgan asks, "Now I ask you, if any of you were unconscious when gray hairs began to appear!" Such behavior is quite unnatural. Men discover gray in their hair and laugh at them, try to pull them out or dye them—but they do not ignore them for they are signs of declining strength. As tragic and stupid as this might be in the physical realm it is even more tragic and stupid in the spiritual and moral realm.

Yet it is continually true that signs of spiritual decadence, which are so patent to others, are undiscovered by ourselves. We go on, and on, and on, the victims of ebbing strength, spiritually and morally becoming degenerate, without recognizing it! We are too often blind to the signs which are self-evident to onlookers. And there is no condition more perilous to our highest well-being than being unaware of spiritual degeneration. Malachi writes of this attitude among the people even after they had suffered the captivities and been restored to the land by God. The refrain of the people in Malachi's day is "Where in . . ." They were spiritually blind to their spiritual decadence. How do men so blind themselves? By setting up false standards—by refusing to admit the validity of God's standards.

How may we overcome spiritual decay? First, of course, we must recognize it, admit it, confess it. But mere recognition and admission that "gray hairs" are present will not remove them. Dyeing the "gray hairs" of sin with a false veneer of respectability will not hide them. We must turn to God in faith and obedience—He will remove them. He will renew our spiritual life. He will give us new birth (cf. Psa. 103:1-5; Isa. 40:29-31); Jn. 3:1-6; II Cor. 4:16-18; 5:17, etc.). God alone is able to remove gray hairs from our spiritual and moral nature by taking away the destructive forces which are producing the moral degeneracy.

v. 10 . . . THE PRIDE OF ISRAEL DOTH TESTIFY TO HIS FACE . . .

How often the pride of Israel, had testified to the face of Israel. One prophet after another declared Israel's sin and God's judgment. One natural calamity after another (locust plagues, earthquakes, droughts, diseases, etc.) testified to the wrath of God upon Israel's sin. Yet for all of this they would not turn and seek the forgiveness of God (cf. 4:6ff).

v. 11-12 . . . EPHRAIM IS LIKE A SILLY DOVE . . . I WILL SPREAD MY NET UPON THEM . . . There is an Eastern proverb, according to Pusey, which says, "There is nothing more simple than a dove." Jesus used the dove as a symbol of simplicity (Matt. 10:16), in a good sense. Hosea's figure of speech refers to Israel as having a stupid or ignorant simplicity—silly, foolish. Israel is like a silly or dumb creature distressed not knowing where to turn for relief. Israel does not know enough to turn to its God (cf. Isa. 1:3). Israel has turned to its enemies for help! She is so silly that she turns for help to those whose sole purpose is to do her harm! Israel, flitting here and there for succor, is oblivious that she is flying right into the trap God has set

for a disobedient people. God has announced before hand that He will chasten Israel by the hand of Assyria (cf. Isa. 10:5 ff). The very nation Israel considers a source of strength will become her trap, (cf. Hosea 11:5).

v. 13 **WOE TO THEM . . . THOUGH I WOULD REDEEM THEM . . . THEY HAVE SPOKEN LIES AGAINST ME . . .** How often God would have redeemed them (cf. Isa. 49:16; Hosea 11:1-9)! How often He did redeem them! But they continually wandered (cf. Heb. 3:7-19). They continually lied to themselves and to one another about the nature of Jehovah. They lied to themselves by refusing to believe Jehovah would bless them in spite of their extremities. They refused to trust in the faithfulness of Jehovah toward His people, even in the face of past experience of history. So their turning to idols was living the lie that was in their heartts.

v. 14-15 . . . **THEY HOWL UPON THEIR BEDS . . . THEY REBEL AGAINST ME . . . THEY DEVISE MISCHIEF AGAINST ME . . .** Instead of turning to Jehovah who proved Himself true and faithful and willing to save and bless, time after time, they lied to themselves and in the midst of certain distressing periods they cried and howled upon their beds in unbelieving despair. They howled to their dumb idols which could neither speak nor hear (cf. Isa. 41:21-29; 44:1-22). They rebelled against Jehovah by devising human or pagan ways and means of supplying the corn and wine which God had withheld from them to bring them back to Him. What they were doing, in reality, turned out to be declaring war on God's ways. The writer of Hebrews (3:10) attributes the failures of their ancestors to "not knowing the ways" of God. These Israelites of Hosea's day refused to recognize that drought, famine, etc. were God's ways of calling them back to Him. They literally assembled themselves together to devise rebellious ways to fight against the judgments of God. How presumptuous! How useless! God was trying to teach them and strengthen them morally through chastening. This is the end of all righteous discipline—moral growth. But he who rebels against moral growth through discipline only destroys himself.

v. 16 . . . **THEY ARE LIKE A DECEITFUL BOW . . .** Israel was changing and turning constantly but not in the right direction! She was missing the mark. She was not headed toward the goal God had set for her. She turned here and there and everywhere but not to the King of the Universe. Like a crooked bow; no matter where it is aimed the arrow flies away from the target. No matter which way Israel turned she missed the target God had set for her, because she

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE — LORD'S LAMENT 7:13-16

always turned away from God's word. Because their princes have lied about God and blasphemed His name they shall die violently. God will have them in derision because they have blasphemously placed their trust in Egypt and not in Him. Any person or people who trusts in their own might or wisdom will be defeated, shamed and confused. "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision" (cf. Psa. 2:1-11).

QUIZ

1. How dangerous is moral decadence when we are unaware of it?
2. How can moral decadence be cured?
3. Why was Israel like a "silly dove?"
4. How did God trap Israel?
5. How did they devise mischief against God?
6. How was Israel like "a deceitful bow?"

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— THE LORD'S LAMENT

TEXT: 8:1-7

- 1 Set the trumpet to thy mouth. As an eagle he cometh against the house of Jehovah, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.
- 2 They shall cry unto me, My God, we Israel know thee.
- 3 Israel hath cast off that which is good: the enemy shall pursue him.
- 4 They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold they have made them idols, that they may be cut off.
- 5 He hath cast off thy calf, O Samaria; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?
- 6 For from Israel is even this; the workman made it, and it is no God; yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.
- 7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind; he hath no standing grain; the blade shall yield no meal; if so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up.

QUERIES

- a. Who is coming "as an eagle" against the house of Jehovah?
- b. How did they set up kings but not by Jehovah?
- c. What does "sow the wind . . . reap the whirlwind" mean?

PARAPHRASE

The trumpet to thy mouth! Like an eagle upon the house of Jehovah! Judgment approaches because they have thrown off covenant relationship with Me and they have violated My laws. When these times of distress come, the people will hypocritically call upon Me to help them, professing that they know Me. But Israel does not know Me because He has abhorred and ignored the good way of God; and as a result a ruthless enemy shall overrun his land. They rebelled against My government and placed usurpers on the throne against My will. They have taken of the wealth I blessed them with and made idols in spite of My warning that I would judge them for such apostasy. Your calf-idol is loathsome and disbusting to Me, Samaria, and My anger burns toward you because of it. How long will it be until you divest yourself of this loathsome idolatry—how long can you go on living in such impurity? What makes it so abominable is Israel, the nation whom the living God chose to reveal the truth about idols, has engaged in the lies of idolatry. Israel, of all people, ought to know that idols made by the hands of men are no gods! They will know soon enough that their golden calf is no go for I will break it to pieces like I did the one at Sinai. They have sown the winds of folly and vanity, but they shall reap the whirlwinds of wrath and destruction. Israel's crops will fail; none of its grain crops will mature enough to produce any grain—there shall be great famine. Even if some were fortunate enough to produce a few heads of grain, the enemy that is about to come upon Israel would take it away from them and eat it themselves.

SUMMARY

In this chapter the prophet Hosea gives God's reasons for the imminent destruction of the northern kingdom; moral, religious and political rebellion against Jehovah God when she knew better.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . TRUMPET . . . AS AN EAGLE . . . AGAINST THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH . . . G Campbell Morgan says, "This chapter is dramatic in its method. It opens with two clarion cries; and our translators have just a little robbed the passage of its arresting character by the introduction of certain words, in order to euphony, and the making of smooth reading and sense." There is no such word as "Set" in the Hebrew text

here—that word has been supplied by the translators. Neither are the words, "he cometh," a part of the Hebrew text. Actually, the imperativeness of the call is more impressive with the supplied words omitted (as in our Paraphrase).

This "eagle" was undoubtedly a pictorialization of the successive kings of Assyria who swooped down upon Israel just a few short years after Hosea pronounced God's judgment upon her. One cannot help but remember the warning of Moses in Deut. 28:49 in the same words as these. Moses warned them if they should forget God and break the covenant and violate the revealed law of God, a nation from afar, swift as the eagle, would come upon them and destroy them. Transgressing God's covenant is much more personal than mere violation of some written statutes. To break covenant is to personally distrust and despise the One with whom you have the covenant. It is a matter of the heart and soul. This, of course, would manifest itself in scorn and disobedience to written laws of God.

v. 2 THEY SHALL CRY . . . MY GOD, WE ISRAEL KNOW THEE . . . When the ruthless, blood-thirsty, Assyrian hordes swoop down upon Israel, they shall instinctively call upon the God whom they have despised all these years for help. They will plead, "We know thee!" For centuries now they have "refused to have Jehovah in their knowledge . . . they have been exchanging the truth of God for lies." But they should have sought the Lord when He could be found and have called upon Him when He was near (cf. Isa. 55:6). Now it is too late, for although Israel spread forth its hands and make many prayers, God will hide His eyes and will not listen (cf. Isa. 1:15). They should have thought that a man cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God at the same time (cf. Jas. 4:1-10). We remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven . . ." (Mt. 7:21). It is with the heart that man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10), but he must believe with the heart as well as make confession with the mouth—this Israel did not do. In connection with this verse we remember the candid statement of the apostle John, "And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says I know him but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (I Jn. 2:3-4). Israel cried, My God, we Israel know thee, but Israel was a liar! What an affront to God even today for those self-willed, sensual-living people who flagrantly disregard the commandments of God, cry, in times of

distress, My God, we know thee. They are liars and the truth is not in them. *God is known only through keeping His commandments! There simply is no other way to know God!* It should be very obvious to any intelligent person that God's commandments are found only in the Bible and for this age in the New Testament.

v. 3-4 ISRAEL HATH CAST OFF THAT WHICH IS GOOD . . . THEY HAVE SET UP KINGS, BUT NOT BY ME . . . THEY HAVE MADE THEM IDOLS . . . Israel "refused to have God in their knowledge . . ." she "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). Israel's deliberate rejection of the "good way" is exactly like that of Judah described by Jeremiah (Jer. 6:16-19)! Israel refused to "stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls." They said, "we will not walk in it." Israel has cast off the good way of God for the way of idolatry that is abominable. Very soon now the worthlessness of what she has chosen will be demonstrated. Refusing the way of God in religion they also rejected His counsel in politics. This is what is happening in America, the beautiful! Men in high places have cast off the good . . . they have "set up kings, but not by Jehovah." Men have tried to rule without the counsel of God and since they have ignored all His counsel, He will laugh at their calamity and mock when panic strikes (cf. Prov. 1:24ff). During 253 years, for which the kingdom of Israel lasted, 18 kings reigned over it, out of ten different families and every one of them came to a violent end. Not once was the will of God sought in the rule of any of these kings. Even Jehu conducted his reign contrary to the will of God. The nation of Israel, so abundantly blessed by Jehovah, took of this abundance and fashioned by their own hands, gods after the likeness of pagan idols. The "god of this world, Satan," blinded their eyes with deceit and pride, and Israel loved it to be so. We quote here from the ISBE, Vol. III, pg. 1448:

"The special enticements to idolatry as offered by these various cults were found in their deification of natural forces and their appeal to primitive human desires, esp. the sexual; also through associations produced by intermarriage and through the appeal to patriotism, when the help of some cruel deity was sought in time of war. Baal and Astarte worship, which was esp. attractive, was closely associated with fornication and drunkenness (Am. 2:7-8; I Kings 14:23ff), and also greatly to magic and soothsaying (e.g. Isa. 2:6; 3:2; 8:19).

"Sacrifices to the idols were offered by fire (Hos. 4:13); libations were poured out (Isa. 57:6; Jer. 7:18); the first-fruits of the earth and tithes were presented (Hos. 2:8); tables of food were set before them (Isa. 65:11); the worshippers kissed the idols or threw them kisses (I Kings 19:18; Hos. 13:2; Job 31:27); stretched out their hands in adoration (Isa. 44:20); knelt or prostrated themselves before them and sometimes danced about the altar, gashing themselves with knives (I Ki. 18:26:28)".

The consequences of Israel's idolatry are so certain it seems as if Israel had intended it to be so. She is in a head-long plunge into destruction and does not seem to want it otherwise!

v. 5 . . . HOW LONG WILL IT BE ERE THEY ATTAIN TO INNOCENCY?

The origin of calf-worship among the Semites probably goes back beyond Abraham. The origin of animal worship is hidden in obscurity, but reverence for the bull and the cow is widespread among the most ancient historic cults. The ancient Babylonian culture (from which Abraham's ancestors came) revered the bull as the symbol of their greatest gods, Anu and Sin and Marduk. Hadad-rimmon, an Amorite deity, is pictured standing on the back of a bull. In Phoenicia, northern Syria, Moab, and other places the goddess Ishtar has the cow for her symbol, and when this nude or half-nude goddess appears in Palestine she often stands on a bull or cow. With the Hebrews calf-worship began, of course, with Aaron (cf. Ex. 32). It was perpetuated by Jeroboam I in the northern kingdom for political and economic reasons (I Kings 12:26-33; II Chron. 10:14-15).

In the light of their deep involvements in unholy alliances and unspiritual procedure, a logical question is raised: "How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?" How long are they incapable of purity of walk before the Lord, instead of abominations of idolatry. That is to say, being bent upon backsliding, having invested so heavily of their gold and silver in idols, having defied the infinite God in their politics, having rejected the commands of the Lord, having hardened their hearts against the prophet's message, how long would it require for them to extricate themselves? How long before they would detach themselves from unrighteousness? Israel had become like the thing they loved? (Hos. 9:10). We shall deal with this principle later but here it is evident that Israel has so long loved and imitated its detestable gods it has thoroughly and irrevocably contaminated itself.

v. 6 . . . THE WORKMAN MADE IT, AND IT IS NO GOD; . . . What makes idolatry so abominable in Israel is that she, of all nations, should have known that an idol is no god. Israel had the special revelations of God in word and deed to demonstrate the nothingness of idols. What folly! What vanity! Isaiah satirically speaks of the same phenomena (Isa. 41:21-24; 44:6-22). The great apostle to the Gentiles had to deal with this as he preached to the heathen (cf. Acts 19:26; I Cor. 8:4ff, etc.). Men still deify images, philosophies and things in this twentieth century. What difference if it be a figurine or a philosophy—it is still idolatry. Any image, thing or idea that is worshipped becomes an idol. Even covetousness is idolatry!

v. 7 . . . THEY SOW THE WIND, . . . THEY SHALL REAP THE WHIRLDWIND . . . The Nation of Israel "sowed" their wild oats. They were sowing (putting their trust in) vain things, empty, useless things. This was their crop. Now they were about to reap the harvest of continued sowing of vanities—the harvest would be a whirlwind of destruction and disillusionment. Temporal things cannot satisfy (Eccl. 1:17; 2:12-17; 2:4-11; 6:2-9). Worldly things never bring rewarding harvest days of joy, peace, fulfillment, satisfaction, holiness. But more serious than that, God has so built His universe that when men sin and pervert even those things of the world, innocent enough in themselves, they will reap a whirlwind of destruction, unhappiness, disillusionment, strife and the judgment and eternal wrath of God. When God's physical laws are violated, trouble comes! When God's spiritual laws are violated, trouble comes! Israel was doing both!

God was going to bring some sort of calamity upon Israel to keep her from producing a wheat crop. If by chance a few grains of wheat should reach fruition, the enemy God was about to turn loose upon Israel would consume all that. All those material abundances in which Israel gloried and which she attributed to her false gods were about to be taken away. Perhaps then she would repent.

QUIZ

1. Where are the Hebrew people warned that if they should transgress God's law an enemy, swift as the eagle, would come upon them?
2. Why is "transgressing God's covenant" so serious?
3. How do we know Israel did not know God?
4. Describe calf-worship.
5. What is meant by the phrase "how long will it be ere they attain to innocence?"
6. Why should Israel know that an idol is no god?

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE— THE LORD'S LAMENT

TEXT: 8:8-14

- 8 Israel is swallowed up: now are they among the nations as a vessel wherein none delighteth.
- 9 For they are gone up to Assyria, like a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.
- 10 Yea, though they hire among the nations, now will I gather them; and they begin to be diminished by reason of the burden of the king of princes.
- 11 Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars for sinning, altars have been unto him for sinning.
- 12 I wrote for him the ten thousand things of my law; but they are counted as a strange thing.
- 13 As for the sacrifices of mine offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it; but Jehovah accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins; they shall return to Egypt.
- 14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and builded palaces; and Judah hath multiplied fortified cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the castles thereof.

QUERIES

- a. How is Israel like "a wild ass alone by himself?"
- b. Who is the "king of princes" of verse 10?
- c. When did Israel "return to Egypt?"

PARAPHRASE

Israel is about to be completely engulfed and conquered by its enemies. When her enemies have exploited her they will despise her as one despises a worn-out and useless pot. This is about to come to Israel because she behaved like a stubborn mule in heat. In spite of all God's warnings to the contrary, she went to Assyria like a prostitute, trying to buy love from Assyria. But all these attempts at conciliation with her enemies are in vain for I, saith Jehovah, will deliver her into captivity where she shall begin to lose her national identity by reason of the exile brought about by the great Assyrian king who boasts, Are not all my princes kings! And because Ephraim has built many altars so she has multiplied her sins. And even though

I revealed to Israel myriads of commandments, a full, complete and holy law, she acted as though they did not concern her at all. As for all the sacrifices they make, they only make them because they are interested in the part of the sacrifices they eat for themselves. Thus their sacrifices, although they are many, are meaningless to Jehovah. God is cognizant of the iniquity of Israel and He will visit them with judgment for their sins. They shall return to bondage and enslavement by their enemies. Israel has misplaced his Maker and sought satisfaction rather in building spacious buildings. Even Judah has done the same and seeks security in her well-fortified cities. But I, saith Jehovah, will bring My judgment upon these nations and all these material things in which they have trusted shall be utterly destroyed.

SUMMARY

Israel has forgotten its Maker. God is going to deliver them into the hand of their enemies for obliteration as a nation.

COMMENT

v. 8-9 ISRAEL IS SWALLOWED UP . . . GONE TO ASSYRIA . . . HATH HIRED LOVERS . . . As G. Campbell Morgan says, this is a chapter of judgment. Hosea gives the reasons for the judgment which he is declaring to be imminent in five blasts upon the trumpet. First, transgression and trespass; second, false kings and princes set up to rule without consulting God; third, idolatry, the calf of Samaria set up as a center of worship; fourth, the folly of seeking safety in alliance with Assyria; fifth, false altars, and sin as the result of them. We have dealt with the first three reasons for judgment in Hosea 8:1-7. In this section we deal with the last two reasons. One notices that the reasons are stated in a climactic manner or in a crescendo—the last one being the reason of which all the others are symptoms—Israel hath forgotten her Maker.

In verses 8-9 we deal with the fourth reason for judgment—foolish alliances with Assyria. As a result of such "mixing" of God's people with ambitious heathen politicians, Israel was, for all practical purposes, "swallowed up" as a nation, losing its identity, never again to enjoy political identity. It would be well to digress here into the history of the last few years of Israel's national identity during which Hosea declared so pointedly and forcefully the impending destruction. We gratefully acknowledge using at length the work of Dr. Charles Pfeiffer, "The Divided Kingdom," chapter 7, pages 66-74, pub. Baker Book House.

After the death of Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom entered a period of decline from which she could not save herself. Instability in Israel combined with the growing strength in Assyria spelled chaos and disaster for the people of the Northern Kingdom. Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam II, reigned but six months before he was assassinated by Shallum. After a reign of but one month, Shallum was murdered by Menahem (ca. 742 B.C.). Menahem reigned for ten years in Samaria, and is remembered for his atrocities (cf. II Kings 15:16).

During the reign of Menahem, a new threat came from the east in the person of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C. who adopted a new policy in dealing with conquered peoples. Earlier conquerors would strike, carry off slaves and booty, and return home, leaving the conquered territory to care for itself as long as the tribute was paid faithfully. Tiglath-pileser began the policy of incorporating conquered territory into his empire. Syria, Babylonia, and Anatolia were divided into provinces directly responsible to Nineveh.

Tiglath-pileser also inaugurated the policy of transporting rebellious peoples to parts of his empire where they would be powerless to unite against him. Peoples were exiled from their homelands and other exiles were brought in to the evacuated territory. In this way continuity between old and new settlers would be broken, and there would be no possibility of the older population returning to their homeland. As a result of this policy Israel, which was taken into exile by the Assyrians, lost its identity, whereas Judah, which survived until Babylonian times, could and did return to Jerusalem and thereby maintain its identity. The shifting of populations hastened the spread of Aramaic as a *lingua franca*, replacing the local tongues of the various peoples of the empire.

When Tiglath-pileser came to the throne he faced challenges to his power from Babylonia to the south, and Urartu (Armenia) to the north. He put down revolts in these areas, enforced Assyrian control, and even extended his rule as far as the region of Mt. Demavend, south of the Caspian Sea. Beginning in 743 B.C. Tiglath-pileser conducted campaigns in Syria where he was opposed by a coalition of states headed by "Azriau of Yaudi," a name which may be translated "Azariah of Judah." Scholars have debated whether this Azriau of Yaudi could be the Biblical Azariah, or Uzziah who ruled Judah from 783 to 742 B.C. If so, we would assume that Azariah/Uzziah

was the outstanding leader of the Syria-Palestine area following the death of Jeroboam II of Israel (*ca.* 746 B.C.). Azariah/Uzziah spent his last years as a leper, with his son Jotham functioning as king. If Azriau of Yaudi was Azariah/Uzziah, then he remained the power behind the throne during the period of his leprosy, and he became the center of opposition to the Assyrians in their campaign of 743-742 B.C. Presumably Azariah/Uzziah died soon after the campaign. No further mention is made of him in the Assyrian annals.

Cyrus Gordon argues that Azriau was not the Judean king, but a native north Syrian who ruled a city state in the area named Yaudi, or Samal. Eduard Meyer suggested that Azriau was an Israelite adventurer who had journeyed northward and established himself among the Aramean states of that region.

By Tiglath-pileser's time the Assyrians had developed siege warfare into an effective weapon. Battering rams and other devices for breaching strong city walls struck terror into the people of western Asia. By 738 B.C. Tiglath-pileser was collecting tribute from Asia Minor, Syria, the Phoenician cities, an Arab queen named Zabibe, Rezin of Damascus, and Menahem of Israel. Menahem gave Tiglath-pileser (Biblical Pul) "a thousand talents of silver that he might help him to confirm his royal power" (II Kings 15:19). While Menahem had little choice, the Biblical text implies that he felt that prompt payment of tribute might cause Assyrian king to look favorably on his kingdom over Israel.

Menahem's willingness to court Assyrian favor to strengthen his hold upon the throne was bitterly resented in Israel. When his son Pekahiah took the throne (738/737 B.C.), opposition flared into the open. One of his officers, Pekah ben Remaliah, assassinated Pekahiah and seized the throne. Pekah had the help of a company of Gileadites (II Kings 15:25) who shared his anti-Assyrian sympathies. He may also have had the tacit support of Rezin, king of Damascus, and certain of the Philistine leaders who resented the pro-Assyrian policies of Menahem and Pekahiah. In the event of trouble with Assyria, they doubtless hoped for Egyptian help.

As soon as Pekah was on the throne of Israel he revealed his anti-Assyrian bias. Judah, now ruled by Jotham, the son of Azariah/Uzziah, chose to follow an independent policy and refused to join Pekah and Rezin in their opposition to Assyria.

A showdown came under Jotham's son, Ahaz, when Rezin and Pekah attacked Jerusalem, determined to remove Ahaz from his throne and install a ruler of their choice, Ben Tabeel (Isa. 7:1-9). At the height of the crisis, Isaiah tried to encourage Ahaz with the assurance that God would not allow the Davidic line to be obliterated, and that the kingdoms ruled by Rezin and Pekah would quickly fall to Assyria (Isa. 7:10-17). Indeed, Assyria was the rod of God's anger (Isa. 10:5) to punish Israel because of her idolatry.

While Pekah and Rezin were besieging Jerusalem, other parts of Judah were exposed to the enemy. Uzziah had fortified the port of Elath (Ezion-geber) on the Gulf of Aqabah, but now the Edomites drove out the Israelites and occupied the port city. The traditional (Massoretic) text of II Kings 16:6 states that the Arameans (A.V. "Syria") took Elath, but many scholars, including the translators of the R.S.V., think that "Aram" was misread for "Edom" by copyists of ancient manuscripts. The two words are almost identical in Hebrew. It is clear, from II Chronicles 28:17, that Edomites invaded Judah during the reign of Ahaz. Philistines also took advantage of Judean weakness by invading Judah from the west (II Chron. 28:18). Thus Ahaz was confronted with invasions of Arameans and Israelites from the north, Philistines from the west, and Edomites from the south.

Although Isaiah had counseled faith in God, Ahaz chose a more mundane way of resolving his problems. He sent tribute to the Assyrian king, and asked Tiglath-pileser to come to his aid (II Kings 16:7, 8). While this appeared to be the solution to an immediate problem, it had disastrous results. Tiglath-pileser probably would have come without Ahaz' appeal, but the appeal gave the invasion a type of legitimacy it did not deserve.

Both the Bible and Tiglath-pileser's inscriptions report the events that followed. *The Assyrian Annals* state:

[As for Menahem I] overwhelmed him [like a snowstorm] and he . . . fled like a bird, alone, [and bowed to my feet (?)]. I returned him to his place [and imposed tribute upon him, to wit:] gold, silver, linen garments with multicolor trimmings, great . . . I received from him. Israel (lit. "Omri-land") . . . all its inhabitants [and] their possessions I led to Assyria. They overthrew their king, Pekah and I placed Hoshea as king over them. I received from them ten talents of gold, and thousand talents of silver as their tribute and brought them to Assyria.

Tiglath-pileser first moved down the seacoast (734 B.C.). He passed through Israelite territory and punished the Philistine cities, particularly Gaza, for their part in resisting Assyrian encroachments. Tiglath-pileser then moved southward and established a base at Wadi el- 'Arish ("The River of Egypt") the natural boundary between Egypt and Palestine. This was his means of isolating Egypt and keeping Egyptian arms out of the conflict in Palestine.

The next year (733 B.C.) the Assyrians were again in Israel. Galilee and Transjordan were overrun and large segments of their populations were deported (II Kings 15:29). Megiddo was destroyed and rebuilt as a provincial capital. G. Ernest Wright has described the palace-fort which served as the headquarters of the Assyrian commandant:

It was some 220 feet long and at least 157½ feet wide, though part of its eastern side may long since have tumbled down the side of the hill. The stone walls of the fort were very thick, varying from 6½ to 8¼ feet wide. The plan suggests a large interior courtyard, surrounded on at least three sides by rooms.

The Assyrians divided the occupied territory of Israel into three provinces. Transjordan comprised the province of Gilead. The province of Megiddo included Galilee, and Dor served as headquarters for Assyrian control of the coastal plain.

Doubtless at the instigation of the pro-Assyrian members of the court of Israel, or even of Tiglath-pileser himself, an Israelite named Hoshea ben Elah (II Kings 15:30) murdered Pekah. Hosea became a vassal of Tiglath-pileser.

In 732 B.C. Tiglath-pileser took Damascus and summoned Ahaz and other vassal princes to pay homage to him. It was on this occasion that an altar in Damascus so impressed Ahaz that he had a large model of it made and sent to Uriah, the High Priest in Jerusalem, with instructions to have a replica of it made and placed in the Temple court (II Kings 16:10-16).

Tiglath-pileser ravaged the city of Damascus. He executed Rezin and deported much of its population. The territory of the Aramaic kingdom of Damascus was divided into four Assyrian provinces.

Shortly after Shalmaneser V succeeded his father Tiglath-pileser as king of Assyria, Hoshea of Israel withheld tribute and sought an alliance with Egypt. Hoshea made an alliance

with So (II Kings 17:14), Egyptians Sib'e, known from Assyrian texts as a *virtan* or commander-in-chief serving one of the rival rulers of Egypt. This was a fatal mistake for Hoshea, for Egypt was in no position to offer effective aid against Assyria. In 724 B.C. Hoshea appeared before Shalmaneser, still hoping to come to terms. The Assyrians were convinced that they could not trust Hoshea, so they took him prisoner and occupied the land of Israel except for the city of Samaria which withstood seige for two more years.

While the siege of Samaria was in progress, Shalmaneser died. His successor, Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) has left records of the fall of Samaria. Many of the Israelites were deported to Upper Mesopotamia and Media and lost their identity there. It is this fact that has given rise to the idea that there are "lost tribes" which either have turned up in the past or will turn up at some future day. As a matter of fact many of the people of Israel lost their national identity through assimilation during the centuries following their deportation. Others made their way southward to Judah, and remnants of them appear among the later Jews.

Samaria was organized into an Assyrian province under an Assyrian governor. Sargon's inscriptions tell us of revolts that broke out in Hamath, Gaza, and other provinces, including Damascus and Samaria, but the Assyrians were in firm control and insurrection was quickly put down. In succeeding years Samaria was repopulated in accord with Assyrian policy of transplanting peoples: "And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sephar-vaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities" (II Kings 17:24).

From the standpoint of orthodox Jewish thought these people had an eclectic faith: "So they feared the Lord but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away" (II Kings 17:33). They brought their local cults with them to Samaria, but when settled there they sought to learn "the law of the god of the land" (II Kings 17:27). The Assyrians permitted a priest to teach the Yahwistic faith of Israel, although Israel disowned them (II Kings 17:34-41). Jesus however, dared to

speak of "The Good Samaritan," and to identify himself as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman. A few hundred Samaritans survive to this day.

For additional information on the political and religious circumstances of the northern kingdom, Israel, at this time, see our Special Study five, pages 59 to 73.

Israel, "the apple of God's eye" (cf. Deut. 32:10; Psa. 17:8; Songs 2:3; Zech 2:8), will become a despised, worn out, cast off pot (vessel). Her pitiful condition would hardly arouse any envy or greed on the part of the nations surrounding her after God finishes His judgment upon her.

One of the main reasons for the impending downfall is her flirtation with Assyria. Instead of trusting in Jehovah, Israel felt more secure in making political and military alliances with Assyria. Although it involved her in virtual "satellite" relationship at first and eventually in total captivity and exile, she ran to Assyria and actually paid tribute to the heathen nation in order to obtain its favor. She was like a stubborn, wild ass in heat. She was like a prostitute who sells her favors for "love" or security. She hired Assyria to "love" her! But hired lovers soon grow cold in their affections. And it was only a short time until Assyria, Israel's hired lover, turned on her and became an unmerciful enemy.

v. 10 . . . AMONG THE NATIONS, NOW WILL I GATHER THEM . . . AND THEY BEGIN TO BE DIMINISHED . . . Appeasing one's enemies at the sacrifice of truth and righteousness has never worked and it never will because it violates eternal, moral principles of God which sustain and protect the destinies of men and nations. And though Israel should pay political "blackmail" she would still lose her national identity. Eventually, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom were scattered all over the face of the earth "among the nations" and remain so to this day! It all began when Assyria rose to world dominance, when the king of Assyria called himself "king of princes" (cf. Isa. 10:5ff).

v. 11 . . . EPHRAIM . . . MULTIPLIED ALTARS FOR SINNING . . . God had decreed that there was to be only *one* altar and that was at Jerusalem. Only there would He accept sacrifices; only there were His priests to officiate. So then, as many altars as Israel reared (at Dan and Bethel and other centers also), so often did they repeat their sin. That God considered their altars and their renegade priesthood a sin, one need only refer to I Kings 12:30; 13:33-34. The only thing that could ever result from worshipping at these altars was sin against God!

v. 12-13 I WROTE FOR HIM THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS OF MY LAW . . . THEY SACRIFICE FLESH AND EAT IT . . . THEY SHALL RETURN TO EGYPT . . . Their sin could not be excused on the grounds of ignorance. God had revealed His truth to them over and over again, in divers portions and divers manners (Heb. 1:1). By Moses, by the priests, by the kings, by the prophets, day after day, year after year they were instructed in the law (ten thousand times). Furthermore the law was extensive enough to cover every behavior of life, every thought, deed and motive. But it was "counted as a strange thing." The law to Israel was foreign, strange, alien and of no concern. In just what way it was "strange we do not know. Perhaps Israel felt the true Mosaic law was anachronistic, that is, out of date—"old fashioned." Good enough for their forefathers who lived rather primitive lives, but outdated for contemporary Israel. This is as modern as the twentieth century! Perhaps Israel felt the Mosaic law politically inexpedient. After all, a change in worship and priesthood was Jeroboam's plan to instill national pride in the northern kingdom's citizens. Perhaps Israel just didn't want to keep the law because it was too binding and would not suit their materialistic greed. This is indicated by verse 13 of our text. The Israelites brought their sacrifices regularly to the places of worship but they did it selfishly, in a mood of indulgence, multiplying the sacrifices in order to multiply indulgences. But God is not dead, neither is He asleep, nor does He forget. God records their deeds of iniquity and they must receive His payment for their sins. God prepares to visit upon them the moral consequences of their rebellion against justice and truth and righteousness. They shall return to bondage (represented symbolically by Egypt) and slavery in the hands of an ungodly, cruel, pagan nation. There is an interesting allegory of the "foundling child" in Ezekiel 16 concerning God's rescue of Israel and Judah from Egypt in the days of Moses and His sustenance of them and their unfaithfulness to Him—read it!

v. 14 ISRAEL HATH FORGOTTEN HIS MAKER, AND BUILDED PALACES . . . This is the one sickness for which all the others are mere symptoms. But had these people really forgotten God in the usual sense of the word? By no means! Men cannot forget God. They can deny Him, but in so doing they are still remembering Him! Men do not forget God intellectually; morally, yes, but intellectually, no! How then had Israel forgotten God? The Hebrew word used for "forgotten" means literally, "mis-laid" and perhaps this will help us understand their moral predicament. Everyone knows what it is to mislay something.

You have not forgotten it, but you have mislaid it. This is the idea. The Hebrew word is *shakakh* and is used in Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:10; 8:11; 9:1, 4, 7. Taking all these passages together we learn that the word means "personal neglect, self-satisfaction that comes from such neglect and the self-righteousness which issues from remembering only self." It also stems from that independence which causes us to say that because of our righteousness and uprightness of heart God has blessed us, and has given us these things; and so God is put out of sight, *mislaid*.

How do men come to *mislaid* God? First, they give an intellectual assent to the fact of His existence without seeing to it that their conduct corresponds with their assent. God forgotten in this sense, mislaid, lost as an active power, touching life, conditioning it, driving it, building it up! Second, after God is mislaid, man begins to substitute, to fill the vacuum thus created in his life by building. Hosea says Israel builded palaces—the word translated literally would be "spacious buildings." The passion of the nation came to be to build big things. How up-to-date the prophet is! Man fills the vacuum in his life today by just such action. The passion for bigness is a symptom of capacity for the eternal, for God; and when men have mislaid God, then they try and build big things without God. Today we are building big government, big military, big industry, bigger homes, bigger automobiles, bigger United Nations, bigger everything and it is all unconsciously symptomatic of a mental and spiritual vacuum created by "forgetting God!"

Judah's forgotten God was replaced by "fortified cities." Here was a quest for security, an attempt to secure safety. The passion for safety is a symptom of the sense of peril! What do we all want? Security. Security against what? The lack of God, and the hopelessness that results from it. Our hopeless hippies carry signs today bearing the statements of hopeless philosophers of a generation ago, like, "There is no cure for birth or death save to enjoy the interval—Santayana . . ." Hosea's message is as relevant as our contemporary scene. We have mislaid God, and now we are building skyscrapers ("spacious buildings") and enormous defense mechanisms ("fortified cities"). These things would not be so wrong in themselves if God were central in the picture. Humanity erases God from the picture and then gropes after the spacious and fights for the secure, and never makes anything so big but that the sky laughs at it; and never secures itself for one five minutes from a possible outbreak of devastation or anarchy.

ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE — LORD'S LAMENT 8:14

We cannot get away from God. We have mislaid Him. He is at our elbow. We may be oblivious of Him, we may pretend to be doing without Him, but all the while we are living and moving and having our being in Him. In his hand our breath is. And according to our relationship to Him, He will bless or blast. If we mislay God, we can run up our sky-scrapers, we can multiply our battleships; but we cannot escape the slow but sure judgment of God.

QUIZ

1. Recite as completely as you can the history of Israel from Jeroboam I to the captivity of Israel.
2. What does Hosea mean, "Israel hath hired lovers?"
3. What is the meaning of "ten thousand things of my law?"
4. In what way does the prophet use "Egypt" to mean the captivities?
5. What does the word "forgotten" mean in verse 14?
6. How did Israel seek to fill the vacuum of a forgotten God? Judah?

LOVE REBUKING 9:1—13:16

REPROVING—
ISRAEL FORSOOK GOD

TEXT: 9:1-9

- 1 Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, like the peoples; for thou hast played the harlot, departing from thy God; thou hast loved hire upon every grain-floor.
- 2 The threshing-floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail her.
- 3 They shall not dwell in Jehovah's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria.
- 4 They shall not pour out wine-offerings to Jehovah, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted; for their bread shall be for their appetite; it shall not come into the house of Jehovah.
- 5 What will ye do in the day of solemn assembly, and in the day of the feast of Jehovah?
- 6 For, lo, they are gone away from destruction; yet Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them; their pleasant things of silver, nettles shall possess them; thorns shall be in their tents.

- 7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it; the prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad, for the abundance of thine iniquity, and because the enmity is great.
- 8 Ephraim was a watchman with my God: as for the prophet, a fowler's snare is in all his ways, and enmity in the house of his God.
9. They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

QUERIES

- a. How will "Ephraim" be in Egypt and Assyria at the same time?
- b. What is the "bread of mourners?"
- c. What are "the days of visitation?"

PARAPHRASE

Do not think this is a time for rejoicing, Israel, just because you have had a few seasons of prosperity. You have been as unfaithful to your God as an adulterous woman is to her husband by attributing your prosperity to idols and worshipping them. The small harvests of grain, oil and wine you now enjoy are very temporary. They shall soon come to a complete end. You will be taken from God's land, Ephraim, into a land of bondage like Egypt was to your ancestors. Your land of bondage will be Assyria and you will be so subservient and poor you will have to eat food that is unlawful—unclean—because there will be no Temple there and no opportunity to sanctify yourselves and your harvests to the Lord as Moses required. Yea, you will not be able to present acceptable offerings to Jehovah because He can be worshipped only at the Temple. Even your daily food, because you are not able in Assyria to sanctify your harvests by the offering of the first fruits, will be like "bread of mourners" or unclean to you. And what will you do about observing your great feast days when you cannot go to the house of Jehovah? Behold, Israel is done for! She has fallen into destruction. Very soon now her people will be buried in a foreign land where they have been taken captive. Her own land will be so desolate weeds will grow up in its deserted houses. Israel is about to receive payment for her sin. Israel is about to learn that she was, in listening to false prophets, following fools and demon-spirit possessed men. Your multiplied iniquities and rebellious hearts led you to reject God's prophets and turn to false prophets—now God is going to give you the consequences of your evil desires. Israel fancies himself capable of knowing God's revelation without trusting God's appointed prophets. The false

prophets Israel did trust in became a trap to her in all her ways. Israel has declared war on God and His prophets in her renegade temples. Israel has become as grossly corrupt as the men of Gibeah who, in the days of the Judges, were sex perverts. God practically exterminated the tribe of Benjamin as a result of this and He will soon visit upon Israel's wantonness a like perfect wrath.

SUMMARY

Israel is warned not to feel so secure in a few seasons of material prosperity. Because Israel had been unfaithful to her God she would be carried away into bondage in Assyria where she would be unable to make acceptable approach to God.

COMMENT

v. 1-3 REJOICE NOT, O ISRAEL . . . THE NEW WINE SHALL FAIL . . . THEY SHALL EAT UNCLEAN FOOD IN ASSYRIA . . . It seems that Israel was enjoying certain periods of harvest blatantly supposing them to be signs that all was well and secure in spite of their iniquitous excesses. Israel also attributed its agricultural prosperity to the idols it had appropriated from its heathen neighbors. Israel had played the harlot in its unfaithfulness to Jehovah, "regarding the harvest-blessing upon its threshing-floors as gifts . . . from the Baals, for which it served them with still greater zeal." While the "harlotry" spoken of in verse 1 refers primarily to spiritual adultery (cf. ch. 2:5, 8; 4:12), it is still a fact that the harvest festivals were also occasions for boisterous festivities in honor of the fertility deities; and they committed at the threshing floors and wine presses the shameful immoralities against which Hosea and Amos so vehemently protest (cf. ch. 4:13-14).

Their good fortune with their crops was only temporary, however, for it would all soon be gone and God was about to withdraw His beneficence.

In addition to imminent crop failure, their exile was so near as to be spoken of by Hosea in the perfect tense (as if it had already happened). Israel has made itself an unwelcome guest in the land of Jehovah. Of course, Israel did not consider it Jehovah's land and herself a guest. Very few nations do! Yet it is still true that God owns the heavens and the earth and all the cattle on a thousand hills (cf. Psa. 24:1-2; 50:10-15; Isa. 66:1-2), and men and nations are merely stewards of His grace. They shall give an account! Israel would be plucked from this land given to her ancestors who came from Egyptian slavery, and cast into a bondage like those of old except that the new exile

would be in Assyria. Egypt is not to be taken literally here. Verse 3 is a perfect example of Hebrew poetic parallelism. Egypt becomes a figurative picture of what the Assyrian exile will be like. All food which was not sanctified to the Lord by the presentation of the first fruits, was unclean, unlawful food to Israel (Ex. 22:29; 23:19; 34:22, 26; Lev. 23:10-12, 15-17). In heathen lands it would be impossible for Israel to come to the Temple of Jehovah (which could lawfully be located only in Jerusalem) and sanctify her harvests. In addition to this they might be forced (cf. Dan. 1:5, 8ff) to partake of food that would be strictly prohibited by the Mosaic law. The context here seems to indicate the former as the primary consideration.

v. 4 . . . THEIR SACRIFICES SHALL BE UNTO THEM AS THE BREAD OF MOURNERS . . . The "bread of mourners" was bread that had been in a house where a dead body had lain. Because the dead defiled a house for seven days and all that was in the house—bread thus defiled was called "bread of mourners." Any sacrifice they might attempt to make in Assyria to Jehovah would be unclean or defiled (like mourner's bread) because there was no place to offer sacrifices acceptable to God but Jerusalem and the Temple. They would have to eat bread for the support of life—"for their appetite"—but since they could not sanctify the first fruits of the harvest, it too would be unclean. Hosea is trying to emphasize here the awesome, terrifying nature of Israel's spiritual destruction when God withdraws His gracious presence. Israel will be cut off from God. God will not hear her—she will be dead.

v. 5 WHAT WILL YE DO IN THE . . . DAY OF THE FEAST OF JEHOVAH? Israel will not be able to worship God, give thanks to Him and call upon Him for forgiveness and blessing in the great annual feast-days while in captivity. They would be deprived of all their ancestors had counted valuable, beautiful, holy and needful. All the religious, national, social, economic, cultural heritage of Judaism centered around its great feasts. Their extreme importance may be seen in the fact that the Jews have attempted to perpetuate these feasts in the centuries following the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. by the Romans. No Jew worships on any holy day today as God has directed for the simple reason there is no temple in Jerusalem to which they may go. To observe the Passover, or Day of Atonement, in New York City is contrary to the Torah (O.T. Law). And Israel, in captivity to Assyria, would be bereft of all opportunity to approach God in a way acceptable to Him.

v. 6 . . . EGYPT SHALL GATHER THEM UP, MEMPHIS SHALL BURY THEM . . . THORNS SHALL BE IN THEIR TENTS . . . Egypt will not be

the actual place of the captivity of Israel (cf. v. 3) nor will they literally die and be buried in Memphis. These are symbols of bondage, slavery and death. These are places where their ancestors had been in bondage centuries ago. The prophet is simply making his prediction of their future captivity in Assyria as vivid and real as he can by referring to a past experience of the nation. Many thousands of the people of Israel were buried in Assyria, never to see their homeland again. A few Israelites, of a generation or two later than Hosea's, returned from captivity, (cf. comments on 8:8-9).

Their land would be desolate. Their "spacious dwellings" (cf. 8:13-14), the objects of their affections, their precious treasures would all be looted by an enemy or left behind to be overgrown with weeds and thorns—deserted. Things for which they had devoted so much of their time and energy would be wrested from them (cf. Matt. 6:19-21; Lk. 12:15-21).

v. 7 THE DAYS OF VISITATION ARE COME . . . ISRAEL SHALL KNOW IT . . . THE PROPHET IS A FOOL . . . FOR THE ABUNDANCE OF THINE INIQUITY . . . "Visit" means to come with a special purpose, either of blessing or punishment. God "visits" men to bless (Gen. 50:24; Psa. 106:4; Zeph. 2:7; Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; Acts 15:14). God also "visits" men to judge and punish them (cf. Lev. 18:25; Psa. 59:5; Isa. 10:3; 23:17; Jer. 10:15; 51:18; Micah 7:4). Woe to that person or nation who does not recognize God's "visit" of blessing (cf. Lk. 19:44; I Pet. 2:12), for they shall soon receive His "visit" of punishment! Whenever a prophet, preacher or teacher of God's Word comes to a person or community or nation with a message from God's Word, he is God's ambassador, and God has visited that person or nation. Woe to those who are indifferent and pay no heed to God's "visitors"—woe to those who reject and persecute God's visitors!

Just which prophet is called a fool and who is doing the calling is a matter debated by the commentators. We prefer the interpretation that the "prophet" is the false prophet who prophesies lies. When God "visits" His judgment of justice and truth upon Israel then she will recognize and know that the prophets she had been following who were promising her peace when there was no peace, are fools (cf. Ezek. 13:10ff; Jer. 6:14; 8:11; Micah 3:5). The "man that hath the spirit" and "is mad" is the same demon possessed false prophet as is described in Micah 2:11 who "utters wind and lies." False prophets usually were under the influence of demoniacal power and were inspired by a "lying spirit" (cf. I Kings 22:22). It is also undoubtedly true that the wicked people of Israel were, at this time, calling God's true prophets,

"fool" (cf. Amos 7:10-17). The prophets were despised, slandered, called "mad," hunted, tortured, slain (cf. II Kings 9:11; Jer. 29:26; Heb. 11:32ff). But what men call "foolish" and what God calls "foolish" are usually exactly opposite (cf. I Cor. 1:18—2:16)!

Israel's punishment and judgment is about to come because of her "abundant" iniquity and great enmity. Israel's terrible sin was that she had "mis-laid" God (cf. 8:14). Israel's abundant iniquity was in being indifferent to the many "visits" of blessing Jehovah had made to her. Her great enmity against God was manifest in her enmity against God's ambassadors, the prophets. One is reminded of the great enmity of the Jews of a later generation as they expressed it in killing the Son of God (cf. Matt. 21:33-46; Mk. 12:1-12; Lk. 29:9-19). Israel demonstrated its *hate for God* by its hate for the prophets of God! What of those men and nations today who have hated and killed Christian preachers and missionaries—how great is their hate for God!

v. 8 EPHRAIM WAS A WATCHMAN WITH MY GOD: AS FOR THE PROPHET, A FOWLER'S SNARE IS IN ALL HIS WAYS, AND ENMITY IN THE HOUSE OF HIS GOD. Keil translates the first phrase of verse 8, "A spy is Ephraim with my God." The meaning Hosea intended, according to Keil and Lange, is that "Israel searches out divine revelations on her own along with the God of Hosea." In other words, Israel does not depend on Hosea to be declaring to her the revelation of God, but she trusts in her own so-called prophets (who were not commissioned by God). Ephraim (Israel) believed the revelations of her false prophets to be equal with, if not superior to, the revelations of Hosea. But, her prophets were leading her into the snare (trap) of the devil (pride). Israel's prophets were leading her into the devil's camp which was at war (enmity) with God. By insisting to the people that their message was right and that Israel should set up a temple of her own and worship a golden calf, they were leading the people to join with Satan and the hosts of wicked demons in war on God!

v. 9 THEY HAVE DEEPLY CORRUPTED THEMSELVES, AS IN THE DAYS OF GIBEAH . . . Israel has fallen to the depths of sin. Nothing is sacred to her anymore—God's Word, human life—nothing. They are as corrupt as those despicable, beastly men of Gibeah who, when they could not take the Levite man and molest him sexually, took the Levite's concubine, all of them, raped and ravaged her and left her for dead on the doorstep (cf. Judges chap. 19-20). As a result of the sins of the men of Gibeah, the tribe of Benjamin was almost completely exterminated. The Lord has laid the sins of Israel to their charge. What

they have sown, they will reap. The Lord will pay them "in full" for their evil works.

QUIZ

1. Why did Hosea tell Israel to cease her rejoicing?
2. Why was the land of Israel called "Jehovah's land?"
3. Did Israel go into captivity to Egypt? Why?
4. Why were the offerings and sacrifices of Israel not pleasing to Jehovah when they were in captivity?
5. How would Israel's daily food in Assyria become unclean?
6. What is Hosea trying to emphasize by showing their condition in captivity?
7. How does God "visit" men? Name two ways.

REPROVING— ISRAEL FOLLOWED BAAL

TEXT: 9:10-17

- 10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-figs in the fig-tree at its first season: but they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated unto the shameful thing, and become abominable like that which they loved.
- 11 As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird: there shall be no birth, and none with child, and no conception.
- 12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, so that not a man shall be left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!
- 13 Ephraim, like as I have seen Type, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring out his children to the slayer.
- 14 Give them, O Jehovah: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.
- 15 All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them: because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house; I will love them no more; all their princes are revolvers.
- 16 Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit; yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay the beloved fruit of their womb.
- 17 My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

QUERIES

- a. What does Hosea portray by the figure "grapes in the wilderness?"
- b. Does Hosea mean in v. 11 that not a single child would ever again be born to a woman of Israel?
- c. Why did Hosea say (v. 15) that "all their wickedness is in Gilgal?"

PARAPHRASE

Oh Israel, how well I remember those first delightful days when I found you so helpless and dependent upon Me. Your love was as refreshing to Me as juicy grapes would be to a thirsty desert traveler or as satisfying as the early fruit on the fig-tree. But then you deserted Me for Baal, the god of Peor, and so thoroughly devoted yourselves to this shameful thing you became as foul and abominable as it was. Ephraim, your glorious fruitfulness will fly away like a bird. Whereas you previously produced many bright and prosperous offspring, your licentious worship of luxury will be punished by childlessness and destruction of any youths who might be born through wars, famine and pestilence. I chose Ephraim to be like Tyre, planted in a fertile, pleasant place, to grow to become a strong, rich and powerful nation. But now, for Ephraim's apostasy, I will give it up to desolation and its sons to death by the sword. Yes, indeed, give them, Oh Lord—give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that cannot nourish. Gilgal is the major source of all their wickedness, and I hate what goes on there. Because of their wickedness I will expel them from the fellowship of covenant relationship with Me. My love and blessings I withdraw from them. All their governing-men are government-destroyers! Israel is doomed. Her roots are dried up and she can no longer furnish nourishment to the tree. She shall bear no more fruit. Even if they bear children, I will cause these beloved children to die. My God will destroy the people of Israel because they will not listen or obey. They will be homeless vagabonds wandering among the nations.

SUMMARY

Israel, so pleasing to God when He delivered her from Egypt, became as abominable as the licentious, pagan religions she adopted. God will dispossess her and make her to become a vagabond people.

COMMENT

v. 10 I FOUND ISRAEL LIKE GRAPES IN THE WILDERNESS . . . BUT THEY CAME TO BAAL-PEOR . . . AND BECAME ABOMINABLE LIKE THAT WHICH THEY LOVED . . . Israel's faith and obedience and love to Jehovah

when He first chose them while they were still in Egypt was refreshing to God. Their love to Him was as pleasing as juicy grapes or fresh figs would be to a tired, thirsty, hungry traveler in the desert. Other prophets speak of God's pleasure with early Israel (cf. Ex. 19:8; 24:3-7; Deut. 5:27-29; Jer. 2:2-3).

But, alas, what a change came over this people! They allowed themselves to be deceived by sin (Heb. 3:12-14). They had devoted themselves, heart and soul to Jehovah at Horeb; but the allurements of sensuality and materialism had led them to devote themselves heart and soul to Baalism (for a description of Baal worship see our comments on Hosea 2:8, 13, 17; and 4:12-13). The lasciviousness and abominable excesses that accompanied Baalism must have been great to deserve the extreme treatment sanctioned by God in Numbers 25:1-18. Israel kept flirting with Baalism from then on (cf. Judges 2:11; I Ki. 16:31; II Ki. 10:19; 21:3; Jer. 2:8; 19:5; 23:13, 27).

When people "consecrate" themselves to any person, thing or idea, it is a moral law that "they become like that which they love." One cannot *love* without imitating (cf. Eph. 5:1-2 in RSV; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 3:1-13; Heb. 12:1-8; I Pet. 2:21; I Jn. 3:1-24; II Cor. 3:18). When men worship idols and animals, they behave like dumb images and sensual animals (cf. Rom. 1:18ff). It is undeniably correct that Adolph Hitler's infatuation with and adoration of Friedrich Nietzsche's evolutionary philosophy transformed the "little corporal" into the insane, savage executioner of Europe. Karl Marx's religion of materialism and humanism has given the world the Kremlin criminals and the Peking pirates. As one ancient has put it, "The object which the will desires and loves, transfuses its own goodness or badness into it" (cf. Psa. 115:4-8). Man, without God, makes a god in his own image and likeness, the essence and concentration of his own bad passions, and then conforms himself to the likeness of what was most evil in himself. Thus the heathen made gods of lust, cruelty, thirst for war. Then, fooling themselves, they deliberately forgot that these gods were the work of their own hands, the conception of their own minds, and fearfully and passionately imitated and obeyed them; Augustine wrote, ". . . what a man's love is, that he is . . . Naught else maketh good or evil actions, save good affections." Love has a transforming power over the soul, which the intellect has not. Tell me what a man loves with all his heart and I will tell you about the man. There is a Jewish proverb which says, "He who serveth an abomination is himself an abomination." One of the early church fathers wrote, "The intellect brings home to the soul the knowledge on which it worketh, impresses it on itself, incorporates it with itself. Love is an impulse whereby he

who loves is borne forth towards that which he loves, is united with it, and is transformed into it."

v. 11 AS FOR EPHRAIM, THEIR GLORY SHALL FLY AWAY LIKE A BIRD . . . Israel had gloried in her continued existence when empire after empire, race after race, nation after nation had long since disappeared. God had protected, sustained and increased Israel's economy, her territory and, most important of all, her youth. Israel was proud of all this and boasted that all this was due to her progressive, liberal attitude. She probably attributed all her prosperity, like America today, to her own human goodness and intelligence in breaking away from all the old, out-dated, irrelevant morés of her ancestors. What an awakening Israel was soon to have! All that she gloried in would soon "fly away like a bird."

Hosea very evidently did not mean that God would bring about absolute execution of every single baby born to any Israelite mother, for in verse 17 he prophesies that they shall become wanderers among the nations. What he means is that since they took great pride in their numbers, they would be reduced in every stage from conception to ripened manhood, (cf. Deut. 28:58, 62).

v. 12 . . . YET WILL I BEREAVE THEM, SO THAT NOT A MAN SHALL BE LEFT . . . The populace of Israel shall be decimated in all stages, even those in the prime of manhood would be taken away by death, war, epidemic, etc.

v. 13 EPHRAIM, LIKE AS I HAVE SEEN TYRE . . . God blessed Israel and gave her a favored place in which to dwell and prospered her so that she became rich and powerful, like Tyre (cf. Ezek. 27:32—28:19). But, like Tyre, she also became self-sufficient, proud, boastful, and so God's justice must fall (cf. Isa. 28:1-4). How often those with the advantages and privileges graciously provided by God misuse and pervert those privileges! Israel was privileged for a purpose. She was "planted in a pleasant place" in order to be "salt" unto the nations, and "light" to the pagan darkness. But she turned her pleasant place into the abode of the selfish and sensual. So now God decrees that she shall "bring her children out to the slayer."

v. 14 GIVE THEM, O JEHOVAH: WHAT WILT THOU GIVE? . . . This is an expression of the agony in the soul of Hosea (like the "lamentations" of Jeremiah) over the impending doom of his countrymen. However, he surrenders, interrupting his wail of mourning with agreement to the pronouncement of God.

v. 15 ALL THEIR WICKEDNESS IS IN GILGAL . . . This may have been a different Gilgal than the one two miles from Jericho where Joshua's army first camped. Some think the Gilgal mentioned in this verse was near Shechem. Gilgal was certainly not the first place Israel sinned, therefore we cannot interpret this verse to mean that God began His hate for Israel's sin at this place. Gilgal simply became another source for His terrible hate because it was another place where Israel's sin was flagrantly and blatantly practiced. The phrase "I will drive them out of my house . . ." is simply another way of saying "I will cut them off from covenant relationship with Me." Israel is no longer an heir, a son in the house of God. The covenant-love of God is no longer their privilege for they have withdrawn themselves from His covenant by rejecting and disobeying it. They do not want God's love—they shall not have it! They can do without God's love—they shall have the opportunity to try! They are like the "prodigal son" (Luke 15). God never really stopped loving them—they stopped loving God and preferred that He stop loving them. They are left to the only other alternative in this morally-governed existence—self, sin, separation from good (cf. Jer. 16:5).

The phrase "all their princes are revolters . . ." is a pun! The men who claimed to be governors and for government were really responsible for all the anarchy and injustice then prevalent! What irony!

v. 16 BPHRAIM . . . IS DRIED UP . . . THEY SHALL BEAR NO FRUIT . . . The very roots of Israel are dried up and since there is no nourishment being furnished the tree it is good for nothing but to be cut down (cf. Lk. 13:7). Even if Israel should bear fruit it would be as worthless as the tree and would be plucked off and thrown away. Only the people whose "roots" are drawing from the word of God will produce a tree "planted by the rivers of water . . ." "bringing forth his fruit in his season . . ." (Psalm 1:1-6).

v. 17 . . . THEY SHALL BE WANDERERS AMONG THE NATIONS . . . According to the warning God had given their ancestors centuries ago by Moses (Deut. 28:65), Israel would be cast into the midst of the nations, forever after to be a race of homeless vagabonds. And it is true to this day! There are more Jews in New York City than in all of Palestine! They have wandered all over the world. There are Jews in Russia, Germany, Italy, America, Canada, France and practically every other country under the sun today!

QUIZ

1. How and why do people become like the person or thing they love?
2. In what did Ephraim glory? and how did God take it away?
3. How was Israel like Tyre?
4. What happens when men reject the love of God?
5. Does the new nation of Israel established by the U.N. mean the "wanderings" of the Jews are over?

REPROVING—
ISRAEL FELL INTO ANARCHY

TEXT: 10:1-11

- 1 Israel is a luxuriant vine, that putteth forth his fruit: according to the abundance of his fruit he hath multiplied his altars; according to the goodness of their land they have made goodly pillars.
- 2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found guilty: he will smite their altars, he will destroy their pillars.
- 3 Surely now shall they say, We have no king; for we fear not Jehovah; and the king, what can he do for us?
- 4 They speak vain words, swearing falsely in making covenants: therefore judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.
- 5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in terror for the calves of Bethaven; for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof, that rejoiced over it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.
- 6 It also shall be carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.
- 7 As for Samaria, her king is cut off, as foam upon the water.
- 8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.
- 9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood; the battle against the children of iniquity doth not overtake them in Gibeah.
- 10 When it is my desire, I will chastise them; and the peoples shall be gathered against them, when they are bound to their two transgressions.
- 11 And Ephraim is a heifer that is taught, that loveth to tread out the grain; but I have passed over upon her fair neck: I will set a rider on Ephraim: Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods.

QUERIES

- a. How is the heart of Israel "divided"?
- b. Who is king "Jareb"?
- c. What were the "two transgressions" binding Israel?

PARAPHRASE

Israel is prospering like a luxuriant grape vine sagging under the weight of much fruit. But the more prosperous I make her, the more she devotes herself to heathen altars and pagan idols. Her heart is smooth and treacherous. She is guilty and must be punished. God will destroy all her altars and idols. Surely under the circumstances of the coming judgment they will cry out We do not fear Jehovah—now we have no king—but what is the difference? No king could help us now! Their talk is empty—they make promises they never intended to keep. On account of this they are sowing the poison of anarchy and destruction within their own land. The people of Israel will moan over the destruction of their national shrines and gods. The priests will perform a ritual dance, imploring their idols to save them. But this idol—this calf-god thing—will be carted off *helplessly* into captivity with Israel as a present to the great Warrior King of Assyria. Israel and her calf-god will be disgraced. The advice and programs Israel thought were so politically and religiously wise will appear to be so foolish to her then. The proud monarchy of Israel vanishes like a splinter upon the surface of this water which is carried away by the current without leaving a trace behind. Those majestic and expensive idol-altars of Aven at Bethel where Israel sinned will crumble. They will be so deserted thorns and thistles will grow up in their place. And the deluded people, forsaken by their helpless gods, cast off by the Lord, stand in awe and terror as they see God's judgment coming upon them—they cry for the mountains and the hills to cover them and hide them from the wrath of Jehovah. Ah, Israel, since the days of Gibeah you have persisted in the same sin as the Gibeahites; but whereas those sinners were punished and destroyed by the war, you still live on in the same sin without having been destroyed in a similar war. When it is according to my purpose, I will punish Israel. The Gentile nations will be arrayed against them. Their two transgressions, apostacy from Jehovah and separation from the royal house of David, will haunt them all during their punishment. Israel is accustomed to pleasant, productive, profitable labor, like the heifer that loves to tread out the grain because she is allowed to eat at her pleasure. But it will soon be different. I will seize her and

harness her by a heavy yoke to the plow and harrow. Yes, Judah too shall be put to hard labor in captivity, just like Israel.

SUMMARY

Israel's prosperity was only a veneer giving an outward appearance of well-being. Inside she was corrupt, lawless, idolatrous and in the throes of anarchy.

COMMENT

v. 1 ISRAEL IS A LUXURIANT VINE . . . The KJV has it, "Israel is an empty vine . . ." Practically all scholars of the Hebrew texts consider this "a palpable inaccuracy." Lange says, "a thriving vine." Keil says, "a running vine." The translators of both the ASV and the RSV translated "a luxuriant vine." Hosea was probably using satire or irony in so addressing Israel. Israel waxed prosperous, it is true, in spite of national calamities. But what kind of fruit was Israel producing? Fruit of its own choosing, of its own pleasure, instead of the fruit for which God looked. The figure of the vine is an old and familiar figure (cf. Psa. 80:8ff; Isa. 5:1-10; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15:1ff; 17:6ff; Jn. 15:1ff). In Jesus' day the great gate of the Temple, the outer gate, had emblazoned upon it a golden vine. It was the symbol of national life. Isaiah tells us (Isa. 5:1ff) what fruit God expected to find on His vine (the covenant people). God expected justice and righteousness but found instead oppression and iniquity. God was not judging them because they were prosperous—but because they misused their prosperity. They were selfish. They spent it on their own pleasure—on vain and ungodly practices. The more their wealth increased, the more they spent on idolatry and sensuality. More wealth, less dependence upon God and more self-worship. Hosea uses more irony in calling their pillars "goodly" pillars. They were probably obelisks erected to pagan deities. They were probably very artistic and expensive. According to their prosperity they had built themselves ornate idols; God was lost, mislaid, and instead of Him there were ornate pillars, obelisks, stones. This certainly strikes a familiar note. America has become a "luxuriant vine," but she produces fruit unto herself. She has forgotten God and built altars to "power," "reason," "progress," "humanism" and is no longer dependent upon the Creator.

v. 2 THEIR HEART IS DIVIDED . . . The Hebrew word *chalag* should be translated "smooth, treacherous," rather than "divided." Jeroboam was very solicitous for the care and convenience of his dear people (I Kings 12:27-28); all the while he was thinking of his own desires to set up

and secure an apostate nation. The people were happy to follow the same deceit—professing with their lips to belong to Jehovah but rejecting His law and worshipping idols. The "spirit of harlotry" was in Israel's heart (Hos. 5:4). If it were not so tragic it would be amusing to behold Israel trying to deceive Jehovah. Surely they would be aware of the many times in their past history when every man and woman who tried to deceive God was inevitably caught!

v. 3 SURELY NOW SHALL THEY SAY, WE HAVE NO KING . . .

As Pusey points out, "These are the words of despair, not of repentance; of men terrified by the consciousness of guilt, but not coming forth out of its darkness; describing their condition, not confessing the iniquity which brought it on them." Israel had rebelled against the kingship of God and asked for a king of their own (cf. Hos. 8:3-4). God gave them Jeroboam. Now, after all the years of gradual political, moral and civil decay and degeneration—to the point of anarchy—surely they will be compelled to confess that they no longer have a king. Yes, they confess it! They also admit that they have no fear of Jehovah. But that is not such a problem as the present king they do have. If we had a king like the Jeroboams, they probably wail, we might hope for better times; but now? The king we have now; it's all his fault. Their hearts are not only deceitful, they are deceived! This is the oldest trick of sin and Satan—deceiving man into blaming others for the consequences of their own sins! When man blames others for his sins, he is in no mind to repent.

v. 4 THEY SPEAK VAIN WORDS . . . JUDGMENT SPRINGETH UP AS HEMLOCK . . . No man's word could be trusted (cf. Jer. 9:5-9; Micah 7:5-7). Their deceitful, smooth, treacherous hearts manifested themselves in their business dealings. What a man is down deep within his heart soon appears in his deeds (cf. Mark 7:21-23). These people of Israel were conducting their business like the Pharisees of Jesus' day (cf. Matt. 23:16-22). Honor, duty, justice, righteousness, truth have all long since ceased to be. Law and order ceases to be right. Might becomes right. Judges are bribed; debtors are sold into slavery; covenants are broken. Right has been made to be wrong and wrong has been made to be right, (cf. Isa. 5:20-23; Micah 3:2). Right has degenerated into bitter wrong—justice is so perverted it covers the land like the poisonous weed hemlock (cf. Amos 5:7). Hemlock, the reader will remember, was what Socrates was forced to drink to induce his death. There was plenty of so-called justice in the land—but what kind of justice? Judgments as bitter and fatal as hemlock, (cf. Hab. 1:4).

v. 5-6 . . . SAMARIA SHALL BE IN TERROR FOR THE CALVES OF BETH-AVEN; . . . IT ALSO SHALL BE CARRIED UNTO ASSYRIA . . . These two verses, although predicting the behavior of Israel at the time of her captivities in the future, are exact representations of how she reacted. First, Israel was concerned for the safety of her national temples, obelisks and calf-idols. What was to become of them. Then, as the reality of the captivity came immediately upon them they began to wail, perform ritual dances, imploring their idol to help them. But their gods were deaf and dumb. There were no answers; no actions. The Assyrians defeated Israel, plundered her spacious buildings from the smallest to the greatest, and the calf-god of Israel they carried off helpless and silent to be given to the Assyrian king as a present. The calf-god of Israel appears to have been included in the Assyrian pantheon of gods and placed in the temple of Marduk (cf. II Kings 18:33-35; 25:13-16; Ezra 1:7-11). Cyrus, king of Persia, restored all these gods to their original homes. Israel is disgraced! Shame and ridicule is now her lot. Why has all this happened? Because Israel trusted in her own pride—in her own vain counsel. She would not listen to the law of God nor to His prophets. She made kings after her own desires; she made gods according to the lust of her heart; she joined herself to pagan countries for protection and became their vassal. Now all this shameful self-counseling is paying its wages—shame!

v. 7 AS FOR SAMARIA, HER KING IS CUT OFF, AS FOAM UPON THE WATER . . . Not only is her calf-god useless to help her, Israel's king cannot help. The word translated "foam" would have been more literally translated, "splinter, or small stick." The king was like one of those little sticks or straws which float in countless numbers on the surface of the ocean or streams, give the image of lightness, emptiness, a thing too light to sink, but driven impetuously and unresistingly, hither and thither, at the impulse of the torrent which hurries it along. Hoshea, their last king, was just so easily swept by the flood which broke on Israel from Assyria.

v. 8 THE HIGH PLACES . . . OF AVEN . . . SHALL BE DESTROYED . . . "Aven" is a pun. "Aven" means, "worthless, vile, useless." Bethel, seat of their idolatrous worship, was called Beth-aven. Here, "Aven" probably also means Bethel. "High place" is from the Hebrew word *bamah* or *ramah* and means simply, "elevation." We quote here from *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, edited by Merrill C. Tenney, pg. 354:

"It seems to be inherent in human nature to think of God as dwelling in the heights. From earliest times men have tended to choose high places for their worship, whether of

God, or of the false gods which men have invented. In Canaan these high places had become the scenes of orgies and human sacrifice connected with the idolatrous worship of these imaginary gods; and so when Israel entered the Promised Land they were told to be iconoclasts as well as conquerors. . . . (Num. 33:52). These figured stones bore upon themselves crude carvings, sometimes more or less like geometrical figures, or else talismans, or other signs presumably understood by the priests and used to mystify or terrorize the worshippers. Israel partly obeyed but largely failed in this work . . . Later some godly kings like Hezekiah (II Chron. 31:1) destroyed the high places, while others like Manasseh relapsed and rebuilt them (II Chron. 33:3). After Manasseh had been punished and had repented, he was restored to his throne, and resumed the temple worship, but the people 'sacrificed still in the high places, but only unto Jehovah their God' (II Chron. 33:17). Through Manasseh's early influence, the people had gone so far into apostasy that they could not repent, but through the godliness of Josiah, especially after he had heard the law read (II Kings 22:8-20), the judgment was delayed till after the death of Josiah."

The "high places" came to be specifically noted for *idolatrous* worship. So the title was transferred from the elevation to the sanctuary on the elevation and so came to be used of any idolatrous shrine, whether constructed on an elevation or not (cf. II Kings 16:4; 17:9; II Chron. 21:11; 28:4; Isa. 36:7; Amos 7:9; Micah 1:5; 4:1; Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:32; Ezek. 6:3-6; 16:16; 20: 29; 43:7, etc.). All these places in Israel were utterly destroyed and made desolate and deserted when Israel was taken captive. Weeds and thorns grew up where thousands once performed heathen religious rites in the name of Jehovah. Their ruins are there today to be seen and pondered! The deluded, shamed people, forsaken by their helpless gods and impotent kings shake with terror as they see God's judgments coming upon them. Clothed in the filthy garments of sin, they are totally unprepared to meet God (cf. Amos 4:13). There is no place to hide when the Day of the Lord comes (cf. Amos 5:18-20; 9:2-4). They cry out for the mountains and the hills to fall upon them and cover them from His terrible wrath (cf. Rev. 6:16). Only those who have washed their robes white in the blood of The Lamb will not be ashamed on that final great and terrible Day of the Lord! Have you been washed, my brother? Prepare to meet thy God!

v. 9 . . . THOU HAST SINNED FROM THE DAYS OF GIBEAH . . . From the very days when the people of Gibeah sinned against the concubine of the Levite (cf. Hos. 9:9), Israel has continued in the same sin. But whereas those sinners were punished and destroyed by war, you still live on in the same sin without having similarly been destroyed.

v. 10 WHEN IT IS MY DESIRE, I WILL CHASTISE THEM . . . Yes, the wheels of God's justice grind slow, at times, but very fine! When the time comes within the omniscient plan and purpose of God for it to be, He will punish Israel for her sins just as surely and completely as He punished the Gibeahites! God never acts without intelligent, fore-planned purpose. Every event of history has a time and a place foreknown in the purpose of Almighty God and man can neither hinder it nor speed it. Furthermore, God uses whatever secondary agents He desires in carrying out His purposes. In Israel's case He chose to use "the peoples," or Gentile nations, to carry out His wrath upon this recalcitrant nation (cf. Isa. 10:5ff).

The "two transgressions" of Israel which will cling to them and bind them like seaweed strangles a drowning man are: (a) Their idolatry; (b) Their making kings according to their own desires. These two specific rebellions against the Holy God will haunt them and plague them all the rest of their days as they "wander" over all the face of the earth.

v. 11 AND EPHRAIM IS A HEIFER THAT . . . LOVETH TO TREAD OUT THE GRAIN . . . Having been trained and provided for by the Lord, growing fat and sleek, Ephraim (Israel) loved to "thresh." Like the young ox, walking leisurely over the corn, permitted to eat her fill (Deut. 25:4), Israel loved to do work which to him seemed pleasant, productive, profitable, neglecting and forgetting the training of his Master; resenting His instructions when they ran counter to his own desires; shirking the arduous duty of self-discipline (Deut. 32:15-18) demanded by Jehovah. "Passed over her fair neck," says Keil, means "rushing in upon a person." The actual idea is that of putting a heavy yoke upon the neck. No longer will Israel be treated like a privileged and petted heifer, but she will be yoked to a plow to do servile, exhausting labor (in captivity). So Judah, too, because of her sins will be taken captive. Israel (like Jacob) will be driven out of their homeland into exile, into hard labor of slavery.

QUIZ

1. What is the meaning of likening Israel to a "luxuriant vine?"
2. What are the "goodly pillars?"
3. Why did Israel cry, "We have no king . . . what can he do for us?"
4. Why is "judgment springing up like hemlock?"
5. How and why did the people "mourn over" their calves of Beth-aven?
6. What are the "high places" of Aven?
7. Whose "desire" is spoken of in verse 10?
8. How is Israel like a "heifer" that loves to tread out the grain?

REMONSTRATING—
RENOVATE "FALLOW GROUND"

TEXT: 10:12-14

- 12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to kindness; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek Jehovah, till he comes and rains righteousness upon you.
- 13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies; for thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.
- 14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces with her children.
- 15 So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: at daybreak shall the king of Israel be utterly cut off.

QUERIES

- a. Why is it "time" to seek Jehovah?
- b. Who were Israel's "mighty men"?
- c. Who is "Beth-el"?

PARAPHRASE

Sow seeds of righteousness among your fellow men and you will reap loving kindness in turn. In order to do this, however, you will have to turn over the hard and weed-infested soil of your sinful hearts. And do not delay for the time to seek the Lord is now—it is ever present. He will come and shower you with blessings of mercy and grace. In the past you have sown wickedness and reaped the consequences

of your iniquity—falseness, shame, vanity. You trusted in your own rebellious ways and in the false security of your army. Because you still insist in doing this a war shall come to your people and all the fortresses which made you feel so secure will be destroyed. Shalmaneser destroyed Beth-arbel giving you an example of his cruelty against even women and children. And now, because you did not heed the warning but continued in your wickedness, Shalmaneser shall do the same to the whole land of Israel, even to Bethel, and your king will perish with unexpected suddenness!

SUMMARY

A last hour call to repentance and reformation of life is given. Unheeded, it calls forth inevitable destruction at the hands of Shalmaneser.

COMMENT

v. 12 SOW . . . RIGHTEOUSNESS, REAP . . . KINDNESS . . . BREAK UP YOUR FALLOW GROUND . . . Sowing and reaping are favorite Oriental and Semitic figures of speech to use in expressing spiritual and moral conduct (cf. Job 4:8; Psa. 126:5; Jer. 4:3; Matt. 13:3ff; Lk. 8:5ff; Prov. 6:14, 19; 11:18; 22:8; Hos. 8:7; Jn. 4:36-37; I Cor. 9:11; II Cor. 9:6, 10; James 3:18, etc.) Here, it is evident, the prophet is exhorting the people to "sow deeds of righteousness" toward one another, in order that they may "reap kindness" from one another. Some commentators, in their attempt to belittle the idea that man must do righteous deeds in order to be pleasing to God, have misinterpreted this text by saying, "It is not a man-made righteousness, but that righteousness which the Lord is ready to grant abundantly as a gift of His grace to all that seek Him and His righteousness . . . Hence, sow toward righteousness—seek the Lord and His righteousness, prepared for you without any merit on your part by the Lord and sent by Him as freely, graciously, and abundantly as the rain from heaven." Now we agree that man can never earn or attain, through his own meritorious deeds, the righteousness which God's Holy Law demands. Man *must*, however, respond to the revealed will of God by *doing* righteous deeds in order to come into covenant relationship and remain in covenant relationship with God through Christ. Faith in God can be efficacious *only* if it issues forth in an obedient life of righteous deeds. "My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (cf. I Jn. 3:1-24). There is only one way to be righteous. By the powerful motivation of faith in God through Christ to *do* the

righteous will of God as it is revealed in His word! There is only one way to reap kindness—that is to actively sow righteousness. To do this, the people of Israel must have a change of mind, a change of heart, a conversion—they must “break up the hard, weed-infested soil of their sinful hearts.”

How is this “fallow ground” to be broken up? By “seeking Jehovah” with the whole heart, (cf. our comments on Hosea 6:1-3). Jeremiah gives the same exhortation in Jeremiah 4:1-4. God will not “rain righteousness” down upon men until they have done something about their relationship to God’s commandments! God’s love, mercy, faithfulness, power, have all been demonstrated and revealed. God’s covenant terms have all been revealed. Now it is up to man to willingly, actively make the proper response.

The time for man to make such a response is always “Right Now” with God. It is always “Today” with God! For the man who chooses to live by faith in God it is also always “Today!” The man of God lives always in the present tense—yesterday is past and unreclaimable, tomorrow is future and only God knows tomorrow, and so Today is the day of salvation (cf. Heb. 3:7-19; II Cor. 6:2; Jas. 4:13, etc.). Men must seek the Lord while He may be found (cf. Isa. 55:6-9), and call upon Him while he is near by forsaking their wicked ways and returning to His commandments!

v. 13 YE HAVE PLOWED WICKEDNESS . . . REAPED INIQUITY . . . EATEN THE FRUIT OF LIES . . . Israel not only sowed wickedness, they cultivated it! They actually nurtured evil like a farmer would a crop of grain by cultivating and fertilizing it. But what was their harvest? Crime, anarchy, distrust, immorality, falsehood, all flourished in high places and low places. Their whole society was built on the crumbling foundation of lies. They deceived others, were deceived by others, but worse than all the rest, they deceived themselves and knew they were doing so all the time! You see, they trusted in their own counsel by which they deliberately deluded themselves; they trusted in their military and economic prowess which they knew from history was not equal to the power of God. How relevant the prophets are for twentieth century society!

v. 14 THEREFORE SHALL A TUMULT ARISE AMONG THY PEOPLE . . . Tumult is the word used to describe the noise and din of war. Right in the middle of their prosperous but decadent unconcern shall suddenly come war. They will suddenly be besieged and invaded by a foreign power. Their so-called impregnable fortress will be torn asunder.

Their cities and villages will be burned and plundered. There will be many thousands slain, thousands of others taken captive and deported to a far away land. Their invaders will be the cruel, blood-thirsty Assyrians who destroyed Beth-arbel (very likely the modern Kirbeth Irbid, about six miles southwest of Magdala in Galilee). Their king will be "Shalman" who is to be identified as the Shalmaneser II of Kings 17:3-6. Not even women and innocent children will be spared.

v. 15 SO SHALL BETH-EL DO UNTO YOU BECAUSE OF YOUR GREAT WICKEDNESS . . . And all this destruction and blood-letting is a consequence of Israel's stubborn rebellion against a merciful God. Their rebellion is manifested most openly at Bethel where the temple and altar to the golden-calf is located and where the nation made pilgrimage constantly to bow down before its idols. All this will bring sudden, swift ("at daybreak") destruction of the ruling monarch and of the nation. Israel will perish suddenly! She will be taken away quickly—there will be no long, extended expiration or wasting away. Her oblivion will come rapidly and completely!

QUIZ

1. How does Hosea intend Israel to "sow righteousness?"
2. How is "fallow ground" to be broken up?
3. To what extent did Israel "plow" wickedness?
4. What were the consequences of plowing wickedness?
5. Who is "Shalman" and what did he do to Israel?
6. Where is Beth-arbel?
7. How long did it take for Israel to disappear from history?

RECOGNIZING GOD'S COMPASSION REMONSTRATING—

TEXT: 11:1-9

- 1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.
- 2 The more the prophets called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.
- 3 Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

- 4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them.
- 5 They shall not return into the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be their king, because they refused to return to me.
- 6 And the sword shall fall upon their cities, and shall consume their bars, and devour them, because of their own counsels.
- 7 And my people are bent on backsliding from me: though they call them to him that is on high, none at all will exalt him.
- 8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zebouim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together.
- 9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath.

QUERIES

- a. Who is the "son" whom God called out of Egypt?
- b. Who is the prophet speaking of in v. 7, "him that is on high?"
- c. What does God's nature (v. 9) have to do with withholding wrath?

PARAPHRASE

When Israel was in its infancy as a nation I loved him and protected and delivered him from Egyptian bondage. And how did Israel repay Me? Time after time, as I sent My prophets with messages of My love and care, Israel rejected them. In fact, he hated the very sight of these well-meaning warners, preferring Baalim and carved images to their Creator and Redeemer. Yet, as a father patiently teaches his child to walk, takes him by his arms, carefully leads him until he has learned to walk safely; so I lovingly took Israel by his arms and taught him to walk in My ways; but they refused to acknowledge that I, Jehovah, was their "healer." I drew them to Me gently like men guiding and helping one another with ropes; I bound them to me only with bands of love; I eased all their burdens like a farmer pushes back the yoke upon his oxen so they may eat their food in comfort; I even fed them manna from heaven, food for which they did not work. No, they shall not return to Egypt—their destiny is far more terrible than that. The blood-thirsty Assyrians will be their taskmasters because they deliberately refused to return to My counsel. War and destruction will swirl through their cities; their enemies will crash through their gates, breaking the

cross-beams holding them shut, and trap them in their own fortresses. *They have chosen to follow their own counsel.* My people are so fastened to their backsliding ways they are, as it were, impaled upon apostasy, and they cannot get loose. Although the prophets continually call them upward to God, none of the people rise to the upward call and return to God's ways. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? shall I surrender thee, O Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? Shall I set thee as Zeboiim—as those blackened cities of the plain that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah? My heart is in turmoil; My heart is moved to its depths! You deserve, and I could justly execute, My fierce anger, but I am not going to utterly destroy you and completely withdraw My covenant promises. No, I am infinitely faithful, loving and patient. I am able to do what no man can do. I am going to ultimately execute justice and at the same time justify by My grace, those who believe and trust Me. I am going to punish sin and have mercy on penitent sinners when I fulfill My covenant.

SUMMARY

Hosea shows how the people of Israel repaid the Lord for all the proofs of His love—with ingratitude and unfaithfulness. Israel deserved total obliteration but God, because of His love and faithfulness, will perform a work that man cannot even imagine—He will both execute His justice and justify those who believe.

COMMENT

v. 1 WHEN ISRAEL WAS A CHILD, THEN I LOVED HIM, AND CALLED MY SON OUT OF EGYPT. This section of Hosea is one of the most beautiful sections of the entire Old Testament. When Hosea touches upon the love of God, he plunges us into an ocean whose depths have never been fathomed. God's love is all-embracing, all-inviting, all supporting, all-supplying. And, as Hosea so graphically indicates, God's matchless love underlies every one of His divine warnings. When such love is spurned it only makes more terrible the fearful storms of judgment when they break. Hosea had been brought into fellowship with such love through tragedy in his own home, through which tragedy, the tragedy of wounded love, there had come to him a sympathetic understanding of the Divine heart of God. The verse before us is quoted in Matthew 2:15. It is very evident that Hosea's primary reference is to Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt under the leadership of Moses (cf. Ex. 4:22-23). God, through the prophet, is appealing to Israel to remember its Heavenly Father's love demonstrated

in the past. The inspired apostle Matthew quotes Hosea and applies it to Christ's sojourn in Egypt when He was a babe in the arms of Mary. It is also possible that Hosea intended to predict the future deliverance of the covenant people from the clutches of heathen captivity (which Hosea has already typified by the use of the name of Egypt, 8:13). In any case, we have here one of the myriad-events of Israel's history which typically prophesies an event in the life of the true Israel, the true Son, the Messiah. We quote on this verse from Keil:

"The development and guidance of Israel as the people of God all pointed to Christ . . . the relation which the Lord of heaven and earth established and sustained with that nation, was a preparation for the union of God with humanity, and paved the way for the incarnation of His Son, by the fact that Israel was trained to be a vessel of divine grace. All essential factors in the history of Israel point to this as their end, and thereby become types and material prophecies of the life of Him in whom the reconciliation of man to God was to be realized, and the union of God with the human race to be developed into a personal unity."

One need only be familiar with the Epistle to the Hebrews and other New Testament references to the typical relation of Israel's history to the Messiah and His church to see that this is true!

God's relationship to Israel from her infancy through her maturity is vividly portrayed by Ezekiel (Ezek. 16:1ff).

v. 2 THE MORE THE PROPHETS CALLED THEM, THE MORE THEY WENT FROM THEM . . . A more obstinate people could not be found. Not even the pagan Ninevites in Jonah's day were this obdurate! Jesus found many of the Jews in His earthly ministry equally as unyielding (cf. Matt. 11:20-30; 12:38-42). A literal translation of this phrase might read, ". . . the more they went away from their (the prophet's) faces." In other words, the more the prophets preached to the people, the more the people hated the very sight of the prophets. The people could not stand righteousness and goodness because they loved evil (cf. John 3:18-21). Their "bent" for sinning is expressed in verse 7 below.

v. 3 YET I TAUGHT EPHRAIM TO WALK . . . The infinite kindness and patience of the Heavenly Father is likened to the tender love of an earthly parent teaching the babe to walk. Moses referred to the Father's care, ". . . in the wilderness the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son" (Deut. 1:31). The "everlasting

arms" of God support His covenant people in all ages and dispensations (cf. Deut. 33:27; Psa. 18:35-36; Isa. 41:10; 46:4). He healed all their sorrows and wounds incurred in the bondage of Egypt by bringing them prosperity and peace. But they did not reciprocate.

v. 4 I DREW THEM WITH CORDS OF A MAN, WITH BANDS OF LOVE . . . God draws with love—He does not drive or force obedience. Even the "new commandment" of Jesus, the command to love one another, receives its prompting from Jesus' own example of love towards those whom He commands to love (John 13:34-35; 15:12-17). "Cords of a man" is evidently a phrase intended to convey much the same meaning as our modern "tied to her apron strings." Lange describes them: ". . . such as those with which men, especially children, would be led, opposed to ropes, with which beasts are tied." God not only draws with love—He also binds men to Himself by the force of love. It was "the love of Christ" which *constrained* the apostle Paul (cf. II Cor. 5:14). It is only through being bound by the "bond of peace" that we are able to maintain the unity of the Spirit. The "peace" referred to, of course, is the peace Christ accomplished between God and man through His loving sacrifice—so it is the love of Christ, after all, that binds us to Him. Time after time the saints of the Old Testament had the love of God demonstrated to them. God eased the yoke from off their jaws. As a merciful farmer would push the yoke back off the cheeks of his oxen in order that they might eat without discomfort, so God relieved one burden after another for the children of Israel. Not only that, He fed them with manna from heaven and caused them to prosper when they did not deserve it. When one thinks about it, this is the proto-type of the Prodigal Son immortalized in the parable told by Jesus (cf. Lk. 15:11ff). It is the same experience many an earthly father has had. A father woos his son by love; he seeks to bind his son to him by acts of love (even when disciplining); the father relieves every burden from the son it is humanly possible for him to relieve; the father gives to the son even when the son does not deserve it. And so often the son reciprocates with self-willed rebellion.

v. 5 THEY SHALL NOT RETURN . . . INTO EGYPT . . . BUT . . . ASSYRIAN SHALL BE THEIR KING . . . There is no contradiction between this verse and Hosea 8:13! In 8:13 Hosea is using the land of Egypt to typify the bondage which Israel was about to suffer in her imminent captivity. In 11:5 Hosea states unequivocally that that captivity will take place in Assyria. Thus the present verse must indicate that some of the people of Hosea's day had suggested a return to political

paternalism with Egypt. Some felt that they might woo Egypt into helping them against Assyria. And being a satellite of Egypt would be better than facing possible military confrontation with Assyria. But Hosea tells them plainly that they will be ruled by the terrifying Assyrians. And the reason is stated simply. Because they would not repent of their self-willed idolatry and return to worshipping and serving Jehovah. There are no humanistic, sociological, psychological, economic, cyclic-historical explanations offered by the preacher of God. It was simply that the people of God had broken their covenant relationship with Him—they did not obey His word.

v. 6 AND THE SWORD SHALL FALL UPON THEIR CITIES . . . The word translated "fall" means literally "to circulate." The swords of the Assyrian soldiers would make the round of the cities of Israel. "Bars" or the large crossbeam-bolts used to bolt their huge city gates would pose no problem to the Assyrians—they would use their war machines and break through the gates. All of this is to come upon Israel "because of their own counsels." They trusted in their own wisdom rather than give heed to the counsel of God (cf. Psa. 127:1; Prov. 29:8; Eccl. 9:13-18). No matter how rich or powerful a nation may become it does not afford security. Why? Because this universe is ruled and operated on a basis of moral law. God created and now sustains the universe and every event within it by principles of justice and righteousness. Any individual or nation that chooses to rebel against these principles must be prepared to suffer the inevitable consequences. It makes no difference how well educated, technologically advanced, economically solvent a people may be, when they trust in their own counsels to the exclusion of God's counsel (the Bible), they dash themselves to pieces upon the immutable sovereignty of God's moral laws.

v. 7 AND MY PEOPLE ARE BENT ON BACKSLIDING FROM ME . . . The word "bent" is literally "fastened upon," or "impaled" upon apostasy as something is impaled upon a stake, so that it cannot get loose. The people of Israel were "transfixed," or "hypnotized," as it were, by sin, and they could not seem to give a thought to anything else! They were fascinated by the thrill of it—by its deadliness. They were deceived by sin (cf. Heb. 3:13). How much this is like so many people today. There is not a person living that has not been fascinated or deceived by some form of sin or another at one time in his life! Sin is like that! Man, without the word of God in his heart, is like that! (cf. Deut. 6:1-6; Psa. 119:11). Although God sent His servants, the prophets, to call the people upward toward God, it seemed as if not one person in the whole nation listened to their preaching.

v. 8-9 HOW SHALL I GIVE THEE UP, EPHRAIM? . . . MY HEART IS TURNED WITHIN ME . . . I WILL NOT EXECUTE THE FIERCENESS OF MINE ANGER . . . Admah and Zeboiim were the cities of the plain that were destroyed when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. In light of Israel's deliberate choice to defy God's moral reign, there is only one thing to do. By all that is just and right, God may give them up, abandon them. This is what man would do. But God is not man (cf. I Sam. 15:29; Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6). There was something holding Jehovah back from executing His judgment to the uttermost. Three times God repeats, "I will not . . . I will not . . . I will not." He cannot utterly abandon them, although they deserve it. And what was staying the hand of God—what kept Him from destroying Israel completely? The answer comes, "My heart is turned within me . . . My compassions are kindled together." It was in the nature of God, not in anything that Israel had done. The omniscient God looked down the corridors of time and saw possibilities in a remnant of Israel that men would be unable to see. He saw what this remnant would be—this "son" whom He had called out of Egypt and nursed and patiently fed. Because of what God is, He sees every human being and their potentialities and possibilities, and in spite of their many backslidings, He is still longsuffering, not willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9). The secret of God's mercy is found in the words, "My heart is turned within Me." That is a very expressive word. Turned about, or turned over, literally; but in use it is the word that describes upheaval, turmoil. Listen. God says My heart is in turmoil; My heart is moved to its depths, My heart! Again, "My compassions are kindled together," and the word "compassion" there does not mean sorrow or pity, but *solace*. G. Campbell Morgan paraphrases thus: "My compassions are in spasm, deeply affected." We are in the presence here of the perfect love of God—a love that is not the mere sentimental outgoing of an emotional nature, evanescent and passing; but love that becomes an agony; love that becomes a tragedy.

How it is that the perfect, immutable, holy God could first pronounce judgment upon Israel and then say, "I will not?" We take the liberty of quoting from G. Campbell Morgan's book, "Hosea, The Heart and Holiness of God," published by Revell:

"Here, all mere intellectuality breaks down; here is something very strange . . . He says I will not give you up; what is the reason? Because of His heart and His compassions? Yes, but go on. 'I am God, and not man,' and I am 'the Holy One in the midst of thee.' There is no lowering of

the standard of moral requirement. The Holy One can be compassionate and remain holy because He is God, and not man. Things are possible to Him that are not possible to man.

"That is as far as we get in Hosea. It is a long way, but it leaves us asking questions; and filled with wonder, we do not understand it . . . A wonder and a mystery of righteousness and compassion are seen working together . . . When God, in spite of sin, says, How can I give you up? My heart is stirred, My compassions are stirred, but I am holy; how can I give you up? and yet says, I will not give you up, I will not, I will not, we are in the presence of some possibility wholly of God. It must have been a great word for trembling and troubled hearts even then.

"But our Bible does not end in Hosea. The name Hosea meant salvation . . . There came One in the fulness of time, whose Name was Jehovah and Hosea: Jesus . . . we find out at last in Jesus, how God can be just, and the Justifier of the sinning soul.

"This way of accomplishment Hosea did not see. In communion with God he had learned facts about the Divine Nature which seemed to be conflicting, and he delivered his message and uttered the words; but at last He came, Who is the Brightness of the Father's glory and the express Image of His Person, and in Him I see how righteousness and peace meet together, and God can be just and the Justifier.

"Through Him the claims of justice which are against my soul are all met. Through Him the glory of holiness is maintained; for His redemption of the human soul is not a pity that agrees to ignore sin; but a power that cancels it and sets free from its dominion. Through Him the loved one is regained, restored, renewed, and all the lights that flash and gleam upon the prophetic page, astonishing my soul, come into focused unity in Jesus. God says of you, of me, 'How can I give thee up? I will not . . . I will not . . . I will not.'

"But how? 'I am God and not man, I am the Holy One.' Through Christ He has made the way by which sinning souls can be conformed to His image, His likeness, His will. The Gospel is gleaming in Hosea. It is shining in full radiance in Christ."

This is the very essence of the gospel! The good news is that God is both just and the Justifier (Rom. 3:21-26). In other words, God

keeps His word to punish sin (this He did in His Son, Jesus Christ, and we participated in it vicariously) and He at the same time forgives the sinner who, by faith, acknowledges and accepts and acts upon Christ's death in his place. Christ became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (cf. II Cor. 5:14-21). Christ died for us all. He became our substitute, our ransom; therefore we all "died" in Him.

What God did in reality and spiritually in Christ, He did typically and temporally with Israel. The remnant of Israel, saved by the justifying mercy of God as it exercised its faith and responded to this mercy, typified all the covenant people of God (from all nations) in the Messianic age. Salvation is still by the grace and mercy of God to all who will respond by an exercise of faith. But that faith must be exercised in conformity to God's revealed plan found now, for all nations and races, in the New Testament.

QUIZ

1. Where is Hosea 11:1 repeated in the New Testament?
2. How is Hosea 11:1 a prophecy connected to the Messiah?
3. Why did the people of Israel hate the sight of the prophets?
4. What is the meaning of the phrase "cords of a man?"
5. Why is the behavior of the Israelites like the Prodigal Son?
6. What reasons are given by Hosea for the imminent judgment of impenitent Israel?
7. How deeply involved in sin and backsliding was this nation?
8. How could God say in one breath He was going to punish Israel and then say He would not give them up?
9. How is God able to be both just and the Justifier of the penitent?

REMONSTRATING— SEE JUDAH'S UNFAITHFULNESS

TEXT: 11:10-12

- 10 They shall walk after Jehovah, who will roar like a lion; for he will roar, and the children shall come trembling from the west.
- 11 They shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria; and I will make them to dwell in their houses, saith Jehovah.
- 12 Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the Holy One.

QUERIES

- a. When will Jehovah "roar" and why will the children then come?
- b. Did any of the children of Israel go into captivity to Egypt?
- c. Why does God point Israel to Judah for an example of faithfulness?

PARAPHRASE

When the Lord turns His pity towards the covenant people once more and utters His loud, far-reaching call, the covenant people will come from all quarters of the earth, swiftly, and God will fulfill His covenant and give them the Messianic blessings which He has promised. Ephraim has surrounded me with hypocrisy *and attacks Me on every side with deceit*, for while claiming to be My people, they are idolators. And Judah is also unbridled and unruly towards Me.

SUMMARY

God is going to fulfill His covenant and give a faithful remnant the Messianic blessings in spite of the fact that most of both Israel and Judah are unfaithful.

COMMENT

v. 10 THEY SHALL WALK AFTER JEHOVAH, WHO WILL ROAR LIKE A LION . . . The emphasis in this verse is on Jehovah's roaring! The phrase is repeated to indicate that Jehovah's call will be the cause of the people's coming to walk after Him. To "walk after Jehovah" means to be converted—to trust, obey and worship Jehovah (cf. Deut. 13:5; I Kings 14:8). The Lord will do His roaring from "Zion (cf. *our comments* on Joel 3:16-17; Amos 1:2), which is, of course a prophecy of the sending forth of the gospel from Jerusalem to all those who will hear and become sons of the covenant in the Messianic age. This verse, then, is Messianic in its fulfillment, as we shall see by its context.

v. 11 THEY SHALL COME . . . AND I WILL MAKE THEM TO DWELL . . . They will come from the east and the west (Egypt and Assyria). Keil says, "out of all quarters of the globe," (cf. Isa. 11:11). We wish to quote from Lange here:

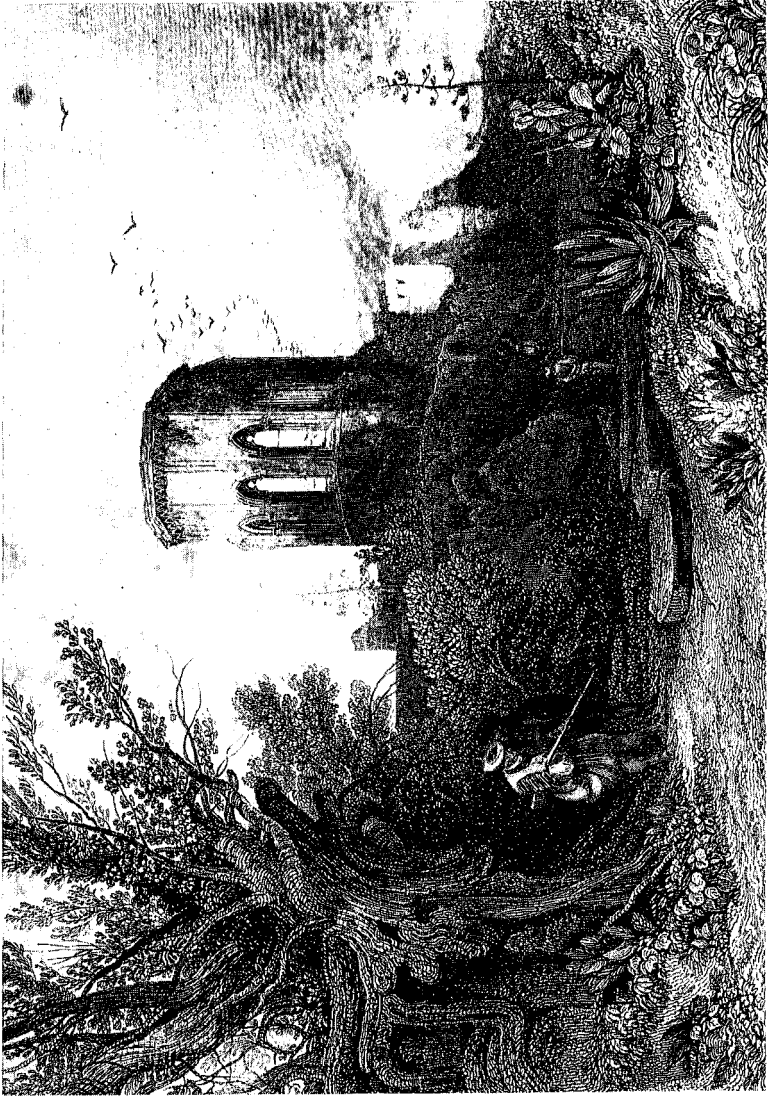
"A return to Jehovah is then announced as the fruit of this compassion, and the removal of the state of subjection to punishment by a restoration to the inheritance they had trifled away is promised as its manifestation . . .

"As to the fulfillment of this promise, see the remarks on chapters 1 and 2. It may suffice to repeat here that we are not to hold to any fulfillment which would contradict the actual course of God's revelation. *Hence we must not think of a future return of the external Israel into their own land from Assyria*, if it were only from the consideration that Assyria exists no longer, and Israel is no longer in bondage to such a nation, and we cannot take the one (Israel, the Holy Land, the return) as literal, and the other (Assyria, captivity) as figurative. We must rather say, from the stand-point of the fulfillment of the Old Testament, i.e., from the stand-point of the New Testament, and in accordance with the actual course of events: *the compassionate mercy of God towards his faithless people*, which the Prophet sees win the victory over wrath, *has been revealed in Christ*—but still as being far greater he sees it; what is clear to him is only the *skia* (shadow) of that which in Christ has actually occurred, and what is still going on in the forgiveness of sin and deliverance from its curse through free grace." (Italics and parenthesis ours).

This is as definitely a Messianic passage from Hosea as is chapters 1 and 2. Keil says, "The fulfillment takes place in the last days, when Israel as a nation shall enter the kingdom of God."

v. 12 EPHRAIM COMPASSETH ME ABOUT WITH FALSEHOOD . . . BUT JUDAH YET RULETH . . . This verse, in the Hebrew Bible, is verse 1 of the 12th chapter of Hosea. It was made to be verse 12 of the 11th chapter only in the English versions. The emphasis of the verse is the unfaithfulness of both northern and southern kingdoms contrasted with God's faithfulness. Israel was full of hypocrisy. She claimed to belong to Jehovah, pretended to worship Jehovah, but turned right into wrong and worshipped idols. Calvin wrote, "The Israelites had acted unfaithfully towards God, and resorted to deceits . . . just as a man might surround his enemy with a great army, so had they gathered together innumerable frauds, with which they attacked God on every side." Like an unfaithful wife Israel still demands the Lord's protection and support, while her every profession of love is a lie! Judah is no better! The word *bipbil* as it is in the Hebrew text here means "to cause to ramble about . . . to be unbridled or unruly, to rove unrestrained." Judah runs loose, unbridled, following the dictates of her own unrestrained wantonness. Both seem

MINOR PROPHETS

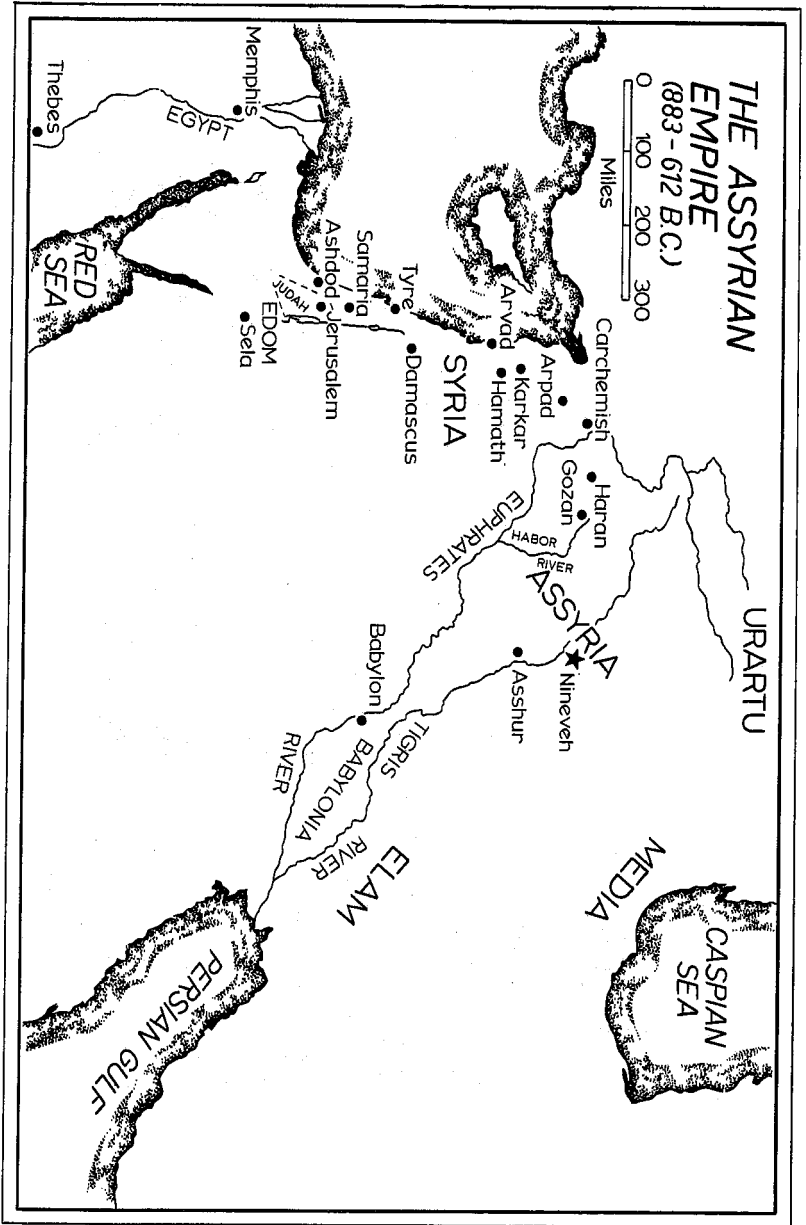


After a drawing by Mr. Brunsford.

Engraved by E. Phipps.

SAMARIA.

MINOR PROPHETS



unconcerned that it is the covenant of the ever Holy, Faithful One they are breaking (cf. Lev. 19:2; 21:8; Isa. 6:3; Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29). Jehovah does not change. He will keep His word—His threats as well as His promises!

QUIZ

1. What does "walking after Jehovah" mean?
2. Why do we say this passage is a Messianic passage?
3. What is wrong with the English version of verse 12? Two things!

LOVE REBUKING

REQUITTING— EPHRAIM HAS PROVOKED

TEXT: 12:1-6

- 1 Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he continually multiplieth lies and desolation; and they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt.
- 2 Jehovah hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.
- 3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel; and in his manhood he had power with God:
- 4 yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him at Beth-el, and there he spake with us,
- 5 even Jehovah, the God of hosts; Jehovah is his memorial name.
- 6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep kindness and justice, and wait for thy God continually.

QUERIES

- a. When did Israel make a covenant with Assyria?
- b. Why refer to Jacob's birth and manhood?
- c. What is Jehovah's memorial name?

PARAPHRASE

Israel is fattening itself for the slaughter by vainly seeking to sustain itself on deceitful military alliances with Assyria and Egypt. Judah, too, will reap the destruction it has sown by sinning against

Jehovah—Jehovah will render justice. If this covenant people had only followed the example of their forefather, Jacob! Jacob was so zealous to appropriate God's promised blessing that while he was still in the womb of his mother he struggled in order to obtain the spiritual birthright by grasping the heel of the first-born, Esau. Then, when Jacob was full-grown, he struggled with all his might, wrestling with God and, through intense prayer and supplication, he conquered and won the blessing of Jehovah. And so it was that Jacob found favor in the heart of God at Bethel. Jacob's exemplary faith and God's covenant blessing there at Bethel applies to us, for we are the children of Jacob, if we follow in the steps of Jacob's faith. We may have confidence that God will bless our faithfulness as He did Jacob's, because He is the God who commands all the forces of heaven, both visible and invisible and rules the universe with unrestricted omnipotence. He is the Great, I AM! He is the Rock of our salvation, and besides Him there is no god! Therefore, O Israel, repent! Return, by faith, to a vital, meaningful fellowship with God. Let this fellowship be expressed in your every-day living through kindness, justice and longsuffering, by faith in the faithfulness of God!

SUMMARY

Israel and Judah's sin brings the just punishment of the faithful God upon this generation of covenant people. The example of their forefather, Jacob, should have led them to lives of faith and righteousness.

COMMENT

v. 1 EPHRAIM FEEDETH ON WIND . . . MULTIPLIETH LIES . . . MAKE A COVENANT WITH ASSYRIA The double indictment of God continues from the last verse of the preceding chapter (11:12). The prophet continues his pronouncement of judgment upon both Israel and Judah.

The word "feedeth" is literally, "*pastures*" or "shepherds." Israel strives eagerly after, or pursues, what is empty or vain. The east wind in Palestine is a fierce, hot wind blowing in off the Arabian desert which dries up everything in its path and makes desolate. Israel pursues that which will bring about its own destruction. Israel is fattening itself for slaughter by living on deceit and lies. During the reign of Hoshea (731-722 B.C.) Israel attempted to liberate itself from the oppression of Assyria by means of a treaty with Egypt (II Kings 17:4). Hoshea sent splendid presents (perhaps olive oil)

to the king of Egypt, to bring him over to his side, and induce him to send him assistance against the king of Assyria, although Hoshea had bound himself by a sacred treaty to submit to the sovereignty of the latter. Undoubtedly there were lies and deceitful arrangements made on both sides, for in order to keep up appearances of alliance with both sides (each bitter rivals for world supremacy), Israel would have to resort to deception, falsehood and intrigue. Such a policy could only end in self destruction and desolation. Such duplicity not only aroused the wrath of their allies, but it was also open rebellion toward God who had demonstrated over and over again His faithfulness in giving them victory, protecting and sustaining them. Furthermore God had commanded that they make no such alliances.

v. 2 JEHOVAH HATH ALSO A CONTROVERSY WITH JUDAH . . .

Judah too is condemned. Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah and during both their lives the good king Uzziah king of Judah, had died to be succeeded by Jotham and then Ahaz, both faithless and unrighteous men who led the people of Judah into the same kind of sin as Israel had been led into. Judah will know God's holy justice. She will get what she deserves. Whatever Judah has sown, so shall she reap.

v. 3-5 IN THE WOMB HE TOOK HIS BROTHER BY THE HEEL . . .

HAD POWER . . . PREVAILED . . . FOUND HIM AT BETH-EL . . . THERE HE SPAKE WITH US, EVEN JEHOVAH . . . "Jacob," evidently referring to all the covenant people (both Israel and Judah), deserves God's *justice*. But, "Jacob" (both nations of covenant people) may have God's *mercy* if they would exercise the same zealous faith to obtain it that their progenitor, Jacob, exercised in obtaining the birthright and the subsequent covenant blessings from Jehovah. Jacob's conduct in obtaining the birthright is definitely held up here as a lesson of earnest striving for the spiritual treasures God has to offer the faithful and diligent. Not only his diligence in obtaining the birthright (whereas Esau, to whom it could have belonged, despised it and preferred physical food), but his persistence and endurance when he was tested by God obtained for him a covenant blessing from God. The test mentioned is apparently the "wrestling with God" (Gen. 32:22ff). It was here Jacob made supplication with loud crying and tears and was heard for his godly fear (cf. Heb. 5:7-8 where the true Jacob wrestled and prevailed). Thus humbly, but persistently, Jacob "wrestled" with God in prayer (probably wrestling more with "self" than with God) and won the victory. As proof of Jacob's victory, Hosea cites Jacob's experience recorded in Genesis 35:9ff where, in Bethel, Jacob not only had his own

name Israel confirmed, but the promise made to his forefather, Abraham, was given to him and he was declared to be the chosen of God.

What God said to Jacob there at Bethel, God meant to be applied to all of Jacob's posterity, the spiritual seed of Abraham. This means, of course, all Jews descended from Jacob until the time of Christ and all Christians afterward who would walk in the same steps of faith as Jacob (and Abraham) walked (cf. Rom. 4:11-17, etc.). All such faithful are members of the kingdom of God and recipients of the covenant promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (which promises find their reality, full-blossomed perfection, in Christ and His church).

The phrase ". . . God of hosts" is intended to portray the God of Israel as sovereign of the universe. He commands the forces of the whole universe, whether visible or invisible. He is omnipotent! This is the God with whom Israel has to do! (cf. I Sam. 1:3; 17:45; II Kings 6:16; II Chron. 32:7; Rom. 8:31-39). We take this opportunity to quote at length from *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, by Merrill C. Tenney, on the article entitled "JEHOVAH:"

"JEHOVAH . . . the English rendering of the Hebrew tetragram YHWH, one of the names of God (Exod. 17:15). Its original pronunciation is unknown. The Jews took seriously the third commandment . . . (Exod. 20:7) and so, to keep from speaking the holy name carelessly, around 300 B.C. they decided not to pronounce it at all; but whenever in reading they came to it they spoke the word *adbonai* which means 'Lord.' This usage was carried into the LXX where the sacred name is rendered 'Kurios,' i.e. Lord. Consequently in the KJV, Lord occurs instead of Jehovah, whereas ASV renders the name 'Jehovah.' When the vowel points were added to the Hebrew consonantal text, the Massorettes (Jewish scribes) inserted into the Hebrew consonantal text the vowels for *adbonia*. The sacred name is derived from the verb 'to be,' and so implies that God is eternal ('Before Abraham was, I AM) and that he is the Absolute, i.e. the Uncaused One. The name 'Jehovah' belongs especially to Him when He is dealing with His own, while 'God' is used more when dealing with Gentiles. See for instance II Chronicles 18:31 . . .

"There are ten combinations of the word 'Jehovah' in the O.T. . . . *Jehovah-ropheka*, 'Jehovah that healeth thee' (Exod. 15:26); *Jehovah-meqaddeshkem*, 'Jehovah who sanctifieth you' (Exod. 31:13); *Jehovah-tsabaoth*, 'Jehovah of hosts' (I Sam. 1:3); *Jehovah-elyon*, 'Jehovah Most High' (Ps. 7:17); *Jehovah-*

roi, 'Jehovah, my Shepherd' (Ps. 23:1); *Jehovah-jireh*, 'Jehovah will provide' (Gen. 22:14); *Jehovah-nissi*, 'Jehovah is my banner' (Exod. 17:15); *Jehovah-shalom*, 'Jehovah is peace' (Judg. 6:24); *Jehovah-shammah*, 'Jehovah is there' (Ezek. 48:35m); and *Jehovah-tsidkenu*, 'Jehovah is our righteousness' (Jer. 33:6,16)."

Jehovah gave His name as a memorial (cf. Ex. 3:15; Psa. 102:12; 135:13). This means, of course, that Jehovah was the name by which Israel was to remember God. The name, "I AM THAT I AM," was to cause Israel to recognize and remember that their God was Self-existent, Eternal, Unchangeable and Immutable. He is from "everlasting to everlasting" (cf. Gen. 21:33; Deut. 33:27; Isa. 9:6; 26:4; 40:28; 63:16; Jer. 10:10; Psa. 90:2; 932:2; Micah 5:2). Such a God would never let one of His promises go unfulfilled! His word is inviolate! His name memorialized in the minds of the faithful all the past historical demonstrations of His unchangeableness and fulfilled promises.

v. 6 THEREFORE TURN THOU TO THY GOD: KEEP KINDNESS AND JUSTICE . . . The "therefore" refers back to the immediately preceding verses. These six verses form a very concise homily in logical sequence. First, the sins of the covenant people and the warning of judgment; second, the example of Jacob's faithfulness and God's blessing of Jacob; third, the nature of God; finally, the conclusion, an exhortation to repent based on the three reasons above. The main reason for repentance is to be found in God's nature, for each of the above points have their bases in the nature of God's unchangeableness. This is the leading idea of all the prophetic literature, indeed of the entire Bible—THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN KEEPING HIS WORD!! On the basis of that faithfulness man may respond toward the will of such a God in full trust and faith and enjoy complete peace and harmony in fellowship with the Unchangeable God! In a world of dissolution, disappointment, inconstancy, temporalness, what a blessed peace comes to the soul who trusts in a God who has historically demonstrated His Immutability, His eternal love! The fruits of such trust are kindness and justice.

QUIZ

1. How did Ephraim "feed" on wind?
2. What connection did Israel's alliances with Assyria and Egypt have with the "multiplication of lies and desolation?"
3. Why was Judah to be punished?

4. How does Jacob's diligence to obtain the birthright become an example to Israel?
5. What does the name "Jehovah" mean?
6. Upon what basis does Hosea call for the covenant people to turn to God?
7. What should be the fruits of their turning?

REQUITING— EPHRAIM HAS PROVOKED

TEXT: 12:7-14

- 7 He is a trafficker, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.
- 8 And Ephraim said, Surely I am become rich, I have found me wealth: in all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that were sin.
- 9 But I am Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt; I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents, as in the days of the solemn feast.
- 10 I have also spoken unto the prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and by the ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes.
- 11 Is Gilead iniquity? they are altogether false; in Gilgal they sacrifice bullocks; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field.
- 12 And Jacob fled into the field of Aram, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.
- 13 And by a prophet Jehovah brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.
- 14 Ephraim hath provoked to anger most bitterly; therefore shall his blood be left upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

QUERIES

- a. How is Israel a "trafficker?"
- b. When did Israel "again . . . dwell in tents?"
- c. Why mention Jacob's servitude for a wife?

PARAPHRASE

Israel has become Canaan, seeking its advantage in deceit and wrong because, like a fraudulent Canaanite merchant, it has attempted to become great by cheating. Israel is even proud of its unrighteousness, rationalizing that the wealth they have acquired justifies the means taken

to obtain it. Let Me remind you, I am the God who led you from Egypt and to this moment I have been the source of all your prosperity. It appears that the only way you will recognize My sovereignty is for Me once again lead you through a wilderness experience where you are totally dependent upon Me. I proved to you over and over that I am the source of your strength by sending prophets to make known My gracious will and exhort you to repentance. I have sent the prophets to preach and teach in every way possible to lead you back to My will. The whole land, from Gilead on the east, to Gilgal on the west, is rotten. Its spiritual worthlessness and wickedness will result in physical destruction and oblivion. I did not even make Jacob's lot as easy as I have made yours. Jacob became a fugitive, served virtually in slavery many years to obtain a wife, and worked at the menial task of tending cattle. Contrast Jacob's lonely flight with your being led by a prophet; contrast Jacob's guarding of the cattle with your being guarded by Me through the prophet Moses. Israel, your failure to remember this and your rebellion against My loving kindnesses has provoked Me to righteous anger against you. You stand guilty and condemned for all your violent, evil, bloody crimes. You will not repent. Therefore justice will be done. Your sentence will be hastily executed.

SUMMARY

Israel's pride has caused her to delude herself. She has forgotten, deliberately, that Jehovah is the source of her very being and of her present wealth. God prepares to teach her again to trust in Him.

COMMENT

v. 7-8 HE IS A TRAFFICKER . . . AND . . . SAID, SURELY I AM BECOME RICH . . . FIND IN ME NO . . . SIN . . . The ASV has in the margin of verse 7, "As for Canaan . . ." and also in the margin, "a Canaanite . . ." The word translated *trafficker* is literally, *merchant*, which is the common, or appellative signification of the Hebrew word in the text here. Israel, far from being like the spiritually-minded Jacob, is like the crafty, cheating Canaanite (Phoenician) merchant or trader. The picture we get of Israel here and throughout the history of the northern kingdom is that her driving ambition was to become wealthy and powerful and she was not concerned with the ethics she used in attaining her goal. In fact, verse 8 represents Israel as an ethical relativist. She believes that the end justifies the means. She thinks she is rich and powerful, and this, after all, is what counts. So who would believe she has committed any wrong that could be called a sin. All's

fair in love and war and making money—according to Israel; but not according to God's commandments given to Israel. Cheating and robbery were strictly forbidden (cf. Lev. 19:36; Deut. 25:13-16; Lev. 6:2-4; Deut. 24:14).

Ethical relativism (sometimes known as "Pragmatism") is the philosophy which says, "Whatever works is true and right." Since one thing or one action may work profitably one day and not the next, truth and right can never be absolute. Truth may change at any moment. It becomes relative to every situation. Of course, if there is no absolute standard of right and wrong then each individual becomes the arbitrary judge of what is right and wrong for what may work for one person does not necessarily work for another. Furthermore, who makes the decision as to what "works?" In other words, is material prosperity the highest "what works" to aim for? This is what Israel had decided. What else can man conclude when he will not accept the divine revelation from God that there are spiritual things much more important? Actually, as Paul says in I Corinthians 15, if Christ is not raised—if the apostolic message is not divinely authoritative, therefore false—man is silly to practice any religion or any code of ethics except hedonism (self-indulgence, self-interest). But, on the other hand, if the apostolic message (and we should include the entire Bible) is an authoritatively revealed will of an Omnipotent God, there are values much higher than "things."

Israel's problem is well summed up in the problem the church of Laodicea. Cf. Revelation 3:14ff: ". . . Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see."

v. 9-10 . . . I WILL YET AGAIN MAKE THEE TO DWELL IN TENTS . . . The people have deluded themselves into believing they are responsible for their own prosperity. God reminds them, in the first phrase of this verse, that He has been Israel's source of origin (when He formed them into a nation and rescued them from Egyptian slavery) and He has been the source of all their successes since that time until the present. Since they will not listen to mere words spoken by a prophet, God will cause them to experience once again a period of dislocation, wandering and testing through the captivity. This experience has as its goal calling Israel to penitent trust in Jehovah as they had in

the wilderness under Moses. All their riches, power and even their land will be taken away. Perhaps then they will repent and turn to God in full trust—since they will have found there is no security in wealth or power. The "dwelling in tents" refers to the ceremonies connected with the Feast of Tabernacles (Num. 14:33) which was to call to their remembrance the shielding and sheltering care and protection of God in their wandering through the great and terrible wilderness (cf. Lev. 23:42-43).

In verse 10 God reminds them of all the intermediaries He sent to lead them, admonish them, teach them and care for them like shepherds tenderly caring for a flock of helpless sheep. The prophets, from Moses to Malachi, were given and used every means at God's command to turn the people of Israel in God's direction. Visions, miracles, predictions of the future and expositions of the Law were multiplied. Vividly arresting figures of speech, symbols, parables, metaphors, allegories, types, object-lessons were all used. These people could never claim lack of quantity or quality of communication as an excuse before God's judgment bar. And, as the writer of the Hebrew epistle puts it, ". . . if the message declared by angles was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will."

v. 11 IS GILEAD INIQUITY? . . . IN GILGAL THEY SACRIFICE BULLOCKS . . . Gilead and Gilgal represent the two halves of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Gilead represents the land to the east of the Jordan which belongs to Israel and Gilgal represents the land to the west of the Jordan. The word translated "iniquity" is literally *worthlessness*. The moral decay of the whole nation, brought on by idolatry, will lead to physical disruption and destruction. The predictive present is used in this verse. The prophet looks into the future and sees it as present—"their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field." This is what is to happen to their altars to idolatry.

v. 12 JACOB FLED INTO THE FIELD OF ARAM . . . Earlier Jacob was used as an example of the diligence for spiritual things which God expected Israel to imitate. Now Jacob's long years as a fugitive, slaving away at such menial tasks as herding cattle, all the distress and affliction he suffered in those years, in made to contrast with the many years of prosperity, peace and security the nation of Israel has enjoyed under the protection of God. Jacob had endured his affliction and served the

Lord faithfully and in gratitude. Israel, the nation, instead of thanking the Lord for their comfort and prosperity by love and faithful devotedness to Him, spurned His love, and went after other gods.

v. 13 . . . AND BY A PROPHET WAS HE PRESERVED . . . No such helpers were given to Jacob. God sent prophets to light the paths of Israel, the nation, by the proclamation of His Word. God demonstrated visibly, many times over, by miracles and predictions through the prophets, His power and His purposes. But it was not given to Jacob, to such an extent, to have the power and purpose of God demonstrated visibly. The nation had privileges and possibilities far beyond those of their "father" Jacob. God had every right to expect of the nation at least as much faithfulness as Jacob had manifested—even more. "To whom soever much is given, of him shall much be required."

v. 14 EPHRAIM HATH PROVOKED TO ANGER MOST BITTERLY . . . Israel's indifference to God's love gave provocation to God's righteous indignation. Unrequited love justly deserves anger. The perfect love of God, when spurned and mocked, merits perfect justice and righteous retribution. If men are moral, if God is moral, if the universe is governed by moral principles, then to repudiate the loving, protecting, sustaining will of the omnipotent God is to morally and justly deserve and deliberately choose the only reasonable and logical alternative—the indignation and wrath of the One spurned. A deliberate, moral choice of wrong can only result in deliberate, moral rejection of good. The crucial question is: Has it been sufficiently demonstrated, historically and pragmatically, or empirically, that God exists, that the Bible is His inerrantly recorded Will for man, that Jesus Christ is His Son, and does the Bible claim to be the exclusive and ultimate "Good?" The answer is now, and was then, unequivocally, YES! Therefore, man, the moral creature, must make his own decision. He is "master of his fate." If man decides against the empirically demonstrated and exclusively ultimate Good, "his blood shall be left upon him." If man will not, by faith and obedience toward God, allow God to forgive his sins, then man must pay the penalty for his own sins. If man chooses evil and rebellion against God (which makes man to be in disharmony with his created purpose) then this is what God will permit man to have—for all eternity.

QUIZ

1. Why use the word "trafficker" in place of "Canaanite?" in verse 7.
2. What was Israel's ethical philosophy?
3. What is "ethical relativism?" Do people practice this today?

4. Why is ethical relativism impractical?
5. How and why did God intend to "make them to dwell in tents" again?
6. How extensive were the opportunities for Israel to know the will of God?
7. Does the person who deliberately chooses evil deserve the wrath of God? Why?

REQUITING— GOD WILL PUNISH

TEXT: 13:1-8

- 1 When Ephraim spake, there was trembling; he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.
- 2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them the work of craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.
- 3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the dew that passeth early away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing-floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.
- 4 Yet I am Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no god but me, and besides me there is no savior.
- 5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.
- 6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me.
- 7 Therefore am I unto them as a lion; as a leopard will I watch by the way;
- 8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart; and there will I devour them like a lioness; the wild beast shall tear them.

QUERIES

- a. Why did they "kiss the calves?"
- b. How is Israel to be "like the dew that passeth early away?"
- c. What is the "caul of their heart?"

PARAPHRASE

It used to be when Israel spoke, her neighbor-nations trembled because Israel was powerful and influential. But Israel let his pride destroy him. He spurned Jehovah God and rebelled against Him, wor-

shipping pagan Baalism instead, and as a result, Israel began to die both spiritually and physically. And now the people disobey more and more. They melt their silver so that unprincipled silversmiths may mold it into pagan idols according to the desires of the people. Then the people say, Bring sacrifices to these gods—how utterly stupid and wicked—men worshipping and kissing calves! Because of such wickedness Israel will perish and vanish from national existence as quickly as the morning clouds, or the dew, or the chaff, or the smoke that rises from the cooking fires. In contrast to the impotency and stupidity of your idol-gods, I AM THE ETERNAL JEHOVAH-GOD. You have every reason to know Me for I delivered you by signs and wonders from the land of Egypt. You have been given all the evidence you need to know that I am the only God—I am the only One who can save you. I saved, protected and led you in the wilderness; I delivered you time after time from plagues, droughts and famines. But when I brought you into the land flowing with milk and honey and prospered you—when you had eaten and were filled, you allowed your heart to be lifted up in pride and you forgot Me, and I specifically warned you, through Moses, not to let this happen. Therefore I am going to come upon this people like wild beasts come upon flocks of sheep. I will tear this nation to pieces and tear its very heart out, and this nation will be swallowed up in My wrath.

SUMMARY

Israel could not stand prosperity. She let pride cause her to forget her prosperity came from Jehovah. Turning, in pride, to idols she persists in idolatry and incurs the terrible wrath of a jealous God.

COMMENT

v. 1 WHEN EPHRAIM SPAKE . . . THERE WAS TREMBLING . . . The struggles of the proud tribe of Ephraim to get the rule among the tribes of the covenant people led eventually to the secession of the ten tribes and the divided kingdoms and the establishment of the kingdom of Israel. Israel, the northern kingdom, then became powerful and rich, and when Israel "spoke" her neighbor-nations (esp. Judah) listened! When Israel became rich and powerful her kings (esp. Ahab, see I Kings 16:29-33) made alliances with heathen nations and brought in the worship of Baal. This offended the righteous and jealous love of Jehovah. From that time onward Israel began slowly but certainly to die—both spiritually, and as a consequence, physically.

v. 2 AND NOW THEY SIN MORE AND MORE . . . THEY SAY . . . LET THE MEN THAT SACRIFICE KISS THE CALVES . . . The farther one goes away from the light, the darker the darkness! The more Israel sinned, the more she wanted to sin. They became stupid and shameless in their sin and melted their silver and fashioned it with their own hands into gods and then bowed down before them and even kissed them. Pusey says, "Kissing was an act of homage in the East, done upon the hand or the foot, the knees or shoulder. It was a token of Divine honor, whether to an idol or to God (cf. I Kings 19:18; Psa. 2:12). It was performed, either by actually kissing the image, or when the object could not be approached, (as the moon) kissing the hand, and so sending, as it were, the kiss to it (cf. Job. 31:26-27). The apostle Paul reasoned logically with the philosophers of Athens that living men should never think that the Deity is like gold or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man (cf. Acts 17:22-31). Men, rational beings, professing to worship Jehovah, kiss, adore, worship, and expect help from calves made of silver. What foolish, stupid wickedness! There is even enough of the revelation of a personal God in nature that men ought not to worship idols or creatures (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). And Israel had in addition to this, a direct, miraculously confirmed, revelation of God!

v. 3 THEREFORE THEY SHALL BE AS THE . . . DEW THAT PASSETH EARLY AWAY . . . Hosea uses four common experiences of men to figuratively express the rapid demise of Israel. As suddenly as the morning clouds vanish, as quickly as the dew is dried up, as violently as the chaff is driven through the air by a whirlwind, and as completely as the smoke rising from a cooking fire vanishes—so will Israel suddenly, quickly, violently and completely vanish from the land. Hosea uses "dew" in other places as a figure of other experiences (cf. our comments on 6:4 and 14:5).

v. 4-5 . . . I AM JEHOVAH THY GOD FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT . . . I DID KNOW THEE IN THE WILDERNESS . . . Again the prophet sets forth the contrast between the true God and the false gods. The enormity of their sin is evident once the comparison is recognized. Their God, Jehovah, delivered them from the power of Egypt and Egypt's "gods" by demonstrating, through Moses and Aaron, the impotency of Egypt's idols and His own omnipotence. Jehovah delivered them, sustained them in the wilderness and revealed His will to them by mighty miraculous signs and wonders which their forefathers had

seen with their own eyes (cf. Deut. 32:1-43). How utterly stupid of this generation then, not to recognize that there is only One True God, Jehovah, and that He alone can save them.

v. 6 . . . THEY WERE FILLED AND THEIR HEART WAS EXALTED . . .

How could a later generation of Israelites be so mentally and spiritually depraved as to forget the facts of history? The answer is here in the sixth verse. Pride! They did exactly what Moses warned them not to do in Deuteronomy 8:11-20! When Israel became affluent, they did like so many other nations have done, and like America is doing today, they lifted up their hearts in pride and said, "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth." Pride—whether it is military pride, political pride, affluent pride or intellectual pride—causes men to "wilfully ignore the facts of history" as Peter points out in II Pet. 3:3-7. Pseudo-scientists, proud of their intellectualism, proud of their erudition, holding to evolutionary, uniformitarian views, will deliberately ignore the historical, empirical facts which testify to creation and catastrophism. Theologians, proud of their erudition or their religious heritages, will deliberately ignore the historical, textual integrity of the Bible and substitute theology and philosophy for the Word of God. Pride is the trap that snared the devil, snared Eve and then Adam and snares many millions today (cf. I Tim. 3:6-7).

v. 7-8 THEREFORE I AM UNTO THEM AS A LION . . . AND WILL REND THE CAUL OF THEIR HEART . . . God's flock had been caused to lie down in green pastures and drink beside the still waters. But now God will come upon this flock of helpless sheep (Israel) like all of the wild beasts and tear this nation to pieces. *Caul* is the pericardium or membranous sac surrounding the heart. God is going to tear the very heart out of this nation. He will cause it to be devoured and swallowed up in Assyrian captivity, like a lioness devours its prey.

QUIZ

1. Who "trembled" when Ephraim spoke?
2. When did Israel begin her downward plunge into moral decadence?
3. Did men actually "kiss" calves? Why?
4. How did Paul, the apostle, argue against idolatry to philosophers?
5. Why should Israel have known the difference between Jehovah and idols?
6. Why did Israel refuse to acknowledge the difference between God and idols?
7. How extensive will the judgment of God be upon Israel?

REQUITING— ISRAEL WILL PERISH

TEXT: 13:9-16

- 9 It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against me, against thy help.
- 10 Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?
- 11 I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath.
- 12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is laid up in store.
- 13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for it is time he should not tarry in the place of the breaking forth of children.
- 14 I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.
- 15 Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the breath of Jehovah coming up from the wilderness; and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall make spoil of the treasure of all goodly vessels.
- 16 Samaria shall bear her guilt; for she hath rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

QUERIES

- a. Why does God bring up the subject of Israel's king?
- b. Why the reference to "death" and "Sheol?"
- c. Were pregnant women really to be "ripped up?"

PARAPHRASE

It is to your own self-destruction, O Israel, that you have resisted Me, your only source of help. What good is your king now? Is it not evident that he is unable to save you? Where are all the royal counselors and ministers of state whom you chose when you broke away from the rule of the house of David and formed your own kingdom? You asked for them, now let them save you. In My anger over your separation from the throne of David I have repeatedly given you your desired kings and in wrath I have overthrown them because they are

all wicked. Ephraim's sins are all carefully bound together and preserved for the day when they will be punished. Pain and agony like that of a woman at childbirth will come upon Ephraim. Yes, God is going to chasten Israel in order to bring about a new birth—a conversion; but Israel behaves foolishly. Like a child, who at the time of the labor-pains will not enter the opening of the womb, Israel will not let himself be new-born. Yet out of the hand of hell will I redeem them; from death will I set them free! Where are your plagues, O death, now that I have annihilated you? Where is your destruction, O Sheol, now that I have conquered you? My purpose of salvation will be irrevocably accomplished and I will not change! For the remnant of Ephraim which remains faithful will bear fruit among brethren. On the other hand, upon the Ephraim that has turned into Canaan, an east wind will come, a judgment of Jehovah, which will destroy this Ephraim. This judgment of Jehovah, the Assyrian empire, will plunder the treasures and valuables of Ephraim. Samaria will pay for its sins because it has rebelled against its God. Her people will be killed by the invading armies, her babies dashed to death against the ground, her pregnant women ripped open with a sword.

SUMMARY

The prophet once more discloses to the people the reason for their corruption. Then, after pointing to the saving power of the Lord, he holds up before them utter destruction as the just punishment for their guilt.

COMMENT

v. 9 IT IS THY DESTRUCTION, O ISRAEL, THAT THOU ART AGAINST ME . . . *What a statement this is*—pregnant with meaning! Man's sin, judgment, sentence and destruction are not, in themselves, from God, but from man's moral choice to rebell against God. Whoever casts himself against the Rock of Ages will destroy himself (cf. Matt. 21:42-44), for God's justice, mercy, righteousness is immutable. An ancient church father wrote, "Rightly is God called, not the Father of judgments or of vengeance, but the *Father of mercies*, because from Himself is the cause and origin of His mercy, from us the cause of His judging or avenging." Hosea is here speaking of the ten tribes in their rebellion against Jehovah when they withdrew from the rule of the house of David under Rehoboam and made Jeroboam their king. The ten tribes showed their contempt for Jehovah when they renounced allegiance to and portion in the throne of David (cf. I Kings 12:16). Of course, this

spirit of desiring to be rid of the rule of Jehovah began in the days of Samuel (cf. I Sam. 8:5) when all the people desired to imitate the nations about them and be ruled over by a visible, physical king.

v. 10-11 WHERE NOW IS THY KING, THAT HE MAY SAVE THEE . . . I HAVE GIVEN THEE A KING IN MINE ANGER . . . The challenge of verse 10 does not presuppose that Israel had no king at all at that time, but simply challenges the people to put forth any of their kings that could save them. None could. We are reminded of Isaiah's challenge to idols and false prophets (Isa. 42:21-24; 44:6-20), to prove their omniscience—they could not. Israel had put all her trust in her kings to save her from economic and political ruin, but "all the king's horses and all the king's men, couldn't put Israel together again."

Verse 11 does not refer simply to the dethronement of one king by another, but to the kingdom generally, which God would overthrow in His anger. The anger of God stands at the beginning and at the end; giving kings and taking them away, are both an evidence of His displeasure. Lange says:

"The whole (temporal) kingdom was a divine system of punishment and chastening. At the request of the people, He granted them a king, but with the expression of His displeasure at their desire because it proceeded from unbelief and vanity, and with the declaration that they would lose their freedom by its realization. But, at the same time, this kingdom of Israel might become a blessing if it with its king would obey God. Nay, God, by establishing the throne of David in Zion, even connected the most precious promises with this kingdom, if the king were entirely one with God and should gather about him a nation obedient to God. But the people with their king followed more and more decidedly a course opposed to God by separating (in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes) from the house with which God had connected his promises, and so forsaking the king which God had given them, they must therefore be punished by having this self-erected kingdom taken away, and the punishment is all the greater that they shall never return to a state of freedom, but must lie under the much viler bondage of foreign rulers until they return to the king whom God had promised to raise up from the House of David."

God gave the tribes who were discontented with the rule of the House of David, a king of their own that He might punish them for their resistance to His divinely appointed government. God held the

rebellious ten tribes responsible for separation from the royal house to which the promise of covenant fulfillment had been given. So when Israel separated itself from the theocracy, it separated itself from the divinely appointed worship and altar, and formed an apostate worship, priesthood and an idol-god. God, after a long period of grace in which He sent many prophets to turn the people back to His will, finally took away Israel's government and gave the nation into the hands of the Assyrians to serve as slaves.

v. 12 THE INIQUITY OF EPHRAIM IS BOUND UP . . . The word *tsarur* means, bound up in a bundle to store away or preserve with certainty, so as not to be lost. So, the idea here is the certainty of the punishment of Israel. Israel thought, as do all sinners, that because God does not punish sin at once, He never will. They think that God will bear with them always, because He bore with them so long; or that He does not see, does not regard it, is not so precise about His laws being broken (cf. Ecc. 8:11). But unrepented sin is increasingly stored up, piled one upon another, stored up until the patience of God reaches the divine day of appointment.

v. 13 THE SORROWS OF A TRAVAILING WOMAN SHALL COME UPON HIM . . . FOR IT IS TIME HE SHOULD NOT TARRY IN THE PLACE OF THE BREAKING FORTH OF CHILDREN. Here is an example of the prophet slipping from one figure to another with application to the same object. It is a very graphic use of figures of speech to portray the obstinacy of Israel. First Hosea describes the punishment Israel will endure by the figure of alluding to the pains of childbirth. Yet, though there is pain in child-birth, it brings forth new life. So, Israel, if she allows her sorrow and travail to turn her to God will be bring forth new life (cf. Micah 4:9-10; Isa. 26:17-18). But death comes if the foetal child does not enter the vagina during labor. So, now, Hosea turns to this tragic picture to represent the stubborn resistance of Israel to the divine purpose in its travail. Israel is an unwise son because, while under the chastening judgment, he resists conversion and new birth. The "place of the breaking forth of children," is in Hebrew, *Mishbar banim*, which means literally, "the breach; the place of bringing forth."

v. 14 . . . O DEATH WHERE ARE THY PLAGUES? O SHEOL, WHERE IS THY DESTRUCTION? . . . This verse contains a promise, not a threat, as some commentators have mistakenly understood. The primary intent of the statement is for a faithful remnant of Israel (the Ten Tribes). God's promise here is that He has the power even to redeem Israel

from the premature death mentioned in verse 13, by raising them from the dead (so to speak) even as Ezekiel predicted in his figure of the "dry bones" in Ezekiel 37! Some of the Ten Tribes did eventually return with Judah and form the Messianic people. But the ultimate fulfillment of this promise was fulfilled when Christ, the true Israel, conquered death and hell, when He died and rose from the grave (cf. I Cor. 15:55). The Israel restored from the captivity became a type of the Messiah and the Messianic people (cf. Isa. 25:8ff).

The phrase "repentance shall be hid from mine eyes," simply signifies that what God has promised to do will be certainly and absolutely accomplished, conditioned upon the response of Israel to His promise. God does not repent! He does not change! His will is immutable! (cf. Psa. 89:34-36; 110:4). Israel, if she will, can put her trust completely in God's promise to redeem her from the "death" of captivity and restore her to her intended destiny as a part of the Messianic people—if she will! It is not God's will that has changed—He does not repent—it is Israel's choice that has changed.

v. 15 **THOUGH HE BE FRUITFUL AMONG HIS BRETHREN . . .** We prefer K & D translation of the conjunction in verse 15 which makes it read "For he will bear fruit among brethren," rather than the "Though he be fruitful . . ." of the text. The opening phrase of verse 15 then becomes a play upon the name "Ephraim" which means "double-fruitfulness." The prophet is saying, in essence, "Yes, even your name signifies the promise of God that some of Ephraim will be redeemed and bear fruit." Of course, all the promises of God are fulfilled to those who adhere to the conditions under which they are given. Of the whole nation of Israel in Hosea's day, only that small remnant who walked in faith in the promises of God and were obedient to His commandments, would be fruitful among their brethren. On the other hand, upon the majority of the people of Israel that has turned itself into Canaan (cf. 12:8), an "east wind" will come. A storm from the "east" will come upon them. This storm from the east (Assyrian soldiers) will consume the fruitful land of the northern kingdom, and all the impenitent sons of Ephraim with it. Their treasures shall be plundered. They become paupers.

v. 16 **SAMARIA SHALL BEAR HER GUILT . . .** Samaria (Israel represented by her capital city) must atone for her sins. She must pay! She has sown the wind—now she shall reap the whirlwind! One word summarizes the past and present history of the Northern Kingdom: **REBELLION** (cf. I Kings 12:19; II Kings 17:14-17). There is a grue-

some description of the cold-blooded cruelty of the Assyrian conquest here. Children will be dashed to death upon the pavements of village streets; women, pregnant with child, will be ripped open with the swords of the soldiers. For a record of the actual fulfillment of this see II Kings 8:12; 15:16.

QUIZ

1. Why is rebellion against God a prelude to self-destruction?
2. How did God give them a king in anger and take away a king in wrath?
3. Why does the prophet liken Israel's situation to child-birth?
4. What is the promise concerning victory over hell and death to Israel?
5. Where is this promise quoted in the New Testament and what is its meaning?
6. What is the "east wind" that will come and destroy impenitent Israel?
7. Where is the record of the fulfillment of verse 16?

LOVE RECONCILING

PEACE REMAINS—LURED

TEXT: 14:1-3

- 1 O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
- 2 Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.
- 3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

QUERIES

- a. Why is Israel directed to "take . . . words" unto Jehovah?
- b. Why does Israel pledge not to "ride upon horses?"

PARAPHRASE

Return, O Israel, by taking the right steps toward God. You have stumbled in taking the wrong steps of sin and rebellion. It is still possible for you to return, but if your return is to be in the right way, it must begin with a prayer for the forgiveness of your sin. So take

with you words of repentance asking the Lord to forgive all your guilt and accept the only good thing that you are able to bring, the sacrifice of penitent lips. Taking the right steps toward God also includes, O Israel, renunciation of trust in world power such as the alliances you have made with Assyria, renunciation of your own military forces, renunciation of idolatry, and trusting completely in the Lord because you have no other One in whom you may trust.

SUMMARY

Israel is given directions for a proper response to the salvation God has offered earlier (13:13-15) and will offer (14:4-8). The proper response is penitent prayer and complete faith in God as their Father.

COMMENT

v. 1 . . . RETURN UNTO JEHOVAH . . . FOR THOU HAST FALLEN . . . Few books in the Bible close on a higher note, with a more climactic appeal, than Hosea. Some, like Genesis, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, II Samuel, II Kings, Jeremiah, and others end on ominous, tragic notes. Other books, of course, close with a joyful note, but none is more dramatically impressive in this regard than Hosea. One gets the feeling from verse 1, here, that Hosea has just offered Israel its last call to repentance before the awful judgment falls. The Hebrew word for "fallen" here is *kashalta* which means literally, "stumbled; made a false step." Israel is exhorted then, to "return" which is equivalent to taking the "right steps" toward God. Jeremiah says it thusly: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16), (cf. also Psa. 16:11; 23:3; 25:10; 119:35; Prov. 2:8-9; 4:11; Isa. 2:3).

v. 2 TAKE WITH YOU WORDS . . . TAKE AWAY ALL INIQUITY . . . SO WILL WE RENDER . . . THE OFFERING OF OUR LIPS . . . One of the first, and most necessary, steps to be taken is that of confession of sin. If we are honest with ourselves and honest with God and confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). However, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (I John 1:8). The work of the Holy Spirit today is to "convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" (see comments on John 16:8-9 in *Gospel of John*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press). God cannot bless until man realizes and acknow-

ledges he is estranged from God and takes the necessary steps to return to the grace of God. The very word "confess" in Greek is *homologeō* which means literally "to say the same as." When we confess that we are sinners we simply "say the same as" God says in His word. And until we do we are rebelling against His word. So with Israel—she must "say the same as" God has been saying to her through the prophet Hosea. She has stumbled through her false stepping and must now confess it.

The phrase "accept that which is good" refers to Israel's plea to God to accept the only good thing they are able to offer Him—that is the sacrifice of penitent lips. They had no merit of their own to offer. He must love them freely (cf. 14:4). God is pleased with the sacrifices of penitent, worshipping lips (cf. Heb. 13:15-16; Psa. 107:22; 116:17; Jer. 17:26; 33:11; Jonah 2:9). And this is what Israel is directed to offer, penitent praise from their lips which would be better than the sacrifice of bullocks (cf. Isa. 1:10-20; Micah 6:6-8).

v. 3 ASSYRIA SHALL NOT SAVE US . . . After prayer for pardon and for acceptance of themselves, and thanksgiving for acceptance, comes the promise not to fall back into their former sins. Trust in man, in their own strength, in their idols, had been their besetting sins. Now, one by one, they disavow them. First, they disclaim trust in man. No longer are they to put their trust for security in political alliances with godless, heathen nations, forgetting that God can protect them from any enemy, regardless of how powerful that enemy might be. The sin involved in making such alliances is, first of all, a manifest lack of trust in God, and second, certain compromises with paganism is necessary in any such alliance.

Second, they disclaim trust in their own strength. War was almost the only end for which the horse was used among the Jews. They measured their own military strength by the number of horses their king could command (cf. Deut. 17:16; I Kings 10:28; II Kings 18:23; Psa. 33:17; Prov. 21:31). Civil defense is not necessarily spiritual defense. National security is not necessarily spiritual protection. Without spiritual health there can be no national strength. Men today may boast of man-made satellites and of intercontinental ballistic missiles with the terrifying potential of nuclear energy, but what can any people do without God? "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us" (Psa. 124:2-3). This will ever be true in spite of our military might.

Third, they must renounce all idolatry. We have dealt at length with the nature and causes of Israel's idolatry. It would be superfluous to add to our former comments, only to remark how foolish indeed to trust in gods made with their own hands.

The phrase "in thee the fatherless findeth mercy" must be another step Israel must take in its way to humbleness. Israel must recognize that it is an orphan and since it is homeless, fatherless and helpless, must throw itself completely upon the mercy of Jehovah who will give mercy to those who so trust in Him.

The words of the Chronicler come to mind as we contemplate Hosea's closing admonition. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (II Chron. 7:14). The three-stage program offered by Hosea to Israel for her salvation would fit the situation of America today: (1) Repent, change the mind in relation to God's word and will; (2) Confess its sins; (3) Renounce its vain hope in political alliances and treaties with godless, tyrannical governments whose avowed goals are enslavement of the world (instead of "building bridges to our enemies" we ought to be repairing bridges made by our pioneer ancestors of trust and praise to God); renounce its pride in its military and economic prowess; renounce all the idols it worships (sex, affluence, sports, sophistication, intellectualism). But, since America is not necessarily "God's people" any more than any other nation, the primary application of Hosea's admonition must be made to the Church (God's chosen nation ever since the Day of Pentecost), see the sermon on Hosea at the end of this book for this application.

QUIZ

1. How had Israel "fallen" by its iniquity?
2. Why is Israel exhorted to confess its sin?
3. What is the only good thing Israel has to offer to God?
4. Name the three-fold renunciation Israel is directed to make?

PEACE REMAINS—LAVED

TEXT: 14:4-6

- 4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him.
- 5 I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

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

QUERIES

- a. How will God "heal" their backsliding?
- b. What do the figurative pictures of Israel as certain trees represent?

PARAPHRASE

I will cure you of your faithlessness and fickleness and I will love you freely and in spite of what you have been for when you have repented, confessed and renounced your sins, My wrath will have been turned away from you. I will nourish you and give you fruitfulness, stability, beauty, and purity like the refreshing dew nourishes and gives all these things to the lilies, the cedars of Lebanon and the olive trees.

SUMMARY

When God's people shall have humbled themselves and turned to Him in penitent thanksgiving, He will shower them with His love and blessings.

COMMENT

v. 4 I WILL HEAL THEIR BACKSLIDING, I WILL LOVE THEM FREELY . . . The Hebrew word translated "freely" here would be more literally, *impelled*. G. Campbell Morgan puts it, "Freely means of My own will and My own heart, quite independently of them or of their deserts. I will not love them in response to their love. I will love them in spite of their rebellion . . . I will love them because I cannot help loving them. That is God. And it is because of that deep thing in the nature of God that He first said, 'I will heal their backsliding,' I will cure the malady of their apostasy."

It is this free love of God (which can only be appropriated by them when they have put themselves in a position to receive it by repenting) which will cure their backsliding. He does not mean that He will merely heal the wounds they have received in judgment for their apostasy. He is going to cure them of the very root cause of apostasy—faithlessness, fickleness and unbelief. And how is He going to do this? We are told in the next verses.

v. 5-6 I WILL BE AS THE DEW . . . HE . . . AS THE LILY . . . CAST FORTH HIS ROOTS . . . BRANCHES . . . SPREAD . . . BEAUTY . . . AS THE OLIVE-TREE . . . Earlier the prophet has used "dew" to

describe the fickleness of Israel's love toward God, "as the morning dew that goeth early away," (6:4). There "dew" represented the evanescent nature of their love toward God. Now "dew" represents the nourishment the everlasting God is able to provide. Because God is as the dew to Israel, he shall blossom as the lily. The lily stands for beauty and purity. God's covenant people, under the dew-like nourishment of God shall be characterized by their beauty and purity. Not only beauty, not only purity, but stability—"cast forth his roots" is synonymous with the stability of the majestic cedars of Lebanon. The branches spreading symbolize magnificence or greatness. The ever-green olive tree symbolizes perpetuity or eternity. Notice the symbolism of it all. Beauty, purity, strength, steadfastness (faithfulness), eternity; and then look at the nation as it was, ugly, impure, deformed, weak and vacillating—withered with the east wind of God's judgment and bearing no fruit.

This, of course, cannot be applied in any ultimate sense to the restoration of the Jews in the days of Ezra and Zerubbabel, for the subsequent history of the Jews does not bear this description out. It is very evidently Hosea's way of expressing God's promise to fulfill the covenant He made with Abraham and Abraham's spiritual posterity (Christians). It is evident that Hosea 14 is entirely Messianic in its terminus *ad quem* (end). It is a prophecy describing the spiritual inheritance that is to come to the Church and this may be clearly seen by comparing the glorious future of Zion (the Church) as Isaiah describes it in Isaiah chapters 60-66. Read especially Isaiah 60:13, 21; 61:1-4; 62:1-5; 65:17-25, as Isaiah also uses the figures of beautifully fruitful trees to depict the future of God's covenant people. There can be no doubt that Isaiah is speaking of Christ and His Church for Jesus applies at least one of these sections to Himself in Luke 4:16ff! God, through Christ, has purified a people unto Himself. God, through Christ, has given beauty, strength, faith, steadfastness and eternal life to His covenant people! God, through Christ, has healed His people!

QUIZ

1. How will God heal the backsliding of His people?
2. What does "freely" mean when speaking of God's love?
3. How is God to be "as the dew unto Israel?"
4. Explain what the different figures of flowers and trees mean.
5. Is this a Messianic prophecy and is it fulfilled in the Church today? Why?

PEACE REMAINS—LOVED

TEXT: 14:7-8

- 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the grain, and blossom as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.
- 8 Ephriam shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found.

QUERIES

- a. Who's shadow are they to dwell under?
- b. Who is "like a green fir-tree?"

PARAPHRASE

All the faithful people who dwell in the shady peaceful and restful influence of this new Israel shall prosper in the presence of the Lord. They will produce and bear fruit because Israel is abiding in the Lord. Israel will say, I will have nothing more to do with idols. And the Lord will have answered out of His concern and care, I have become your everlasting source of joy and satisfaction; in Me you have found life and fruitfulness.

SUMMARY

The idyllic portrait of the Messianic age now comes to a climax from the artist Hosea. God's gracious invitation is responded to by new Israel who finds God able to do exceeding abundantly above all that can be imagined.

COMMENT

v. 7 THEY THAT DWELL UNDER HIS SHADOW SHALL RETURN . . . "They" undoubtedly includes all the nations who shall "dwell under the shadow" of the new-Israel. It is "they" now, not "he"—not Israel, but they that dwell under his shadow. It is certainly confirmed from other prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc., that the promises to new-Israel belong to the "nations" (Gentiles) in the coming Messianic age (the Church). Furthermore, as we have noted in our

comments on Hosea 1:6—2:23, the promises to new-Israel belong to the Gentiles also since the apostle Paul applied Hosea 1:6ff to them in Romans 9-11. G. Campbell Morgan says, "The fulfillment of all this is coming through Christ. This nation as an earthly people was rejected when Jesus said in the Temple courts, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' Almost immediately after, the Lord was alone with His own disciples, and He said, 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches.' Everything of beauty and of glory and of strength and of fruitfulness, is to be produced through Him, and those associated with Him as branches in the Vine." And this new—Israel, as a result of the free love of God shown through His Son, will be "drawn" to Him (cf. Jn. 12:32) forever. Israel's response will be, "What have I to do any more with idols?"—Ephraim has broken with idols. What has brought this break with idols? What is it that sweeps idolatry out of the soul of a man, or of a nation? It is the loving care God expresses for men (once they have known and experienced it). Or, as our text puts it, "I have answered and will regard him (new-Israel)." The love of God, as it has been revealed through Jesus Christ our Lord, is the power that drives sin, anxiety, and fear out of the hearts of men (cf. I Jn. 3-4). We love Him because He first loved us and if we have this hope in us we are able to purify ourselves by it (cf. also II Pet. 1:3-4).

v. 8 . . . I AM LIKE A GREEN FIR-TREE; FROM ME IS THY FRUIT FOUND. This is from God's mouth. God compares Himself to a cypress becoming green, not only to denote the shelter which He will afford the new-Israel, but as the true tree of life, on which the new-Israel finds its fruits—a fruit which invigorates the spiritual life of the new-Israel. We add here the comments of Keil: "The salvation which this promise sets before the people when they shall return to the Lord, is indeed depicted, according to the circumstances and peculiar views prevailing under the Old Testament, as earthly growth and prosperity; but its real nature is such, that it will receive a spiritual fulfillment in those Israelites alone who are brought to belief in Jesus Christ."

QUIZ

1. Who are the "they" of verse 7? How do you know?
2. What motivates Israel to renounce idolatry?
3. When was all this fulfilled? To whom?

EPILOGUE OR POSTSCRIPT

TEXT: 14:9

9 Who is wise, that he may understand these things? prudent, that he may know them? for the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

QUERIES

- a. Why did Hosea add this Epilogue or Postscript?
- b. What does it mean?

PARAPHRASE

Whoever is intelligent will understand what I have written. Whoever acts wisely will be convinced that what I say is true. That is, the ways of Jehovah are the only correct, true and right ways. Furthermore, those who are righteous and just will walk in these ways. The wicked, however, will stumble and fall in them just because they are right and true.

SUMMARY

God's ways are straight and true, and we walk, or fall, according to our relationship with those ways.

COMMENT

v. 9 WHO IS WISE, THAT HE MAY UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS?
 . . . The RSV puts this verse in the form of a declaration and we prefer it that way. Moses declared long before Hosea that keeping and doing the commandments of the Lord was wisdom and understanding (cf. Deut. 4:3-9). Compare also Psa. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 30:3-5. Hosea's challenge is that whoever was wise and prudent in Israel in his day would comprehend that what he was preaching was right! "Prudent" means acting according to intelligence; squaring conduct with conviction.

We may summarize the teachings of Hosea and make them applicable for today: (1) Sin separates from God, and blinds us, so that we lose the vision of Him; (2) Idolatry follows inevitably a loss of the vision of Him. (3) Hosea then reveals the heart and the holiness of

God—His love is freely given and eternal, but it is never divorced from moral requirement on the part of man.

We, today, are living in fuller light than Hosea had. We see God as Hosea never saw Him. We see Him in Jesus Christ. There seeing Him, we know, as never before, that He can make no terms with sin; but we know that he stops at no sacrifice in order that He may heal our backsliding.

If we are guilty of idolatry, what will cure us? The vision of God the Supreme Lover, as He is seen in Jesus Christ.

"Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him?

Is not thine a captured heart?

Chief among ten thousand own Him,

Joyful choose the better part.

Idols once they won thee, charmed thee,

Lovely things of time and sense;

Gilded thus does sin disarm thee,

Honeyed lest thou turn thee thence.

What has stript the seeming beauty

From the idols of the earth?

Not a sense of right or duty,

But the sight of peerless worth.

Not the crushing of those idols,

With its bitter void and smart;

But the beaming of His beauty,

The unveiling of His heart.

Who extinguishes their taper

Till they hail the rising sun?

Who discards the garb of winter

Till the summer has begun?

'Tis that look that melted Peter,

'Tis that face that Stephen saw,

'Tis that heart that wept with Mary,

Can alone from idols draw.

Draw and win and fill completely,

Till the cup o'erflows the brim;

What have we to do with idols

Who have companied with Him?"

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

by Francis Thompson.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
 I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
 I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
 Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
 I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
 Up vistaed hopes I sped;
 And shot, precipitated,
 Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
 From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
 But with unhurrying chase,
 And unperturbed pace,
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
 They beat—and a Voice beat
 More instant than the Feet—
 "All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
 By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
 Trellised with intertwining charities;
 (For, though I knew His love Who followed,
 Yet was I ere adread
 Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.)
 But, if one little casement parted wide,
 The gust of His approach would clash it to:
 Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
 Across the margent of the world I fled,
 And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
 Smiting for shelter on their clanged bars;
 Fretted to dulcet jars
 And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
 I said to Dawn: Be sudden—to Eve: Be soon;
 With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
 From this tremendous Lover—
 Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
 I tempted all His servitors, but to find
 My own betrayal in their constancy,
 In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
 Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deciet.

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.

But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,

They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven,
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.

Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—

"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;

But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies,
They at least are for me, surely for me!

I turned me to them very wistfully;
But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,

Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.

"Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;

Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning

With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
Banqueting

With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured dais,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice

Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."

So it was done:

I in their delicate fellowship was one—
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.

I knew all the swift importings
On the wilful face of skies;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumed of the wild sea-snortings;

H O S E A

All that's born or dies
 Rose and drooped with; made them shapers
 Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine;
 With them joyed and was bereaven.
 I was heavy with the even,
 When she lit her glimmering tapers
 Round the day's dead sanctities.
 I laughed in the morning's eyes.
 I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
 Heaven and I wept together,
 And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
 Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
 I laid my own to beat,
 And share commingling heat;
 But not by that, was eased by my human smart.
 In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
 For ah! we know not what each other says,
 These things and I; in sound I speak—
 Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
 Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
 Let her, if she would own me,
 Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
 The breasts o' her tenderness:
 Never did any milk of hers once bless
 My thirsting mouth.
 Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
 With unperturbed pace,
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
 And past those noised Feet
 A voice comes yet more fleet—
 "Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."
 Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
 My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
 And smitten me to my knee;
 I am defenseless utterly.
 I slept, methinks, and woke,
 And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
 In the rash lustihood of my young powers,
 I stood the pillaring hours
 And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.

Yea, faileth now each dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.

Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?

Ah! must—
Designer Infinite!—

Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
My freshness spent its wavering showed i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a briken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down over
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.

Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.

But not ever him who summoneth
I first have seen, unwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must Thy harvest-fields
Be dinged with rotten death?

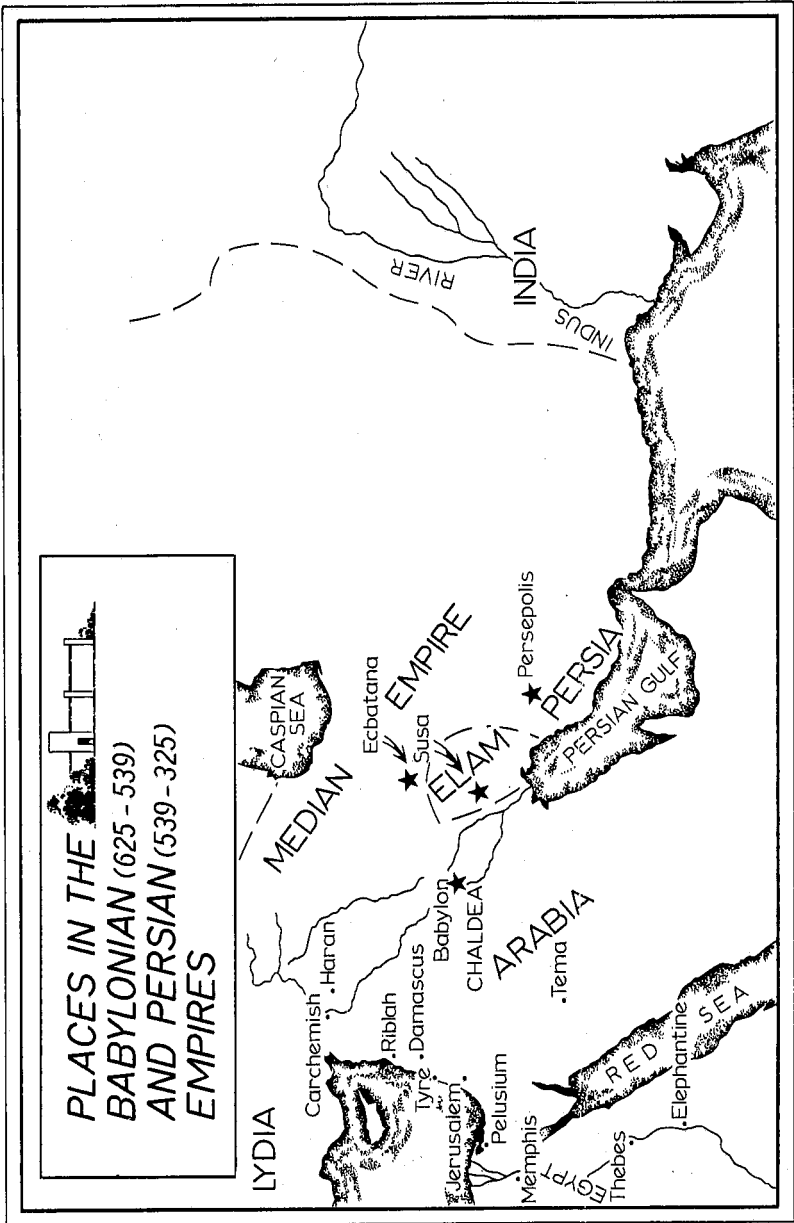
Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
"And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?

Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
Strange, piteous, futile thing!

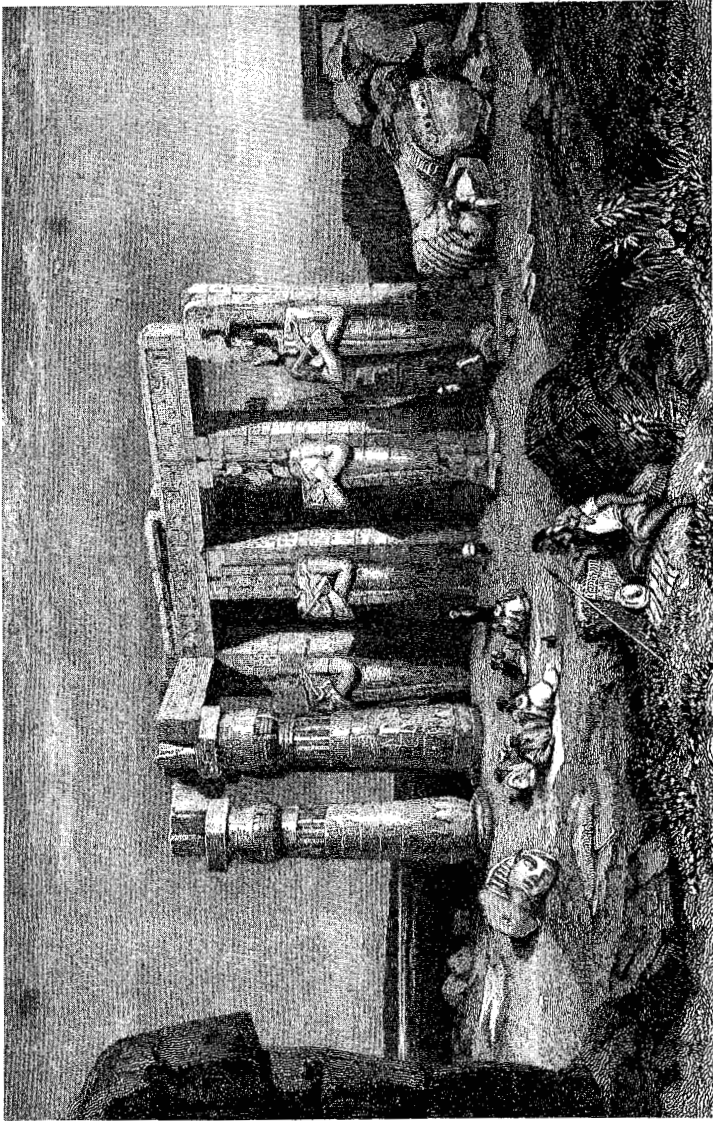
H O S E A

Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught" (He said).
"And human love needs human meriting:
 How hast thou merited—
O! all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
 Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
 Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
 Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
 All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
 Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"
Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
 "As, fondest, blindest, weakest,
 I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

MINOR PROPHETS



MINOR PROPHETS



Engraved by W. Finlay.

Drawn by C. Stanfield, R.A. from a sketch by T. Callender.

EGYPT.
The Temple and broken Statues of Memnon, Thebes.

EXAMINATION ON HOSEA

EXAMINATION

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Was Hosea's marriage actual or symbolic?
2. Did God command Hosea to do something immoral in marrying a "woman of harlotry?"
3. Why did God command Hosea to marry and live with such a woman?

ASSOCIATIONS

Associate the persons or events of column one with the correct person or event of column two.

1	2
Jezreel	capital of Israel
Achor	Egypt
Ephraim	house of vanity
Gibeah	Israel's captors
Admah	near Jericho
Zeboiim	city of plain of Sodom
Lebanon	Hosea's wife
Gomer	Hosea's mother-in-law
Baal	hope
Diblaim	another name for Israel
Lo-ruhamah	city of plain of Sodom
Lo-ammi	city where great sin was done
Gilgal	name of idol
Beth-aven	Hosea's daughter
Assyria	Hosea's son
Memphis	Hosea's son
Samaria	famous for cedar trees

MEMORIZATIONS

"... and I will have _____ upon her that had not obtained _____; and I will say to them that were _____ my people, Thou _____ my people; and they shall say, _____ art my God."

"Their _____ will not suffer them to turn unto their God; for the _____ of whoredom is with them, and they _____ not Jehovah."

"My people are _____ for lack of knowledge; because thou hast _____ knowledge, I will also _____ thee . . ."

HOSEA

"Sow to yourselves in _____, reap according to kindness; break up your _____ ground; for it is time to _____ Jehovah, till he come and rain _____ upon you."

"When Israel was a _____, then I loved him, and called my son out of _____."

"I will heal their _____, I will love them _____; for mine anger is turned away from him."

CONTEMPIATIONS

1. What is the symbolic or typical significance of the names of Hosea's children?
2. Where, in the New Testament, are these names used as fulfillments of Messianic prophecies?
3. What did Hosea's rescue of Gomer from the slave market symbolize in God's relationship to Israel?
4. What was the religious condition of the nation in Hosea's day?
5. How is Ephraim like "a caked not turned?"
6. To what point had the people fallen in their living in Hosea's day? Describe it using Hosea's terms.
7. Why is Hosea compared to the apostle John of the N.T.?
8. Where is the phrase "O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction?" quoted or paraphrased in the N.T.?
9. Name 5 characterizations of Israel listed in Hosea's book (such as, "silly dove").
10. How near the end of Israel's existence did Hosea prophesy? What other prophets were his contemporaries?

THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

Text: Entire book of Hosea

esp., Hosea 4:12; 5:4

INTRODUCTION

I. HOSEA'S BACKGROUND

- A. The entire people of God, except for a very small remnant, was decadent and utterly corrupt
 - 1. Israel was morally falling apart at the seams
 - 2. The evil which Amos had condemned earlier had grown rapidly worse
 - 3. This led to political anarchy and chaos
- B. Religious apostasy and refusal to know God led to
 - 1. kings and princes finding their entertainment in the people's sinning (7:2ff)
 - 2. a degenerate priesthood wringing its hands in greedy glee over the sons of the people because their coffers were enriched through sacrifices (4:6-8)
 - 3. killing, stealing and bloody violence (4:1-2; 6:8; 7:1; 10:4; 11:12)
 - 4. sin is rampant 8:1; the people will not tolerate rebuke (4:4)
- C. Kirkpatrick says, ". . . The picture is drawn with a force and feeling which attests an eyewitness . . . who is keenly and bitterly alive to the sense that his own country is being dragged headlong down to ruin by the sins and crimes which he rebukes but cannot reform . . ."

II. HOSEA'S MARRIAGE ACTUAL BUT SYMBOLIC OF ISRAEL'S RELATION TO GOD

- A. Hosea is commanded to marry a "whorish" woman which symbolizes the attitude of the people of Israel toward God
- B. He is further commanded to give his children symbolical names depicting God's attitude toward the idolatrous people.
- C. Hosea means: Salvation, or, the Lord saveth, which is appropriate for the mission and message of Hosea
- D. It was out of Hosea's actual experience that he was able to know and feel more acutely what God felt about Israel. He was able to preach with a broken heart about the broken heart of God.

III. SO THE REAL THEME OF HOSEA'S MESSAGE IS "SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY."

- A. The primary condemnation is for the spiritual harlotry of the people . . . their unfaithfulness to God . . . which led to the specific sins
- B. Hosea's message is for the *people of God*
APPLICATION TODAY: ALL WHO CLAIM TO BE PEOPLE OF GOD
- C. We shall analyze the book of Hosea as we study and make application of this admonition against the "spirit of harlotry."
 - 1. Condition (just what is the "spirit of harlotry")
 - 2. Cause (how does one become infected with it)
 - 3. Cure (how does one overcome it)

DISCUSSION

- I. CONDITION (what attitudes or attractions betray possession of "the spirit of harlotry?")
 - A. Promiscuousness (permissiveness; indiscriminateness; looseness)
 - 1. The promiscuous person is one who has few convictions—wants to try everything; accept every idea;
 - 2. 4:1-2 ". . . There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; **THEY BREAK ALL BOUNDS** and murder follows murder . . ."
 - 3. The promiscuous person is fickle . . . 6:4 . . . "Your love is like a mourning cloud, like the dew that goes early away . . ."
 - 4. The promiscuous person is actually an insecure, selfish person. This is true in one's relation to God and in one's relation to the opposite sex.

Marion Hilliard, M.D., Toronto, Canada, Reader's Digest, says, "Adolescent boys need to know that promiscuity is habit forming and can make a shambles of their adult lives. Promiscuity is, in fact a mass of contradictions. It is not the indulgence of confident, capable men, but of men who have been defeated. It doesn't attract men of achievement, but only men looking for achievement. Promiscuity destroys a person, much as a narcotic does. It has the identical effect of blacking out disappointments and making a man feel 9 ft. tall—and it has the same hangover the next day, with the disappointments still unsolved and the man even less able to cope with them. The promiscuous man is not oversexed at all; he's undersexed. He's not looking to give some-

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thing, but to get it. This desolate pattern can be set in adolescence. A boy must not indulge himself in his youth if he wants to be a coherent, secure adult. He might keep in mind that gluttons don't enjoy the taste of food. An adolescent boy can check on his own incipient gluttony by means of a bit of introspection. When he contemplates his date for the evening, is he considering the reward he will get for his investment? Does he choose her with his mind on getting the most return? This is downright immoral. No boy should expect a girl to pay for her evening's entertainment by permitting petting."

SEXUAL PROMISCUITY AND RELIGIOUS PROMISCUITY BOTH BETRAY "THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY." PERMISSIVENESS—LOOSENESS—FICKLENESS IN RELIGION IS SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY.

LOOSENESS TOWARD GOD'S COMMANDS AND STANDARDS IS SPIRITUAL PROMISCUITY AND THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY.

B. Prostitution (abasing oneself, degrading oneself for gain)

1. The harlot or prostitute is one who allows herself to be violated for money . . . she gets no real sense of love or satisfaction out of sex (which is what God intended it to be) for she has abased and degraded it.

A book entitled, "The Call Girl," by Greenwald, case studies by an eminent psychologist of about 18 women successful beyond words in their profession, states: "The average income for each call girl was \$35,000 a year. For that kind of money they must have been beautiful and reasonably intelligent; and with that kind of money they could afford good clothes, leisure, and "some of the good things of life." With them there was no fear of "conception, infection, or detection." They knew how to handle themselves and their careers. Yet they all turned to liquor and dope; and finally went down the drain."

2. Israel PROSTITUTED its relationship to God and the purpose for which God chose her. 4:17-18—"Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. A band of drunkards, they give themselves to harlotry; they love shame more than their glory (Jehovah)."

8:4—"They made kings, but not through me, they set up princes, but without my knowledge. With their silver and gold they made idols."

ISRAEL PROSTITUTED HERSELF TO THE DEVIL . . . ALLOWED THE EVIL ONE TO VIOLATE HER IN ORDER TO GET MATERIAL GAIN . . . ISRAEL BECAME AN ADULTERESS AND LEFT HER HUSBAND GOD, AND WENT AFTER OTHER LOVERS (WORSHIPPED PAGAN IDOLS, MADE ALLIANCES WITH PAGAN EMPIRES)

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THE CHURCH (AT LEAST THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE THE CHURCH)
HAS PROSTITUTED ITSELF IN MANY REALMS TODAY

ALLOWED ITS PURPOSE OF SALVATION TO BE VIOLATED IN
ORDER TO GAIN FAVOR WITH THE WORLD . . .

ALLOWED ITS PURPOSE OF SERVING MANKIND TO BE PROSTITUTED
TO GAIN WORLDLY WEALTH

The National Council of Churches General Board met recently and voted to (1) stop the bombing of North Vietnam (2) quit threatening Red China (3) press for Red China's admission to the UN (4) create conditions for cooperation between the U.S. and Communist countries (5) recognize the government of Cuba (6) acknowledge the rights of East Germany (7) remove restrictions on imports from Communist countries (8) condemn the idea that the world is divided into two camps—Free and Communist. THE MEETING HAD LITTLE OR NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST AND THE SALVATION OF MEN ACCORDING TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE N.T.

YES, WHEN THE CHURCH PROSTITUTES ITS RELATIONSHIP AND PURPOSE, IT IS EVIDENCE OF "THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY."

C. Putridness (rottenness, decadence, foulness) such a state is not only useless, but dangerous

1. Israel had become putrid, rotten, foul, useless 7:8-9
". . . Ephraim is a cake not turned . . . gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not." "Israel is defiled . . . Ephraim is sick . . . Ephraim is corrupt . . . a vulture is over the house of the Lord . . . Israel is a useless vessel . . . They have deeply corrupted themselves . . . They have become detestable like the thing they love . . . Ephraim is destined for a prey"

2. It is not necessary to remind you that in many segments of so-called Christendom, today, the church has become putrid..

IN SOME PARTS IT IS LIKE THE PUTRID, SICKENING CHURCH OF LAODICEA WHICH THE LORD SAID WOULD BE SPEWED OUT OF HIS MOUTH!

a. Some churches are dead in ritualism

b. Some are rotten with immorality

c. Some are so stingy they are sickening

d. Some are so concerned with things of the world they are corrupt and perverted

INSTEAD OF BEING SALT OF THE EARTH THEY CONTRIBUTE
TO THE DECAY OF SOCIETY

WHEN THE CHURCH IS PUTRID THE WHOLE SOCIETY IS PUTRID—
SOCIETY IS REAPING A HARVEST OF IMMORALITY, CRIME, VIOLENCE,

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BROKEN HOMES, HOPELESSNESS AND FRUSTRATION . . . BECAUSE THE CHURCH'S WITNESS IS ROTTEN.

In Washington D.C. recently, 3 Lt. of USMC were dining in a Washington restaurant with 3 girl friends. A group of 3 or 4 Negroes walked in, opened fire, killing two Marine officers and wounding the other officer and one of the girls. The crime was hushed up, kept almost off newscasts and out of newspapers, lest the arrest of the Negroes if reported, be falsely labeled "police brutality" and start a riot . . .

In another city, a PTA meeting was being held in a schoolhouse. A gang of teenagers broke into the school, and before the eyes of these parents and teachers, proceeded to smash up and wreck the furniture.

In many high schools even men teachers must walk down halls two or more together for their own protection . . .

YES, THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY IS EVIDENT . . . BUT WHAT ARE THE CAUSES . . . WHY IS THERE A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY IN THE CHURCH????

II. CAUSES

A. Pride; the proud do not trust in God . . . they trust in themselves . . . they are unfaithful . . . in their pride they cultivate the spirit of harlotry

1. Pride was the door by which the spirit of harlotry entered the heart of Eve then Adam
2. "The pride of Israel testifies to his face" Hosea 5:5 "The pride of Israel witnesses against him" Hosea 7:10
3. Israel was proud of its material progress; proud of its international deals; proud of its religiosity; proud of its past . . . etc.

ALL THIS PRIDE OPENED THE DOOR TO SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY
"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate."
Prov. 8:13

Obadiah said to Edom, "The pride of your heart has deceived you . . ."

BISHOP OXENAM, ONCE HEAD OF W.C.C., said, "The doctrine of substitutionary atonement to me is immoral. They are my sins . . . I will atone for my own sins . . ."

GREAT SECTIONS OF CHRISTENDOM BOAST OF THEIR MATERIAL WEALTH . . . HOARD IT . . . BOAST OF THEIR POLITICAL POWER AND SPEND THEIR ENERGIES CULTIVATING IT . . . BOAST OF ITS PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INTELLECTUALISM . . . Pride in all this creates the tendency to be unfaithful to God . . . this opens the door to the spirit of harlotry.

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OTHER SEGMENTS OF THE CHURCH BOAST OF THEIR NUMBERS, OF THEIR RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES, OF THEIR RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND THEIR PRIDE IN THESE THINGS HAS INFECTED THEM WITH A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

B. Parrotism (imitating, longing to be like another)

1. The church has imitated and copied the world and has prostituted itself away from God
2. Robert Sinsheiner, prof. of biophysics at Cal Tech, declares that the scientist has now in effect become both Nature with a capital N and God with a capital G. GOD IS NO LONGER NEEDED
3. The church has aped that claim . . . GOD IS DEAD. A survey of some 3000 clergymen (Prot.) by McCalls, Feb. 1968, reveals a considerable number rejecting altogether the idea of a personal God; a majority not believing in the virgin birth; and disbelief in the deity of Jesus; salvation is not the major task of the church.
4. Theologians advocate and many church members are only too happy to practice SITUATION ETHICS . . . "NEW MORALITY" . . . WHICH IS ONLY THE OLD IMMORALITY DRESSED UP IN NEW TERMINOLOGY . . . IMITATING WHAT THE WORLD HAS BEEN ADVOCATING AND PRACTICING FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME!
5. This was the cause behind Israel's spirit of harlotry in Hosea's day, WANTING TO BE LIKE THE WORLDLY NATIONS ABOUT THEM!!!

THE CHURCH IS A BODY OF INDIVIDUALISTS . . . MY FRIEND IF YOUR SECRET DESIRE IS TO IMITATE THE MORALS OF WORLDLY FRIENDS . . . IF YOUR SECRET DESIRE IS TO POSSESS THE THINGS OF THE WORLD . . . IF YOUR WISH IS TO REALIZE THE GOALS AND AMBITIONS OF THE WORLD . . . THEN YOU ARE HARBORING IN YOUR HEART THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY.

MINISTERS, ELDERS, CONGREGATIONS . . . NEVER ENVY THE POWER, WEALTH, PRESTIGE OF WORLDLY INSTITUTIONS, FOR SUCH ARE THE SEEDS OF THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY!

C. Perversity is also a cause of this spirit—this might also be called stubbornness, obstinacy

1. "they rejected knowledge . . ." 4:6
"Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn . . ." 4:16
"they love shame more than their glory" 4:18
"When Ephraim saw his sickness . . . he went to Assyria . . ." 5:13

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"like an oven their hearts burn with intrigue; all night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire . . . all of them are hot as an oven . . ." 7:6-7

"They made kings, but not through me . . . they set up princes but without my knowledge . . ." 8:4

"They turn to Baal, they are like a treacherous bow . . . because of the insolence of their tongue . . ." 7:16

"The more I called them, the more they went from me . . ." 11:2

"Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit . . . the more his fruit increased the more altars he built . . ." 10:1-2

"MY PEOPLE ARE BENT ON TURNING AWAY FROM ME . . ." 11:7

Like those whom Jeremiah exposed in Jer. 6 . . . "we will not" **STUBBORNNESS WILL CAUSE THE HEART TO HARBOR A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY**

THE CHURCH AND INDIVIDUALS MUST LEARN TO REPENT . . . MUST LEARN HUMILITY

THE CHURCH MUST LEARN TO GIVE IN TO THE WILL OF GOD BECAUSE HAUGHTINESS LEADS INTO A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

III. THE CURE

A. Perception: We need to see or recognize our condition

1. Israel could not see itself as God saw it "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"

2. "I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress they seek me" 5:15

SO IT IS SOMETIMES THAT AFFLICTION AND DISTRESS IS NEEDED TO MAKE US SEE

3. God sent them prophet after prophet . . . "Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth . . ." 6:5

THANK GOD THERE ARE STILL SOME PREACHERS, CHRISTIANS AND CHURCHES CUTTING THROUGH THE FACADE AND VENEER OF SOPHISTICATION AND AFFULENCE WHICH IS HIDING THE CANCEROUS SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY . . . BY DECLARING THE CONVINCING, CONVICTING WORD OF GOD!

The writer of Hebrews says, "Ye have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised." 10:36

Christian Reader, June-July 1968, article "WHY, GOD?" A mother tells of bringing baby home with polio . . . working five

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years exercising, praying, hoping, doctoring that the boy would recover . . . through years of caring for him and having eventually to give him reasonable answers for his condition, the mother learned why?

One night while putting him to bed, he asked her, "Mother, why did God give me polio?" She used Bible passages to explain, Heb. 12, II Cor. 1 . . . then she heard Elliot begin to pray, "Lord thank you for my polio. I know you have a purpose for me—something special you want me to do. Help me to watch for your leading so I won't miss it . . ."

MY FRIEND, THANK GOD WHEN YOU ARE TESTED AND TRIED . . .
THANK GOD YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO KNOW GOD'S WORD AND
LET HIM SPEAK TO YOUR HEART . . . THIS WILL GUARD YOU FROM
A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY!

B. Penitence; when we have perceived ourselves and our condition as God has . . . then we must repent . . . WE MUST ALLOW HIS WORD TO CHANGE OUR MIND . . . TO CONQUER OUR OWN WILFULL DESIRES AND AMBITIONS

1. "Come, let us return to the Lord, for he has torn that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up . . ." 6:1-3
2. "Return, O Israel to the Lord your God . . . Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to him, Take away all iniquity; accept that which is good and we will render the fruit of our lips." Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, and we will say not any more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands . . ." 14:1-3

GOD CANNOT CURE ANYONE OF A SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY UNTIL THEY HAVE CHANGED THEIR MINDS AND RETURNED TO HIM . . . ALL MEN ARE CREATED MORAL BEINGS . . . THE MORAL CHOICE IS UP TO THEM . . . GOD WILL NOT FORCE HIS LOVE ON ANYONE . . . BUT HE WILL LOVE FREELY ALL WHO WILL ACCEPT IT (14:4-7)

C. Practice; seeing our condition and changing our mind as to our need; WE MUST THEN PRACTICE THE WILL OF GOD AS HE HAS REVEALED IT

1. "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, that He may come and rain salvation upon you." 10:12

DO WHAT THE LORD COMMANDS FOR THIS IS RIGHTEOUSNESS (cf. I Jn. 3:7) . . . PUT YOUR UNUSED EFFORTS AND TALENTS TO USE IN THE LORD'S WORK (break up fallow ground)

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2. "Whoever is wise, let him understand these things, whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right and the unrighteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them." 14:9

CONCLUSION

- I. IT IS NO MISTAKE THAT THE BIBLE LIKENS THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITHFUL PEOPLE TO GOD UNTO THE RELATIONSHIP OF WIFE TO HUSBAND
 - A. Hosea's own relation to his wife was typical of the way Israel had acted toward God and how God had acted toward Israel . . . GOD LOVED THEM AGAIN, JUST AS HOSEA REDEEMED HIS WIFE FROM SLAVERY!
 - B. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:25-27
 - C. "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb . . ." Rev. 19:9 "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." 21:2
- II. SO, THE EXHORTATION OF HOSEA TO YOU IF YOU ARE A PART OF HIS BRIDE IN 1968 IS.
 - A. Do not be found guilty of harboring in your heart "the spirit of harlotry."
 1. Check the conditions which betray such a spirit being harbored in the heart."
 2. Be careful not to let pride, parrotism or perversity cause you to sow the seeds of the spirit of harlotry in your heart
 3. Perceive, be Penitent and Practice righteousness
 - B. IF YOU ARE NOT A PART OF HIS BRIDE THEN TO YOU IS THE INVITATION OF THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE Rev. 22:17
- III. MANY PEOPLE TODAY THINK THEY ARE CHRISTIANS . . . THEY ARE MEMBERS OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST
 - A. When two people marry there are certain things they must do and say before they are legally married. No matter how much they may claim to be married, unless they have gone through the initial ceremonies they are not!

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B. On the other hand, there are some who have gone through the right initial ceremonies, but they are UNFAITHFUL and they are not really married . . .

IN BOTH THERE IS THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY

AND SO IT IS WITH THOSE WHO WISH TO BE KNOWN AS MARRIED TO CHRIST, BUT DON'T WANT TO BE FAITHFUL EITHER IN THE INITIAL CEREMONY OR IN THE SUCCEEDING YEARS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING, IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SERVE, WORSHIP—LOOK OUT! THE SPIRIT OF HARLOTRY IS TAKING ROOT IN YOUR HEART—IF ONE CHURCH IS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER NO MATTER WHAT THEY TEACH—LOOK OUT!

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