

Profit from the Prophets

a survey of the major and minor prophets



**PINE
COVE**

SUMMER STAFF
BIBLE STUDY 2013



Dear Summer Staff:

The prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible are a rich and deep study in the grace and love of God for His stubborn and rebellious people. Most avoid these books because they are difficult to understand and are filled with unhappy messages of judgment and destruction. What we will find this summer, however, is that these books are a rich study in the characteristics of God and His unrelenting desire to see His people conformed into His image once again. Furthermore, a proper understanding of these passages, we will see, helps us to more rightly understand why the New Testament authors quoted these passages so frequently. Finally, while the message of the prophets was delivered to the nation of Israel, we will also find timeless principles that are applicable to our own lives as well.

It is my hope that through surveying these prophetic books this summer that we not only gain more knowledge and information about the message of each book, but that we respond to the message of each prophet with immediate costly obedience. Israel made the grave mistake of not listening to these men the first time; I hope that we do not make that mistake a second time.

Remember, don't be the end user of this study. Re-invest what you have learned into the lives of the people you minister to back at home and at school. It will not only be a blessing to those whom you choose to spend time with, it will further cement what you have learned this summer.

And don't forget – not only do you have the notes to this study, you also have access to the audio recordings as well! Each week we will post the audio on our blog: blog.pinecove.com.

I'll look forward to next summer when we'll get to do this all over again! In the meantime, don't forget about the opportunity you have at the Forge. If you are interested in applying, please give me a call – I'd love to speak with you about it.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance,

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Profit from the Prophets

Instructions for Teachers & Bibliography

How To Use This Study:

- Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the Text. These notes assume that you are already familiar with the passages being studied, so don't expect to be able to sit down with the note pack and easily walk through the study without a little prep work on your part.
- Step 2: Decide which parts of the passage are the ones you want to focus on. These lessons are NOT designed to teach the lesson for you. You have more things to teach here than you could/should possibly teach in a 30-45 minute lesson. You must decide which parts of the Text and notes are most pertinent to the group you're teaching.
- Step 3: Don't bore or insult your study group by reading the study to them point by point. Instead, have a general outline of thoughts and your own personal illustrations that make the study come alive. Think of these notes like the bone structure and skin. It is your job as the teacher to make the study come to life. Feel free to change the study as you like.
- Step 4: Look for opportunities for application. The thrust of this note pack is focused on helping you, the teacher, prepare well for your study. You will need to encourage application with your small group based on who they are and what your relationship is with them. Whatever the case, don't skip this step – otherwise this study will just be an exercise in information transfer.
- Step 5: Copy these notes and distribute them each week to your small group. No need to give them lessons in advance – once per week will be good. Encourage them to use the notes as a guide for the rest of the week for their quiet times so they can dive deeper into the lesson if they would like to.

Remember: These notes are *mine*. You have to make them *yours*. Until the Text becomes something you are passionate about and familiar with you will have a lot to say but nothing to teach. Change this up as much as you want – add more quotes/references. *Make it your own*. The most inspiring and effective teachers are those who own what they teach.

Tough Questions:

It's hard to replace the value of a good question that will keep your students learning even after they leave your study. Each week there will be a question or two at the end of the study that is designed to make your students (and you!) think hard about the subject just discussed. Sometimes the questions aren't even answerable – but that's not the point. The point is that they are engaging the Word on their own (and they're motivated to do so!). Don't worry about your answers – there is more to be learned in the investigation of the question most of the time than in determining what the right answer is.

Sample Schedule for Summertime:

- 6:50am – Arrive before they do & make sure there is coffee!
- 7:00am – Start your Bible study promptly on time. No need to waste time asking “how was your week” or “how are you feeling.” They will get that in their small group time. Get straight to the meat – you'll need every minute!
- 7:40am – If you want to have time for Q&A at the end, plan on ending the study a little early. Then you can have some dialogue about the text or discuss the tough question from the week before.
- 7:45am – Dismiss the study *promptly*. Do not go over on time as it obstructs the flow of camp.

Bibliography:

There are not many single volumes out there about the covenants themselves. Most of my research has come from a few sources and then random commentaries. As I compiled my notes and thoughts, these were the resources that I found to be the most helpful. If you would like to study further, I would recommend these resources to you first as good entry points. So, to the degree you find this study helpful, you need to know it really comes from the wisdom of these brothers in Christ. I'm just the young guy standing on their shoulders.

Primary Sources:

- Constable, Tom. Expository notes on specific books. 2013 edition.
 - Dr. Constable, a retired professor of Dallas Theological Seminary, makes his expository notes on the entire Bible available online for free! You can download them at www.soniclight.com. Highly recommended!
- McComiskey, Thomas Edward. *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical & Expository Commentary, Vol. 3*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
 - This is a technical volume that would be most useful for the advanced student.
- Walvoord, J.F. & Zuck, R. B. (Eds.) *Vol. 1: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
 - This resource is one of the first commentaries I recommend young students purchase as they begin to build their theological library. It provides a basic and brief verse by verse commentary on each book of the Hebrew Bible in one volume.
- I also draw a lot from my personal notes I took while a student at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Special Thanks To . . .

. . . Andrew Peterson, The Album Leaf, Shane & Shane, Explosions in the Sky, George Winston, and James Horner whose music helped to drown out all the distractions and keep me focused.

. . . My gorgeous, thoughtful and nurturing wife who puts so much of her own wants and needs aside so that I can do things like the Forge and write studies like this one. Darcie, your love is a gift; I treasure it. You are precious to me.

. . . Pine Cove for giving me the opportunity and the time to write this study. I'm grateful to work for a ministry who cares so deeply not just for the people they minister to, but also the people they employ as ministers.

Profit from the Prophets

A Survey of the Major and Minor Prophets

Week 1: Introduction & Isaiah 6:1-13

Week 2: Isaiah 40

Week 3: Habakkuk 2:1-4

Week 4: Zephaniah 1:1-7

Week 5: Malachi 1:1-14

Week 6: Ezekiel 16

Week 7: Ezekiel 37

Week 8: Hosea 1

Week 9: Micah 6:1-8

Week 10: Joel 2:28-32

Week 11: Daniel 9:24-27



Profit from the Prophets

Week 1 :: Introduction

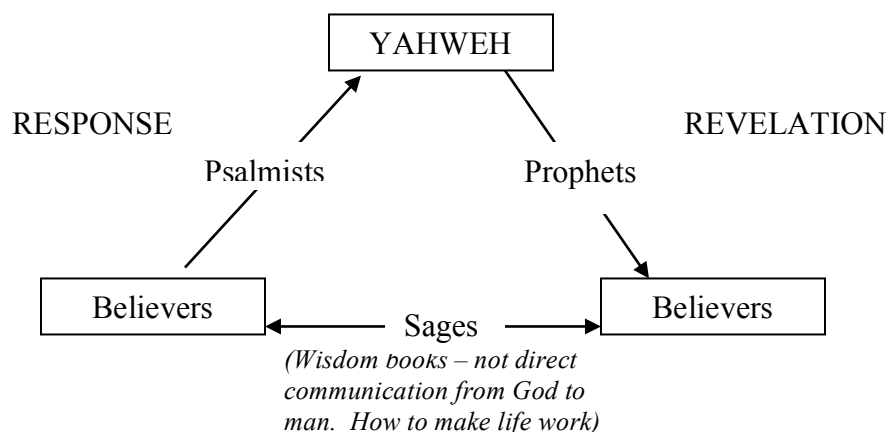
Why Study the Prophets?

1. The prophetic books are difficult to understand and we often skip them simply because they don't make sense to us.
2. Understanding the role of prophets in God's economy will help us respond more quickly and obediently to the messages we hear in our own lives.
3. At a bare minimum, we ought to know a little bit about each prophet, why he wrote, when he wrote, & what the most important chapters are of his book.
4. Much of what the prophets prophesied about the future still has yet to happen! We need to rightly understand its purpose and place in the story of redemption.
5. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and **profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." -2 Timothy 3:16-17

What is a Prophet?

- A prophet is a male or female who speaks God's Word to people. The spoken Words do not originate from the prophet; they are God's delivered *through* the prophet. He or she is not allowed to speak his or her own words, only those that are from God (Exodus 7:1; Numbers 12:6-7; Deut. 18:20-22). These Words are only accessible to the prophet; they are not known unless the prophet speaks them.
 - While a prophet must be able to sharply distinguish the contents of God's Word from his/her own, once he/she has made the distinction the prophet has an absolute compulsion to speak. The words burn in his/her soul until he/she utters them. (Jeremiah 6:10, 15:17)
 - In the Hebrew Bible, prophets become prophets when they received the word of the Lord directly or in a vision (Jeremiah 1:4, Ezekiel 1:1, Zech 1:1). In the New Testament, Jesus is the ultimate Prophet of God and His coming, along with the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit, inaugurates a significant shift in the office. It is no longer an office; it is a gift (Acts 2-3; 1 Corinthians 12-14).
- In the Bible, prophets are classified into two types: major & minor. The distinction is not in significance but simply the length of the book.
 - Major: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
 - Minor: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

The Role of the Prophet in Divine Revelation



REFLECTION

Why Does God Use Prophets?

- God has always had a means of communicating with His people. The office of prophet has developed from Abraham to Moses to the Judges to Kings to the prophets we have recorded in Hebrew Scripture.
- As God's mouthpiece, the role of the prophet was not only to point forward to the coming of the promised One, but also to point back to the founding of covenant with the people on Mount Sinai. This is a major and recurring theme in most of the pre-exilic prophets.
 - Take time to point out Deuteronomy 27-28. The curses related there are constantly being referenced by the prophets as a reason for God's impending judgment.
 - *As such*, the prophets, though their messages are frequently filled with doom and judgment, are actually instruments of God's grace! Many people question why a loving God would destroy His people as the prophets describe – but the prophets are giving the people yet another last change to repent and turn back to God.
- Names of prophets are theophoric: Their names are built to magnify God & usually summarize their ministry.

The Historical Backdrop of the Prophets

- Prophets are also classified according to when in Israel's history they ministered.
 - Pre-exilic: ministered before the exile of Israel in 586BC
 - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel?, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah
 - Exilic: ministered during the exile from 586 – 536BC
 - Daniel, Ezekiel
 - Post-exilic: ministered after the return from exile
 - Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel?

Isaiah Chapter 6

Fast Facts & Context:

- Chapters 1-5 serve as an intro to the book. This was a fairly tumultuous time in Israel's history. The Northern Kingdom was on the verge of collapse and the Southern Kingdom was in rapid spiritual decline. Chapter six begins the prophetic ministry of Isaiah and the first five chapters illustrate why Isaiah's ministry was needed.¹
- It also correlates well with the following chapters 7-39 in how a sinful nation could become a kingdom of priests by seeing Yahweh and allowing Him to deal with their sin as Isaiah did.
- The nation of Assyria was growing in power and becoming more and more aggressive (they would overthrow the northern kingdom only 20 years later).
- Jewish legend suggests that Isaiah was Uzziah's cousin and caretaker during his years of leprosy – making this section more emotional than simply historical/informational.²

Exposition:

V.1:

- Uzziah: (a.k.a. Azariah) was one of the few good kings of Israel. He reigned for 52 years, but the last 17 years of his reign were marred by his leprosy³. He was, perhaps, the most faithful king in Israel since Solomon. His death would have been a big deal; his death was likely around 740BC.

¹ Dr. Thomas Constable. Expository notes on Isaiah. 2004.

² Ronald B. Allen. Class Notes. Dallas Theological Seminary. 2001.

³ Consider & compare the story of Uzziah's fall in relation to this story of Isaiah's commissioning: see 2 Kings 15:5 & 2 Chronicles 26:16-23. In fact, several contrasts between the lives of these two men can be made.

- Lord: is the Hebrew word *adonai*, meaning “sovereign master”.
- Throne, lofty & exalted: In Isaiah’s vision, he see’s the sovereign master seated on a high/elevated throne. So, we have a three-fold emphasis to God’s majesty: he is *adonai*, he is lofty, he is exalted (notice the distinction between the human king of Uzziah and the Sovereign King of All). This sovereign master is the true king of Israel.
 - It is interesting to think about the “sovereign master” as one who is seated on a throne. God the Father has no shape or form, so his sitting down would not really be realistic because of his lack of physical form. Some commentators think that this could be the pre-incarnate Christ that Isaiah is seeing.
- Train filling the temple:
 - “In the most holy place of the temple in Jerusalem, God’s glory was evident between the cherubim on the atonement cover over the ark of the covenant. Therefore some Israelites may have erroneously thought that God was fairly small. However, Solomon, in his dedicatory prayer for the new temple, had stated that no temple could contain God and that in fact even the heavens could not contain Him (1 Kings 8:27). Therefore Isaiah did not see God on the ark of the covenant, but on a throne... The Lord’s long robe speaks of His royalty and majesty. His being in the temple suggests that though He hates mere religiosity (1:11–15) He still wanted the nation to be involved in the temple worship. The temple and the temple sacrifices pictured the righteous dealings of the sovereign God with His covenant people.”⁴
- Temple: Isaiah wasn’t a priest. Thus, he wouldn’t have gone into the temple because he would have known full well the consequences of that wrongdoing from his service to Uzziah. Nevertheless, very much *unlike* Uzziah, Isaiah in his vision is allowed to enter into the Temple.
 - It is important to remember that this was likely a vision of Isaiah – not an actual physical experience (just like John’s revelation recorded in the book of Revelation or Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple). It doesn’t make these events any less real for Isaiah, however. He experiences the vision as if it is happening to him physically.

V.2:

- Seraphs: Even angels like the Seraphim (*who are without sin*) still must cover themselves in God’s presence because He is so holy and glorious.
 - The word for Saraph in Hebrew means “to burn.” Elsewhere the same Hebrew word is translated “poisonous snake” (Num 21:6; Deut 8:15; Isaiah 14:29, 30:6). They are angelic beings who flew and stood above the Lord (who perhaps had a more serpentine appearance than human).
 - There are a wide variety of interpretations as to what the covering of wings represents as well as flight.

V.3:

- Notice, this is what the angels are saying to *each other* – not to the Lord.
- Holy: is the Hebrew word *kadosh*. It means sacred – not necessarily “pure” or “sinless.” Those are things that contribute to the *kadosh* of Yahweh. The angels are proclaiming the unlikeness of anything in comparison to Yahweh. That’s what holiness means. To be holy means to be unlike anything that is common. Furthermore, in the Hebrew language when a word is repeated twice it’s like saying “God is the most holy.” When a word is repeated 3 times, it’s like saying “God is so holy, there are no other words to explain or describe how holy He is.”⁵

⁴ Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Is 6:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ Ronald B. Allen. Class Notes. Dallas Theological Seminary. 2001.

- The LORD of hosts: This name for God is also translated “The LORD of armies” or “The LORD who commands armies.” We have a lot of baggage with the term “army” because we view it primarily as a military term – which it is – but in Hebrew Bible can also carry the connotation of all of the citizens of the angelic realm.
- “the whole earth is full of His glory:” Just as Yahweh’s glory filled the temple, so also does it fill the earth (Psalm 19:1-3). In as much as they are similar, there is a stark contrast to Isaiah’s behavior in the presence of God’s glory and the Nation of Israel’s behavior since the Exodus (compare also Isaiah’s behavior to Uzziah’s)(see 1 Peter 1:15).

V.4:

- The praise of the Seraphim was so great that it shook the temple!
- Smoke: Smoke tends to symbolize God’s power to consume / judge (see Ex 19:18, Deut 4:24; Rev 9:2). Thus, Isaiah’s fear when the smoke fills the temple. It could also be a reference to the pillar of smoke that the Nation of Israel followed in the wilderness that demonstrated God’s presence among the people (see Ex. 13:21; 16:10; 1 Ki 8:10-13).

V.5:

- So many times and ways prophets had prophesied “woe” upon the nation of Israel – and here a prophet is prophesying “woe” upon himself.
 - Isaiah has a right understanding of who he is in relationship to God (also known as humility). He’s not *being* humble, he *is* humble.
 - That right understanding leads to his admission of sin and inadequacy before holy, holy, holy Yahweh, Lord of armies, enthroned as King.
 - A leadership lesson for all leaders in ministry: *the most obvious demonstration of your closeness to God is your awareness of sin*. The more we mature in our lives as Christians, the more sinful we become (in our sight). This could be the biggest qualification for ministry.
 - “Woe” – realize God’s holiness & your sinfulness (v.5)
 - “Lo” – accept God’s provision for cleansing (v.7)
 - “Go” – fulfill the mission God gives you (v.9)⁶
 - “I am convinced that the first step towards attaining a higher standard of holiness is to realize more fully the amazing sinfulness of sin.” -J.C. Ryle

V.6-7:

- Note, all Isaiah does is acknowledge his condition – he didn’t ask God for help or make excuses or make empty promises. As a result, God provides what Isaiah needs to dwell in His presence.
 - So it should be with us. When we draw near to God and see more and more sin in our lives, we need not try to rid ourselves of our sin. We draw near in full expectation of deserved judgment and then God touches us not with a coal, but with the blood of Jesus.
- “Realizing his impurity, Isaiah was cleansed by God, through the intermediary work of one of the seraphs. It is fitting that a seraph (“burning one”) touched Isaiah’s lips with a hot coal ... from the altar, either the altar of burnt offering, on which a fire was always burning (Lev. 6:12), or the altar of incense where incense was burned each morning and evening (Ex. 30:1, 7–8). This symbolic action signified the removal of the prophet’s guilt and his sin. Of course this is what the entire nation needed. The Judahites needed to respond as Isaiah did, acknowledging their need of cleansing from sin. But unlike the prophet, most members of the nation refused to admit they had a spiritual need. Though they, through the priests,

⁶ Dr. Thomas Constable. Expository notes on Isaiah. 2004.

burned sacrifices at the temple, their lives needed the purifying action of God's "fire" of cleansing."⁷

V.8:

- "Us" is a Trinitarian reference (see Gen. 1:26, 11:7).
- The nation of Israel needed the same type of cleansing that Isaiah had just received. God was going to send someone to accomplish that, but that person also had to be willing to go. Since Isaiah had received cleansing instead of being consumed, he was inclined to sign up.

V.9:

- As much as Isaiah thought that he would be able to lead the Nation to a similar type of repentance to his own, he must have been surprised when God told him that the result of his preaching would NOT be repentance, but hard-heartedness.
- John uses this passage in reference to Jesus' ministry in 12:40-41. Also similar to Moses' ministry: The more he preached, the harder Pharaoh's heart became.
 - *The success of our ministry should not be our prime motivation to continue in the work of the gospel. Our loving commitment to remain faithful to the Lord who has graciously saved us and called us into His service despite our lack of outward success should be.*

V.10:⁸

- Did God decide beforehand to "doom" the Israelites to hard-heartedness?
 - God was letting Isaiah see beforehand what the result of his preaching would be.
 - Those who heard God's word had the opportunity & ability to respond to it positively, but they chose not to in the past and they would not choose God in the future.
 - Consequently, God hardened their hearts so that it became harder and more difficult for them to repent (Ex. 10:1, Rom 1:18-32, Heb 6:4-6).
 - Israel had already hardened her heart towards Yahweh and Isaiah's inauguration into ministry was not going to be to reverse the process, but to reinforce their guilt before the Lord.

V.11-13:

- A glimmer of hope. A tenth of the nation would survive the judgment (2 Ki 24:14). The image here is Israel as a tree and being cut down for her unrighteousness. However, just because the tree is cut down, does not mean that it cannot regrow (see also Isaiah 4, 11, Jer. 23:5, Zechariah 6:11-15)
- There is a double play on the word "seed" here. The Hebrew word is *zera* which is a collective singular noun. The seed is both the remnant of Israelites (plural), but it is also a reference to the ultimate holy seed, Jesus Christ (singular) (see also: Gen. 3:15, Gen 12:7, Gal 3:15-29).

Tough Question / Application

1. Given what you've considered today about Isaiah (his sinful condition before God, God's telling him that his ministry will only harden hearts), how does it shape/change your view of what a successful minister of the gospel should look like? (Minister does not just mean "pastor" but anyone who ministers in any way – i.e. a counselor at a camp is a minister)

⁷ Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Is 6:6–7). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁸ Constable notes on Isaiah, 2004.

Profit from the Prophets

Week 2 :: *Isaiah*

Authorship & Date

- Isaiah's name means: "Salvation is of Yahweh" which is a good summary of the book. He had two sons: Shear-Jashub (7:3) & Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (8:3).
- He is a pre-exilic prophet who ministered around 740-681 b.c.
- He is a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah
- There are three traditional chapter divisions in the book:¹
 - Chapters 1-39 were written to those who lived during Isaiah's time & the threat of Assyrian invasion.
 - Chapters 40-55 were written to those who would survive the Babylonian captivity (150 years in the future).
 - Chapters 56-66 were written to the remnant who would return to Jerusalem to rebuild.
- He received his call to prophetic ministry in 740 b.c., the year of King Uzziah's death (Isaiah 6:1), and Jewish tradition makes him out to be the cousin of Uzziah.²
- Isaiah is the 3rd longest book in the Bible behind Jeremiah & Psalms.
- The date of Isaiah's death is unknown, but some place it just after Hezekiah's death in 686BC. Thus, his ministry spanned almost 60 years. According to ancient tradition (via Justin Martyr ca. 100-165), Isaiah was sawn in half by King Manasseh (cf. Heb. 11:37).

Historical Background

- Isaiah ministered under four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.
 - **740 b.c.** King Uzziah dies (6:1)
 - **733 b.c.** Tiglath-pileser invades Israel (northern kingdom)
 - **722 b.c.** Northern Kingdom is overthrown
 - **715 b.c.** Hezekiah begins his reign
 - **701 b.c.** Sennacherib invades Judah while Hezekiah is King

Key Passages

- Isaiah 1 – Definition of sin & grace
- Isaiah 6 – Isaiah's call to ministry
- Isaiah 7:14 – Messianic Prophecy
- Isaiah 9:6-7 – Messianic Prophecy
- Isaiah 11 – The Righteous Branch
- Isaiah 12:2 – Isaiah's name
- Isaiah 40 – Do you not know? Have you not heard?
- Isaiah 52:13-53:12 – The Suffering Servant & Messianic prophecy

¹ Liberal commentators will use these divisions to suggest that three different authors instead of one wrote Isaiah. It is not within the scope of this study to discuss the matter here, but it is worth noting for the student who wishes to study Isaiah further.

² Dr. Thomas Constable. Expository notes on Isaiah. 2004.

Isaiah Chapter 40

Fast Facts & Context:³

- Though Isaiah is often divided up into 3 parts, if it were only divided into two parts, chapter 40 would be the beginning of part II.
- 150 years pass between the end of chapter 39 and the beginning of chapter 40. In chapters 1-39, Isaiah spoke in the present. In chapters 40-66 he speaks/prophesies about *the future*. The future time that Isaiah is speaking about is the time during the captivity in Babylon. Would God still redeem his people now that they had been cast out of the land?
- The theme in the first 39 chapters is God's faithfulness to His promises after He has disciplined Israel for her unfaithfulness. Chapters 40-66 continue to develop this theme along with the themes of comfort, the highway, hope and the revealed word of God.
- The first half of the book is focused on judgment – the second half on restoration & deliverance.

Exposition:

V.1:

- "Comfort" is *nacham* and is repeated twice for emphasis. The judgment that the book has been focused on will be replaced with deliverance. God will not abandon his people. Much like a parent comforts a child after a severe discipline, God comforts His people in much the same way.⁴ Discipline is not the end of love; it is the evidence of it (Heb. 12:10-11).
- "My people" is covenant language (Gen. 12:1-7; Ex. 6:7; 19:5-6; 2 Sam 10:2). Echoes of the promises God made to Abraham are found in phrases like these. As the choice people of God, the people not only had relationship with Him, but also hope & security (important words to hear and remember when you are exiles in captivity in Babylon).
 - "Would the coming Babylonian exile prove that God could not deliver His people or that He would not because they had been so sinful? Isaiah's answer was a resounding no! The new historical situation did not signal a change in God or His plans. Rather it would show even more clearly than ever that God is sovereign and that people can trust in Him to deliver."⁵

V.2:

- This verse serves as an outline for the remainder of the book. Israel needed to be wooed back to her God by reminding her that God still loves her (just as a child needs the same comfort after receiving a severe discipline).
 - "Her warfare has ended" (ch's 40-48)
 - "Her iniquity has been removed" (ch's 49-57)
 - "She has received double for all her sins (ch's 58-66) (not double the punishment, but double the reward (61:7)).
- How can God offer sinful people comfort? He won't overlook their sin or simply ignore it. Instead Isaiah begins to speak of God taking matters into His own hands so that comfort comes in spite of the behavior of His people. He plans to come to His people . . .

V.3-5:

- This verse is attributed to John the Baptist by each gospel writer.
- There are a number of plays on the word "desert/wilderness." John the Baptist came out of the wilderness to deliver his message. The Nation of Israel was lost in captivity, having

³ Dr. Thomas Constible. Expository Notes on Isaiah. 2004.

⁴ The first place this Hebrew word is used in the Hebrew Bible is Genesis 5:29 in connection with the name, Noah.

⁵ Constable, 172. 2013 edition.

wandered in the wilderness before. And the Nation herself was in a spiritual desert: dry, weary, thirsty. It is this scenario that God breaks into.

- "Raising the valleys and lowering the mountains refer in hyperbole to workmen leveling or smoothing out the roads on which a dignitary would travel when he came to visit an area. Today an equivalent is, "roll out the red carpet." In Isaiah's day he was calling Israel to be "smoothed out" so that the Lord could come to the nation and rule. This was emphasized by all the prophets-ethically the nation must be righteous. Eventually the nation will be "smoothed out" spiritually when the glory of the Lord is revealed (Isa. 40:5)." ⁶
- The restoration of the people from captivity, the first coming and the second coming of Messiah are all probably in view here. The Lord will be exalted and glorified among all the nations when He accomplishes complete redemption for His people through the reign of Messiah.

V. 6-8:

- Again, the question (or doubt) in the minds of Isaiah's hearers would more likely have been, "Will God really do this? Can He?" In anticipation of their question and doubt, the Lord has Isaiah remind the people that they are just that: *people*. People live and die; they don't keep their word; people change. In contrast, God never fails and His word endures forever.
 - This is especially important to remember during times of discipline, exile, failure, and other difficult circumstances. Regardless of time or circumstance, God's Word will never fail; His promise of redemption can always sustain us through the devastation of His discipline. God will not treat us like we would treat us.

V. 9-11:

- God's answer with regard to the deliverance of His people will be so convincing that the Messenger encourages them to proclaim it loudly from the mountaintops. From Jerusalem will come the message of salvation not just for Israel, but for the entire world.
- Whenever we receive blessing, it is never solely for us. It is always to be passed along. We are blessed to be a blessing. The same thing is in view here. Now that the news has come, it is to be proclaimed everywhere (c.f. Acts 1:8). He will come and be King – a King who shepherds, gathers, carries, and leads his flock.
 - "He not only rules in power, but He also brings booty (His reward, i.e., blessings) with Him. Arm suggests strength, a concept Isaiah frequently mentioned (40:10; 51:5 [twice], 9; 52:10; 53:1; 59:1, 16; 60:4; 62:8; 63:5, 12). God was also pictured as a tender Shepherd (cf. Pss. 23:1; 80:1; John 10:11, 14; Heb. 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4), who carefully carries and leads the weak and helpless members of His flock (cf. Jer. 13:17, 20; Micah 4:8; 5:4; 7:14; Zech. 10:3). These two aspects of the Lord's character are emphasized throughout this second major portion of Isaiah's book."⁷
- So, God obviously wants to save Israel (40:1-11), but can He (40:12-26)?

V.12-20:

- Yes. God can save Israel. Isaiah uses the doctrine of God to assure Judah of her security and of God's faithfulness.⁸ He is creator (12), omniscient (13-14), omnipotent (15-17), and transcendent/holy/no idol (18-20).
- The practice of idolatry is ridiculous. Idols are less impressive than the metals used to make them and weaker than the trees they are carved from. In as much as those idols will topple over, rust and break, God never has and never will.

⁶ Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Is 40:3-5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dr. Thomas Constable. Expository notes on Isaiah. 2004.

V.21-26:

- God is even superior to the rulers of the earth. He not only outlasts them, He establishes and removes them. He is so much stronger than those rulers that He sustains the life of stars – each of which He has named. He is the creator of everything that the pagans fashion into an idol.

GOD'S SUPERIORITY TO ALL POSSIBLE OPPOSITION⁴²⁰		
Argument	Question(s)	Conclusion
His superiority to the nations is shown by His creation of the earth.	40:12-14	40:15-17
His superiority to idols is seen in the fact that they are created by craftsmen.	40:18	40:19-20
His superiority to the rulers of the earth is seen in the fact that He is transcendent while they are temporary.	40:21	40:22-24
His superiority over other "deities" is shown by His creation of the heavenly bodies.	40:25	40:26

(chart is from Constable, 179 quoting Dr. Charlie Dyer in his book The Old Testament Explorer)

V. 27-31:

- This is a dilemma for the Israelite. If God is so great and so mighty, then why hasn't He helped them? Is he too great to help us?
- The answer, of course, is no. He is not limited by time, space, power or understanding. The question should rather be: If God is so great and mighty, then why haven't they trusted and been faithful to Him?
- Those who trust in Yahweh find all the strength and power they need to survive whatever circumstance God has them in. Because the strongest of young men cannot bear up under all of life's pressures (let alone the discipline of God brought on for unfaithfulness). God has not forgotten his people. They have forgotten Him: His power (1-11), His holiness (12-26), His sufficiency(27-31).
- The people of Israel can continue to trust and obey the Lord – even if they find themselves in captivity in Babylon. God will deliver and make good on His promises to them even though it may not always feel like He can or that He cares to.

Tough Question:

1. Is weariness evidence of a lack of faith?

Profit from the Prophets

Week 3 :: Habakkuk

Authorship & Date¹

- The author is Habakkuk, a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, who lived during the pre-exilic period of Israel's history. Habakkuk was evidentially a poet as well as a prophet since the entire book is poetical.
- Habakkuk's name could have a couple of meanings. It might come from the Hebrew word, *habaq*, which means "to fold the hands" or "to embrace." Thus, his name could mean "one who embraces," or "one who is embraced."
- The book was written around 608-605 bc (approximately the same time as his contemporaries: Nahum and Zephaniah).

Historical Background

- His ministry occurs during the early years of King Jehoakim (2 Kings 23:36 – 24:7). This is just after King Josiah's death, the last reforming King of Judah. All other kings after Josiah eventually led Judah to her ultimate doom. Hezekiah is ministering at the beginning of the end.
- The book itself references the Chaldeans (a.k.a. the Babylonians). They were a people who were intent on expanding their kingdom and eventually did so by defeating Egypt, Assyria and, eventually, the Southern Kingdom of Judah. During this time, Judah turned to Egypt and Assyria for help and protection from the aggressive Babylonian army, but they should have turned to the Lord.
- His ministry occurs during the same time as the prophet Jeremiah:
 - **612 b.c.** Babylonian army sacks Nineveh
 - **609 b.c.** King Josiah dies
 - **608 b.c.** Jehoakim becomes King
 - **607 b.c.** Hezekiah's ministry begins
 - **605 b.c.** Joint army of Egypt & Assyria defeated by Babylonians at battle of Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylon and marches on Judah.
 - **586 b.c.** Nebuchadnezzar's 3rd invasion. He sacks Jerusalem and all of the rest of Judah is carried off to captivity for her disobedience.

Key Passages

- Habakkuk 2:4

Habakkuk 2:1-4

Fast Facts & Context:

- Chapter 1 is a dialogue between Habakkuk and God about the nation of Judah and the continuing prosperity & imminent coming of the Babylonians.
- Chapter 2 is God's answer to Habakkuk about the Babylonians
- Chapter 3 is Habakkuk's ultimate response to all he experiences.

Exposition:

V.1:

- In chapter one, Habakkuk has asked two questions of God: 1. Why is Judah so messed up? When will she stop? 2. Why are you using a people like the Chaldeans to reprove your chosen people? Why are the proud flourishing and why are You doing nothing? Here he stands waiting for an answer from the Lord. A number of things we should observe about his waiting:
 1. He waits expectantly.
 2. He waits for a response so that *he* might respond.

¹ Dr. Thomas Constable's notes on Habakkuk, 2004 edition.

3. He is ready to be wrong.

- “He had made his complaint and now he resolved to position himself so he might obtain the earliest and clearest information and then, like a watchman, inform his waiting brethren. It is likely that the watch and the ramparts refer to the prophet’s attitude of expectation rather than his physical location. This vivid imagery was common in Habakkuk’s society (2 Sam. 18:24; Isa. 21:6). The prophet or seer, like a lookout, waited to see more than *hear* what God would say.”²

V.2:

- God wanted to make sure that this answer was going to remain (write it down) and be proclaimed (run with it) to all the people. God will be clear about the situation and will give a solid answer to Habakkuk’s questions/complaints.

V.3:

- God prefaces his answer by saying that the results of his answer are going to be yet future. Though they will happen, waiting will be a prerequisite. Faith will be required. A beautiful preface to verse four (the beginning of the Lord’s answer).
 - “The writer of the Book of Hebrews quoted this verse (Heb. 10:37). He used it to encourage his readers to persevere in their commitment to Jesus Christ, since what God had predicted will eventually come to pass, which in the context of Hebrews will be the Lord’s return.”³

V. 4:

- This is the hinge of the entire book.
 - “the proud one:” The nation of Babylon. The remainder of chapter 2 is an indictment against the fruit the pride had produced in the life of the Babylonians.
 - “By implication, Babylon, the unrighteous one, would not live because she did not live by faith (trust in God) but by sight and might. She sought to gratify her ambitions by running over other people rather than by submitting to God’s sovereignty.”⁴
 - “soul is not right. . .” The soul of someone who is proud is in bad condition. It’s messed up. Crooked. Pride is an outward manifestation of an inward reality: a crooked soul. Instead of trusting in Yahweh they hold aloof in a spirit of self-sufficiency, trusting in themselves.
 - “If I asked a group of people to imagine a straight stick, everyone would visualize a stick that is free of any bends or curves. But if I asked them to imagine a crooked stick, everyone would visualize a different shape of crookedness. A crooked stick may be crooked in a hundred different ways, but there is only one way a straight stick can be straight. Goodness is basically simple, but evil is exceedingly complex. Goodness looks only one way, but evil can take many different forms and shapes.”⁵
 - “righteous:” If the root of pride is a crooked soul, then the root of righteousness is faith. (see Paul’s quotation of this verse in Romans 1:17). Righteousness isn’t a behavior that can be learned. It is a fruit of an inward “straightness” that comes only from faith in God.
 - “live:” Rather than trying to stay alive by obeying the Mosaic Law, the righteous person lives by faith and therefore lives. A crooked heart leads to the 5 woes brought against Babylon: greed (v.6-8), pride (v.9-11), violence (v.12-14), immorality (v.15-17) and idolatry (v.18-19).⁶ When 2:20 happens, the one who lives by faith will live. The one

² Blue, J. R. (1985). Habakkuk. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Hab 2:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Constable, 15. 2013 edition.

⁴ *ibid*, 16.

⁵ *ibid*, 6..

⁶ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* lists the woes as: intimidation (6-8), intemperance (9-11), iniquity (12-14), indignity (15-17), and idolatry (18-20).

who lives by pride will not (see Paul's use of this verse in Galatians 3:11). Thus, "live" has a double meaning. The righteous will live (day-to-day) AND will live (eternally) by faith.

- "faith:" Reconsider Habakkuk's situation. He saw the proud flourishing. He saw crookedness all around him, even in his own people. He saw the chosen people of God destined for destruction. And God wasn't doing anything to stop it. So, how does Habakkuk live by faith?
 - He doesn't throw up his hands in frustration and abandon his ministry.
 - He doesn't try to fix the problem by himself.
 - He doesn't rationalize the problem, nor does he pawn it off on someone else.
 - He takes the matter straight to God, gripes Him out, and waits for an answer.
 - Notice how the writer of Hebrews uses this passage and verse 2:3 in Hebrews 10:32-39. Consider the parallels.
 - "Faith is the principle that leads to life, in spite of all appearances, and pride is destructive, in spite of all appearances. Godless people and their plans seem so strong and invincible. Their enterprises, which are often in rebellion against God, seem so inevitable and sure to succeed. Nevertheless, the one whom God regards as righteous, because of his or her trust in Him, will live on."⁷
- "This verse appears three times in the New Testament. Paul quoted it in Romans 1:17 and emphasized "righteous." Faith in God results in righteousness for both Jews and Gentiles. He used it again in Galatians 3:11 but to stress "live." Rather than obtaining new life by obeying the Mosaic Law, the righteous person does so by faith. In Galatians, Paul was mainly addressing Gentiles. The writer of Hebrews also quoted this verse in Hebrews 10:38, but his emphasis was on "faith." It is faith that God will reward in the righteous. In this case, the original readers were primarily Jews. In all three cases, "live" has the broader reference to eternal life, but here in Habakkuk, it is mainly physical life that is in view. Thus, this verse is clearly a very important revelation in the Bible—even its essential message."⁸
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V.20:

- "From dumb, man-carved idols, attention shifts to the living Lord, the self-existent, eternal, holy Sovereign who rules the universe from His holy temple, that is, heaven. Instead of shouting, "Arise! Awake," the whole earth must stand in silent awe and worship before Him. The Hebrew word *hāsāh*, rendered "be silent," means "hush" (also used in Zeph. 1:7, "Be silent," and Zech. 2:13, "Be still"). For Habakkuk, the message was clear. Stop complaining! Stop doubting! God is not indifferent to sin. He is not insensitive to suffering. The Lord is neither inactive nor impervious. He is in control. In His perfect time Yahweh will accomplish His divine purpose. Habakkuk was to stand in humble silence, a hushed expectancy of God's intervention. The closing verse of this woeful dirge recorded by Habakkuk serves as a link to the song of worship that follows in Habakkuk 3."⁹

Tough Questions:

1. How is Habakkuk's questioning/doubting/gripping at God an example of "living by faith?" How is it righteous?
2. If you are willing to ask of the Lord, how long are you willing to wait for an answer? What does "living by faith" have to do with prayer?

⁷ Constable, 6. 2013 edition.

⁸ *ibid*, 16.

⁹ Blue, J. R. (1985). Habakkuk. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Hab 2:20). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Profit from the Prophets

Week 4 :: Zephaniah

Authorship & Date

- Zephaniah means “Yahweh hides,” “Yahweh has hidden,” “Yahweh’s watchman,” or “Yahweh treasured.” He was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
- Zephaniah was the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah of Judah (1:1), thus making him one of the only writing prophets with royal blood in his veins (David & Solomon being the other two).¹
- Zephaniah’s writing contains more “Day of the Lord” references than any other book. The Day of the Lord sometimes refers to the past, the near future, the distant future, or even the far distant future. It is also a time when God will break into history in a recognizable way – sometimes for judgment & wrath, sometimes for blessing.
 - “Wherever we find the phrase “the day of the Lord,” it always suggests a contrast with the “day” of man. The day of man is any day when man appears to be in control of human affairs. It is a day of God’s patience. The day of the Lord is any day when God is clearly in control of human affairs. It is a day of God’s judgment and or blessing. The phrase “the day of the Lord” is by no means unique to Zephaniah, but it is the key to the message of this book. Zephaniah used it more frequently than any other prophet. It was his burden, and he explained the meaning of this phrase more than any other prophet.”²

Historical Background

- He ministered during the reign of one of the great kings of Judah, King Josiah between the dates of 640-612 b.c.
- He ministered during a relatively peaceful time in Judah’s history as the super-power Assyria was in decline and the Neo-Babylonian empire was gaining strength.
- Josiah’s evil predecessors, Manassah and Amon had encouraged the people of Judah to turn away from Yahweh for over 50 years – so wickedness had taken over an entire generation. Josiah turned the nation around and reinstated Yahweh worship around 622b.c. The problem was that most of the people found it easy to commit to a religion, but difficult to commit themselves to Yahweh. Hence, Zephaniah’s terrible messages of impending judgment for wickedness.
 - “Reading Zephaniah is somewhat like watching a science fiction movie about a nuclear disaster that leaves nothing but a sterile, uninhabited, windswept landscape with no life, no flowers, no fruit, and no beauty. What produces this horrible condition? The reason is people who are complacent and indifferent, who disregard and ignore God. They do not obey God’s voice, receive His correction, trust in Him, or draw near to Him. They are materialized, self-centered, living in luxury oblivious to their danger. So God steps in and turns their complacency into chaos, disorganizes their orderly lives, and purges them in their indifference. All that is left is a wind-swept desert (cf. the Flood). However, marvelous restoration will follow devastating judgment.” (cf. Jesus Christ, New Heavens & New Earth)³

Key Passages

- Zephaniah 1:1-7 – God’s judgment on Judah
- Zephaniah 3:12-20 – Hope for the future

¹ Dr. Thomas Constable. Expository Notes on Zephaniah. 2004.

² Constable, 5. 2013 edition.

³ Constable, 2004 edition.

Zephaniah 1:1-7

Fast Facts & Context:

- Zephaniah has many oracles of judgment – this first one deals with Jerusalem and Judah. All of his oracles have to do with the immanent “Day of the Lord.” First it involves judgment (1:2-3:8) and then blessing (3:9-20).

Exposition:

V.2-3:

- Zephaniah opens with a prophecy about the complete and utter destruction of the entire earth. It is a horrifying picture of universal judgment upon a world who has forsaken the Lord and disregarded him completely.
- His description of how everything will be wiped out is indicative of creation’s reversal. Even the listing of men, animals, birds and fish is in the opposite order from the creation account (Gen 1:20, 24, 26).⁴
- The scope of destruction is the same as that of the Flood. All things will be removed from the face of the earth.
 - “Since Zephaniah later wrote that a remnant would be delivered (3:9–13), the universal destruction of mankind referred to in 1:2–3 would apparently be limited to the wicked. Jeremiah made this clear (Jer. 25:31–33).”⁵
 - Obviously this has yet to happen. Most likely it is in reference to the judgments that will come during the tribulation described in Revelation chapters 6-18.

V.4-6:

- After a brief oracle of judgment on the entire world, the scope of judgment narrows specifically to Judah and Jerusalem for the remainder of the chapter. It is easy to conclude that the near referent of this prophecy is the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, but it should also be remembered that there can be multiple fulfillments to any prophecy.
- Over the next three verses, the prophet identifies three types of idolatry: pagan idol worship, syncretistic worship of both Yahweh and other gods, and the apathetic/indifferent yet religious person.⁶ All will be judged.
 - The Pagan Idol Worshipper (v.4):
 - Josiah went to great lengths and reform to remove all of Manasseh’s idols to bring the people back to Yahweh. Though it was good that Josiah turned the nation around, the reforms had little affect on the hearts of the people. Yahweh will come and do what Josiah never could have done.
 - “Baal was the god of productivity: his function in Canaanite religion was to make land, animals and humans fertile. Baal was another name for the gross national product, and wherever people see bank balances, prosperity, a sound economy, productivity, and mounting exports as the essence of their security, Baal is still worshiped. Baal was also the god of religious excitement (1 Ki. 18:26b) and sexual free-for-all (Num. 25:1-3). Human sexual acts were publically offered to him to prompt him to perform his work of fertilization...Wherever excitement in religion becomes an end in itself and wherever the cult of ‘what helps’ replaces joy in ‘what’s true,’ Baal is worshipped.”⁷
 - The Syncretistic Worshipper (v.5):

⁴ Hannah, J. D. (1985). Zephaniah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Zep 1:2–3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Constable, 2004 edition.

⁷ J. Alec Moyter. “Zephaniah.” *An Exegetical and Expository Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 912.

- “Bow down on the housetops” is a reference to Israelites who worshipped the stars (including the sun & the moon) as gods in the face of what God commanded in Deut 4:19 (cf. 2 Kings 21:3, 5, 21).⁸
 - Here, there is a division between the six types of people listed: Baallists, false priests, & astrologists. These are ones who are actively committed to other gods; the Lord has no place in their religion. The following three: syncretists, backsliders, and practical atheists pretend a devotion that is actually unreal, departed from devotion they once professed, or gotten to the point where the Lord is not a living reality to them at all.⁹
 - Molech was the chief god of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:33), a people east of the Dead Sea (cf. Zeph. 2:8–9). Jeremiah, a contemporary of Zephaniah, said the Jews were sacrificing children to Molech (Jer. 32:35; cf. 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6). The Hebrew *Malkām* is a variant spelling of “Molech.”¹⁰
 - “How the Lord must hurt when such gods are preferred to him and he is marginalized in the lives of his people, whose creed may be impeccable (1:5b) but whose lives rest on other foundations (1:5c).”¹¹
- The Indifferent non-Worshipper or athiest (v.6):
 - c.f. Deut 6:5. The people have abandoned their personal devotion and daily walk with the Lord in favor over other things.
- This first section v.2-6 is an example of how a prophet will see multiple visions and preach them as one oracle when there really are two (see mountain diagram from the Micah study). The immediate fulfillment of this oracle is found in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 b.c. Yet, ultimately, the Tribulation is also in view.

V.7

- In view of the guilt of the Judeans, their only response was silence because the day of the Lord was near.
 - “Such impending judgment ought to evoke fear and silence. No more calling on Baal; no more invoking the stars; no more swearing by Molech—for now Yahweh, the only God, would act. They may have forgotten Him, but He would not forget them! In fact God prepared Judah like a sacrifice, that is, He prepared her for slaughter much as sacrificial animals were prepared to be eaten (cf. Isa. 34:6; Jer. 46:10). The invited guests, the Babylonians, were God’s chosen instrument (cf. Jer. 10:25; Hab. 1:6) to eat the sacrifice; they had been consecrated or set apart to be the agent of God’s judgment on His chosen nation.”¹²
 - “To speak of the Day of the Lord as a day of sacrifice places it within the long biblical tradition that where there is sin there must also be death – and this because Yahweh is the Holy One. The revelation that sin brings death began in Genesis; Exodus brought the revelation of the sinner endangered by the holiness of God; and Leviticus enshrined at the heart of the sacrificial system the principle that the wages

⁸ Hannah, J. D. (1985). Zephaniah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Zep 1:5–6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁹ J. Alec Moyter. “Zephaniah.”

¹⁰ Hannah, J. D. (1985). Zephaniah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Zep 1:5–6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹¹ J. Alec Moyter. “Zephaniah.” *An Exegetical and Expository Commentary on the Minor Prophets*.

¹² Hannah, J. D. (1985). Zephaniah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Zep 1:7). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

of sin is death... Those who have long despised the sacrifice that God provides become the sacrifice their sin merits."¹³

2 Peter 3:1-18

- "God will visit earth with direct and positive retribution, not in the general administrative sense of bringing people to account eventually, but in the narrower sense of executing vengeance on humanity in cataclysmic judgment (1:14-16). This judgment will fall in spite of human unbelief (1:12). When people will be disregarding God, He will break into human history dynamically, supernaturally, to judge. Peter's description of the day of the Lord is remarkably similar (2 Pet. 3:1-10). People today are saying what these two prophets said they would say so long ago. They are saying that God will never intervene in judgment this way. The great statement of the Book of Zephaniah is that God will indeed do this in a day yet future."¹⁴
- In light of the coming day of the Lord, Peter urges us to be diligent in three ways:¹⁵
 - Be diligent to live Godly lives (3:11-14)
 - Be diligent to win the lost (3:15-16)
 - Be diligent to grow spiritually (3:17-18)
- "It is also our responsibility to live holy and godly lives as we anticipate the coming of "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell" (2 Pet. 3:11-13). We need to be diligent to be found at peace with God, "spotless and blameless" in our lives (2 Pet. 3:14). We need to be on guard that we do not fall away from our own faithfulness because of the prevalent "error of unprincipled people" (i.e., complacency and indifference; 2 Pet. 3:17). And we need to continue to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). Rejoicing and responsible living: these characteristics need to distinguish the lives of people who anticipate the day of the Lord."¹⁶

Tough Question:

1. True or False: A proper consequence for idol worship is the devastation and destruction of the entire planet. Defend your answer.
2. What connection does the Day of the Lord described here in Zephaniah have with the coming New Heavens & New Earth?

¹³ Moyter, 917.

¹⁴ Constable, 6. 2013 edition.

¹⁵ Warren Wiersbe. *Be Alert!* A commentary on 2 Peter. Victor books.

¹⁶ Constable, 7. 2013 edition.

Profit from the Prophets

Week 5 :: Malachi

Authorship & Date

- Malachi means “my messenger” and that’s just about all we know about this prophet. The Text itself doesn’t give us any biographical or genealogical information, so it makes it very difficult to figure out the date and context of the book.
 - His name, like the names of all the prophets, are key to understanding their message. Malachi is a messenger to the priests who are supposed to be messengers (but they are not acting like it) who proclaims the coming of Messiah himself who will be the ultimate messenger.
- There are also no specific historical references in the book which have led conservative scholars to draw their own conclusions as to when the book was written. Most agree that Malachi is a post-exilic prophet and that the book was written sometime between 480 – 420 BC – roughly the time of the return from Babylon & the leadership of Nehemiah.
- Malachi is the last prophet to Israel before the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ some 400 years later.

Historical Background

- Assuming the historical background is indeed during the reforms of Nehemiah, the context is vastly important to the right understanding of the book. The Babylonian captivity ends gradually over about a 100 year time span. The first group of exiles returns in 536 BC and begins to rebuild the temple. Several years later, after the temple is rebuilt, Nehemiah leads back one of the last group of exiles to Judah. Over this period of time (which must have been supremely difficult for the exiles), the hearts of the people grew weary and discouraged. They started going through the motions and continued to adopt practices of the foreign people still in the land.
- It is helpful to compare the list of reforms that Nehemiah was calling for during this time with the rebukes that Malachi leveled against the people in his message:

	<u>Nehemiah</u>	<u>Malachi</u>
Marrying foreign wives	13:23	2:11
Withholding tithes	13:10	3:8
Divorce of legitimate wives	13:23,27	2:15,16
Neglect of temple service	13:4,5,11	1:12,13

- Chronology
 - 536 BC – Babylonian captivity ends & Israelites begin returning to Judah (Ezra 1-6)
 - 515 BC – Temple rebuilt under Zerubbabel
 - 480 BC – Story of Esther (482-473 BC)
 - 455 BC – Ezra’s return to the land & attempts to reform (Ezra 7-10)
 - 444 BC – Nehemiah’s return to Judah as governor & attempts to reform
 - 432 BC – Nehemiah’s return to Babylon & delivery of Malachi’s message

Key Passages

- Malachi 3:1 & 4:5 – prophecies about the forerunner for the Messiah & His coming

Malachi 1:1-14

V.2-5: *The Importance of Remembering God's Covenantal Love*

- God's declaration of love for His people is a powerful and important opening to a prophetic book that is, generally, a rebuke to the people who have wandered away from Him.
- The response of the people is theoretical – not actual. Malachi is putting words in their mouths (accurately) as they respond by saying, "Oh, really? It doesn't feel like it." They've been in exile, they are continuing to struggle to rebuild themselves as a people, and they aren't hearing or seeing any of God's activity on their behalf. Thus, their hearts have grown hard and skeptical of God's love for them.
 - Wherever we find our hearts distant from God, we can be sure that we find ourselves in that place primarily because we began to disbelieve that God cares about us. In fact, forgetting the simple reality of His love is often the source of all kinds of sin in our lives.
- "To our word "love" ('*ahab* [*ah-have*]) we now add the antonym "hate" (*sane'* [*sah-nay*]). A careful word study of each of these terms will show that choice is a part of the meaning for love, and reject (or not choose) is at the heart of the word for hate. Even Jesus used the word hate with this basic meaning when he called for his disciples to hate father and mother--he called for them to choose to follow Him and that involved a radical break with families. With Jacob and Esau we know that the choice was made for Jacob even before the two boys were born, when the mother was pregnant and sought an oracle about the twins. And that oracle was not about two boys, but about two nations (Gen. 25). The loving and hating was not personal, but providential. That is why Paul refers to the same event in Romans 9:13 as a sample of divine election. God's love for Jacob was a distinguishing love; it meant that the line from Jacob, i.e., the Israelites, was chosen for a special purpose in the world--to be the channel of blessing to the nations and the source of the Messiah. The Edomites, the descendants of Esau, were not chosen. This, of course, does not mean that individual Edomites could not come to faith in the LORD; it means that the line of the Edomites was not the chosen line."¹
- The existence of the Nation of Israel (in any form) at this point in history was the strongest demonstration of God's never-ending love for them. Even considering the type of person Jacob was (in comparison to Esau especially), it was obvious that God's love for them was true.
- The Edomites, sons of Esau, were the long-standing enemies of Israel. "Edom was the earliest, latest, closest, and most consistently hostile of all of Israel's enemies."² God will keep his promises both to Jacob and to Esau respectively. Even though the Nation may have experienced judgment and discipline, the promises of God are not void.

V.6-14: *Forgetting God's Love Turns Worship into Profanity*

Priestly Activity did not match Priestly Identity (v.6-9)

- The primary charge leveled against not just the Nation – but the leaders of the Nation, the priests – was that they were not giving God the respect and glory that was due His Name.
- They respond in ignorance. They didn't even realize how far off track their own leadership as priests had gone, "No we're not. How could you say that? We're offering sacrifices and doing what you told us to do."
- God had given the priests *explicit* instructions on how they were to serve Him and bring glory to His Name as His priests:

¹ Ross, Alan P. *Studies in the Book of Malachi*, 3.

² Stuart, Douglas. *Malachi*, 1281.

- They presented defiled sacrifices to Him (compare with Lev 22:2, 17-30, 32). By presenting defiled sacrifices not only were the priests defiling the elements of the temple, they were also defiling the Lord Himself (see Lev 21:6).
- They presented blind, lame, and sick animals to the Lord (compare with Leviticus 22:18-25; Deut. 15:21).
- The offerings that priests are supposed to bring to the Lord are to be without blemish and the best of the best for two reasons:
 - First, the quality of the offerings are a demonstration of the quality of the One being worshipped. If the President of the United States were to come to my house for dinner, I wouldn't use paper plates. I would get out my fine china. In much the same way, I don't give someone a used gift for their birthday because it would communicate something to the person about their worth to me. By offering defiled animals as sacrifices they were dramatically insulting not just a governor, but the King of Kings.
 - Second, the quality of the offering was a qualification for its acceptability as a substitutionary sacrifice. Only the sinless (without blemish) can atone for the sinful (blemished). When a blemished animal is offered as a sacrifice, it cannot atone.
- The priests had forgotten the love of God for them and, in so doing, forgot how their own identity as priests was supposed to govern and guide the worship of God. Through years of inconsistency and laziness, the priest's worship of the Lord was no longer a holy thing. It had become common.

Loveless offerings were like no offerings at all (v.10)

- When our hearts are far from the Lord it trickles down into our behavior. Though our conduct may still be pious in our own eyes, the Lord knows when worship is offered in Spirit and in Truth and when it is not. In this case, it would be more pleasing to God for the doors of the temple to be shut than it would for them to continue to defile themselves, the temple, and the Lord with their half-hearted sacrifices.
- It is possible for the Lord to not be pleased with a people whom He is in love with. His displeasure with His people does not betray His love, it is further evidence of it. On the other hand, the priests' lack of holiness in their worship was a demonstration of both their displeasure and lack of love for God. What they thought were offerings were really nothing more than dead animals; they brought no pleasure to God.

God is worthy of Glory; Give it to Him (v.11-14)

- God's Name will receive honor and glory. Period. If it doesn't come from the Nation of Israel, it will come from the Gentile nations. *They* will worship Him from the rising of the sun to its setting – meaning they will worship him from sunrise to sunset (all day) and from one end of the sky to the other (everywhere).
 - "God here proclaims to the priests that their inadequate and thus insulting worship is completely inconsistent with what will one day be the case: he will be worshipped reverently – and properly – the world over."³
 - It is completely appropriate to see multiple fulfillments of v.11 culminating, ultimately, in the Millennium (Is. 11:3-4, 9; Dan. 7:13-14, 27-28; Zeph. 2:11; 3:8-11; Zech. 14:9, 16)(Acts 9:15; 15:17; Rom. 9:17; Phil 2:10).
- Verse 12 re-emphasizes verse 7 in an important way. The actions of the priests were profaning (*khawlal*) the Name of God. The Hebrew word is an antonym for holy. Instead of treating God as unique and worthy of honor, they treated him as if He was something less. In so doing, the priests defiled the Name of God by making it less than holy – by making it more common & ordinary than it deserves to be (and actually is).

³ Stuart, Douglas. *Malachi*, 1306.

- While our beliefs should motivate our behavior, it stands to reason that our behavior is indicative of our beliefs. If we are approaching God in a half-hearted way and deliberately disobeying and disregarding His commandments, our behavior is a commentary about what we truly believe in our hearts.
- How is it possible to begin in priestly service to the Lord in full devotion and then get to a place where one says, "This is too much work," or, "I'm tired of this; it's boring", or, "It doesn't matter, just throw something on the altar." How does anyone get to that place in a position of ministry? It's happening far too much even in our day; what is the problem?
 - "When true love departs, callousness sets in. We see this in the people's response to the Lord's reminder of His love for them. They replied: "How have You loved us?" (1:2). The attitude expressed in that question is the root of all sin (cf. Gen. 3). Since this is how these Jews felt, it is no wonder that, as Malachi pointed out, they failed God in so many other specific ways. The hour in which we begin to cease to love God is the hour in which we begin to wonder whether God really loves us. Then our worship of God, if we continue it, becomes only formal, not real. Then there is no real power in our lives, only a form of godliness."⁴
 - "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever."⁵

"The Lord Jesus Christ told the woman at the well that the Father was seeking worshipers who would worship in spirit and truth. Worship must be honest and spiritual; the worshipers must put their heart into it and offer to God the best that they have, and the best that they can do. To get to this point they have to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord so that they will appreciate more who he is and what he has done. The greater the knowledge of the object of worship, the greater the worship. But if people do not venture there in their faith, but live selfish and self-indulgence lives, then the worship will be a drudgery and their gifts perfunctory and worthless."⁶

"Malachi charged the Jews with seven specific sins. In each case, his contemporaries responded by challenging his criticism. They said, "How have we done that?" (cf. 1:2, 6; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13). Their response indicated hardness of heart, a resistance to deal with the internal conditions in their hearts that needed correcting. Malachi revealed the sensitivity of Yahweh to their condition and the insensitivity of the people to it. They believed that since they were serving God as He had directed, then He must be pleased with them. Malachi said that their hearts were not right with God, and He was not pleased with them. The people had a form of godliness, but they were devoid of the power of godliness."⁷

Tough Question:

1. What are we supposed to do when it doesn't feel like God loves us?
2. Where should we draw our motivation for doing ministry (especially when ministry isn't going well)?

⁴ Constable, 10-11.

⁵ Piper, John. *Let the Nations be Glad!* 11.

⁶ Ross, 10.

⁷ Constable, Dr. Tom. *Dr. Constable's Notes on Malachi*. 2013 edition, 9-10.

Profit from the Prophets

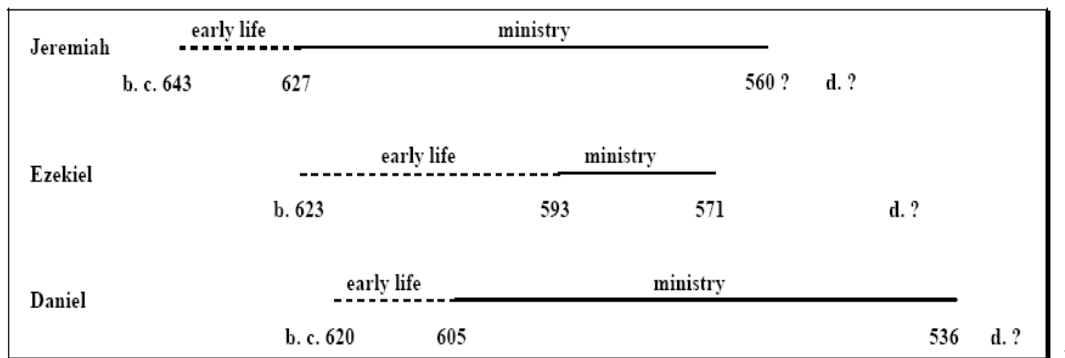
Week 6 :: Ezekiel

Authorship & Date^{1 2}

- Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi (1:3) is the author
- His name means “God will strengthen / harden” (like concrete)
- Ezekiel was a priest like Jeremiah and Zechariah – the only three prophet-priests in the Hebrew scriptures (Ezk 1:3)(Jer 1:1)(Zech 1:1)
 - Hence his emphasis on the temple in Jerusalem, the glory of the Lord, the actions of Jerusalem’s priests, and God’s future temple.
- Ezekiel began his prophetic ministry in 593 b.c. around the age of 30 (1:1)
- The last prophecy was “in the 27th year, in the first month on the first day” (29:17) which would have been 571 b.c. Thus, his ministry spanned 22 years (593-571 b.c.)

Historical Background

- His ministry occurs during the time between 2 Kings and Ezra (*see Hebrew timeline*)
 - **597 b.c.** Nebuchadnezzar’s 2nd invasion (Ezekiel & Jehoiachin taken captive)
 - **593 b.c.** Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry begins in the 4th month on the 5th day of the 5th year of the exile of King Jehoiachin (1:1-2)
 - **586 b.c.** Nebuchadnezzar’s 3rd invasion. He sacks Jerusalem and all of the rest of Judah is carried off to captivity for her disobedience.
 - **571 b.c.** Ezekiel’s ministry ends.
- The book was written during Judah’s bondage to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar’s rule.
- His message focused on Judah’s forthcoming destruction because of her sin before the fall of Jerusalem. After the fall in 586, his message changed to Judah’s future restoration.



3

Key Passages

- Ezekiel 10 – Vision of the wheels
- Ezekiel 16 – Israel’s birth & growth
- Ezekiel 28 – Judgment on King of Tyre
- Ezekiel 33 – The watchman’s duty

¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary.

² Ronald B. Allen class notes. Dallas Theological Seminary

³ Dr. Thomas Constable class notes. Dallas Theological Seminary.

- Ezekiel 36 – The New Covenant
- Ezekiel 37 – The vision of the dry bones

Ezekiel 16

Fast Facts & Context:

- Chapter 16 is the longest chapter in the entire book and the longest single allegory in the entire Bible
- It is a part of a list of parables that are designed to prove God’s judgment on the nation of Israel in ch’s 15-17. God’s chosen people were not only a vine that was good for nothing (ch. 15), but they had produced disgusting fruit (ch. 16). The Lord compared Jerusalem to a despised orphan who had become the beautiful wife of a king but had abandoned her privileges to become an insatiable prostitute (cf. Hos. 1–3).⁴
- This allegory is a legal judgment against Jerusalem (which may or may not personify all of Judah) for all her “abominations” (word is repeated a frequent 11 times in the chapter).⁵ Here is a basic outline:
 - Arraignment (16:1-3)
 - Indictment (16:4-34)
 - Sentence: suspension of Grace (16:35-43)
 - Reputation: like mother, like daughter (16:44-52)
 - Hope: Grace returns (16:53-63)

Exposition:

V.3:

- Jerusalem is spoken to directly by the prophet. As a city, Jerusalem hasn’t always been possessed by the Israelites. Before David captured the city and made it the capital of his kingdom (1 Chron. 11:4-9), Jerusalem was called Jebus and was populated by the Jebusites (Judges 19:10-12). It is unclear from the text if the Jebusites founded the city or not.⁶
- This is the first example in a list that Ezekiel is making about Jerusalem to make the point that Jerusalem – even since her conception – has never been special or outstanding. Other cities that had similar prestige to Jerusalem all had better geographical locations, more abundant resources, easier to defend, etc. Jerusalem had none of those advantages. In fact, all was a disadvantage. As we shall see in the following verses, she should not have even survived.

V.4-5:

- “Normally after a baby is born the umbilical cord is cut. In biblical times a newborn was then washed to remove the blood and vernix and was rubbed with salt to dry and firm the skin. Then the infant was wrapped in cloth for warmth and covering. But for Jerusalem these things were not done.”⁷
 - The description here delineates not only physical abandonment, but legal as well. Whoever birthed this child not only left it to die, but gave up their rights of parenthood. The “parent” left their own child to die a slow and terrible death all alone out in the elements – helpless & hopeless.

⁴ Constable, Tom. *Expository Notes on Ezekiel*. 78

⁵ New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT): Ezekiel.

⁶ It is somewhat interesting to note that the Jebusites are listed between the Amorites and Hittites in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10 (see vv.15-16). This is likely Ezekiel’s way of saying that the Jebusites – a lesser known and not as influential tribe – were just like the more infamous Amorites and Hittites.

⁷ Dyer, C. H. (1985). Ezekiel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Eze 16:1–5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- While the infant in this allegory is still alive after being thrown into a field, she is effectively dead since she can do nothing to save herself. Unless someone intervenes on her behalf, death is imminent. I've always seen this as a parallel to what Paul describes as being "dead in our trespasses and sins" in Ephesians 2:1-3. As sinners, we are in a helpless and hopeless state – just like the infant in Ezekiel 16.

V.6-7:

- "Live, live" is a declaration not only of redemption, but also adoption. Again, if we look at Ephesians 2:5-7 we see the same idea. God raised us to life when we were as good as dead. And when God declares for something to live – it doesn't just survive; it *thrives*. What one parent abandoned, God treats as His very own.
 - "The Lord enabled Jerusalem to thrive. Her inhabitants became numerous. She eventually developed into a fine city even though she had gotten a bad start in life. During the reigns of David and Solomon, Jerusalem was one of the most highly respected cities in the ancient Near East."⁸

V.7-8:

- When Jerusalem was old enough for marriage ("at the time for love"), God made a promise to her of faithfulness, protection, and ownership (see Psalm 132:13-17).
- The phrase "spread My skirt over you" is a way of promising the protection and provision that comes through a marriage promise (see Ruth 3:9). Thus, Jerusalem – once left for dead – is now set to become Queen Jerusalem (see v.13). No other city in the world had a relationship with God like Jerusalem now did.

V.9-14:

- Instead of being clothed in blood and dirt and the stench of a woman's afterbirth, this abandoned and unwanted baby had grown up beautifully and now God chooses to adorn her with fine clothing, ointments & perfumes, and jewelry. Her "husband" gave her everything she needed and more. He gave her the very best of whatever was the best – and her reputation among the nations became exceedingly great (c.f. 1 Kings 10:4-5, 1 Chron. 14:17; Lam. 2:15).
- "clothes and fine linen" could also be descriptions of the tabernacle. The special food, flour, oil could be the sacred offerings. The double meaning here is that Jerusalem, the bride of Yahweh, is clothed with garments that clothe the temple. Queen Jerusalem is a surrogate for the temple.⁹ Look at the results of what divine love can do!

V.15:

- This is the stuff reality TV is made of. A beautiful rags-to-riches story should end here with the husband and wife living happily ever after. But, as we know, such was not the case. Instead of reciprocating the love that she was shown, Queen Jerusalem trusts in her own beauty and prostitutes herself with other men.
- This verse is the thesis for the indictment against Jerusalem/Judah. The remainder of the chapter is a graphic (even pornographic at times) description of what the Queen does with the life she has been given (note how many times "played the harlot" is repeated between v.15-29). These are the reasons that the Nation was being sent into exile that are each vividly described in metaphors of harlotry:
 - Pride (v.15)
 - Unfaithfulness / Idolatry (v.15b-19)
 - Human sacrifices (v.20-21)
 - Rebellion (v.22-25)

⁸ Constable, 80.

⁹ NICOT

- Trusting foreign nations (v.26-29)
- Unwilling to repent (v.30-34)

V.16-34:

"Jerusalem's gaze turned from her Benefactor to her beauty, and she became proud (she used her fame to become a prostitute). Jerusalem forgot the One who had supplied her with her wealth, and turned away from Him. Instead she basked in her beauty and prostituted herself to other gods. Beginning in Solomon's reign (1 Kings 11:7-13), and continuing till her fall to Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem turned from God to idolatry. She had times of revival, but her general trend was downward."¹⁰

"All her brazen adulteries had left Jerusalem with a sick heart; she could no longer feel true love. She was worse than a common prostitute in that she practiced adultery not because she needed money from her lovers but simply because it made her feel good. She took strangers to bed with her instead of her husband. She even gave gifts to her lovers to bribe them to come to her (paying tribute to make alliances) rather than giving them what they wanted in payment for the bribes they would normally have offered her. Her adulteries were worse than those of common prostitutes in that she paid her lovers rather than receiving payment from them (cf. Hos. 8:9)."¹¹

After reading Ezekiel 16:16-34, read Deuteronomy chapter 8.¹²

V.35-43:

- Now that the indictment and verdict has been thoroughly laid out before Jerusalem, the sentencing begins:
 - Exposure (v.37)
 - Blood & destruction (v.38-39)
 - Death / Exile (v.40-41)
- Jerusalem has come full circle. She was an abandoned infant left naked and bare out in the open (exposed) in a pool of her own blood and filth (blood) waiting to die or be devoured (death). God came and loved her with a divine love, made her a Queen. She squandered it and now finds herself right back where she began. The rags-to-riches Queen has become a nymphomaniac tramp.

V.44-52: The detestable behavior of those who lived in Jerusalem made the sinful behavior of those who lived in the northern kingdom and Sodom appear righteous.

V.53 & 60: Double grace! Not only did God restore her from infancy and raise her to royalty, now the Lord has done all that, PLUS witnessed all her harlotry (in light of all that He had done for her previous) and STILL promises to save and to redeem! Why? God keeps His promise (Genesis 12:1-3) and promises to do so by making a New Covenant with Israel to ensure that His promise comes to pass (forthcoming in Ezk. 36).

Tough Question

1. If God will be faithful to us, even when we are faithless to Him, what is our motivation for faithfulness? (i.e. how do we not repeat Israel's mistake?)

¹⁰ Dyer, C. H. (1985). Ezekiel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Eze 16:15-19). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹¹ Constable, 82.

¹² For more scriptures on the beginning of Israel's demise, see 1 Kings 11:1-13; 2 Kings 15:19-20; 16:3, 7-18; 17:4; 18:21; 20:12-19; 21:6; 23:7-10; 2 Chron. 21:16-17; 28:3, 16-19; Isaiah 30:7; 36:1; 57:8.

Profit from the Prophets

Week 7 :: Ezekiel

Ezekiel 37

Fast Facts & Context:

- Chapter 37 is probably the most well known section of the Book of Ezekiel because of the songs and artwork that have drawn inspiration from its words.
- The vision that Ezekiel receives of seeing dry bones come to life is the way God gives a very powerful picture to His people of the manner of His redemption.
- Remembering the context of exile is important to remember as we read. Just as the Nation is at its lowest point, there is still a glimmer of hope – not because the people are good or because they will do anything noble, but because God intends to keep His promise.
- The details of God’s restoration have been explained just before in chapter 36:¹
 - The Nation had profaned the Name of the Lord to the degree that God brought His heavy hand of discipline upon them & evicted them from the Promised Land (36:17-20).
 - God vows to vindicate the holiness of His Name among the nations (36:21-23) and explains that He will demonstrate Himself to be completely and utterly unique when He still redeems His people.
 - He will bring the Nation that has been scattered by exile back into her homeland and she shall be one nation again (36:24).
 - He will purify the Nation (36:25).
 - He will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them (36:26)
 - He will cause them to obey by indwelling them with His Spirit (36:27)
 - He will give them abundant prosperity in the land (36:28-30)
- The restoration of Israel is both an action of God keeping His promise to His chosen people as well as an act of vindication of His Name in spite of what His people have chosen to do. Tired of continued disobedience, God takes the Nation’s obedience into His own hands by promising to send His Spirit not just to write the Law on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34).²

Exposition:

V.1-2:

- The Lord gives Ezekiel the experience of another vision – this time a valley full of bones. The bones were not fresh, they were brittle and dry indicating that they had been there for quite some time.
 - Verse 11 tells us that the bones are the whole house of Israel. They are not literal bones in the sense that there was a valley somewhere full of bones; they are a metaphor of the spiritual condition of Israel now that she was disobedient and sent into exile (c.f. Deuteronomy 28:25-26).

¹ I believe Ezekiel 36 is the most important chapter in the book, but I have chosen not to cover it in this study because it is dealt with at length in the Covenants Bible study that we taught 2 summers ago. Contact me if you would like a copy of that study or visit my blog: www.matthewdlantz.com to download a copy.

² It is also my personal belief, and therefore the bias of this study, that the promises made here to Israel are made first to Israel. The fact that the Church shares in some of the promises mentioned in Ezekiel 36-37 is not an indication that God has chosen to replace Israel with the Church. It would be more appropriate to see the present fulfillment (in part) of these promises as being experienced in the church now & the fulfillment of these promises for Israel is still yet future.

- How does a Jewish priest, like Ezekiel, feel about dead bodies left out in the open like this? It was not only considered an indecent and indignant thing to do in the Jewish culture, it was also ceremonially unclean.
- Ezekiel is brought out to the valley by "the Spirit" (Heb: *ruach*) of the Lord. The Hebrew word *ruach* can be translated as spirit, wind, or breath.

V.3-4

- The Lord asks Ezekiel a seemingly impossible question with an obvious answer: no. But certainly the Lord knows this, so why would He ask the question unless it was possible, right? Ezekiel answers wisely acknowledging that even though it seems humanly impossible, the Lord (Heb: *adonai* – sovereign) GOD knows more than he does.
- Thus, God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to what must have been the most unusual audience Ezekiel had ever spoken. Furthermore, the prophecy contained a verb ("hear" – Heb: *shma*)³ that required action on the part of lifeless bones. Why would God have His prophet tell lifeless bones to hear the Word of the Lord?

V. 5-6

- The bones are not alive, so they cannot respond to the Word of the Lord. God knows this, so He promises to bring the bones to life so that they can *shma* the Word of the Lord. How does the Lord bring dead things to life? His breath.
 - The word "breath" here is also *ruah* as we saw in verse 1 (see also v.14). The parallel between breath & spirit should make our minds jump back to Genesis 2:7 and God's breathing life into Adam (although it is not the same word). It should also cause us to think about Jesus' words to Nicodemus a little more deeply in John 3:5-8 as we continue to read this chapter.
 - If you're reading these notes, ask me about how simply the act of breathing is a spiritual exercise. ☺

V.7-10

- In this section the word "breath" is also *ruach* which is now the third different English word that has been used to translate this one Hebrew word in this chapter. There is plenty of word play on this word as the image of new birth, resurrection, and the indwelling of the Spirit are all images that are discussed at length in the New Testament.
 - The primary example would be Romans 8:1-17 – especially vv. 10-11.

V.11-14

- The Israelites were saying that they were like dry bones: they had been dead for a very long time spiritually as well as physically. They had no hope of life in the future; they had lost all hope of becoming a nation again or of seeing God's promises to them fulfilled literally. The Lord had cut them off completely; the bones were separated from each other, and the Israelites were scattered over the earth.⁴
 - "There is no finer illustration of the life-changing power of the preached word than what the prophet saw in his vision. It has the power to transform those who are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-22) and make them new, living creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)."⁵

³ This Hebrew word is a very significant one. It is the same word used in Deut. 6:4 and its meaning is more than simply the English word "hear". A more detailed way of translating the word might be: "a hearing that leads to action."

⁴ Dr. Thomas Constable. Expository Notes on Ezekiel. 2004.

⁵ Cooper, pp. 319-22; Feinberg, p. 214; and Daniel I. Block, "Beyond the Grave: Ezekiel's Vision of Death and the Afterlife," *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 2 (1992):112-41.

V.15-23

- Ezekiel explains that Yahweh promised to bring exiles from both kingdoms back into the land. He would make one united kingdom of them again and set up one king over all of them (cf. Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 16:10; 17:7-9; 22:17-18; 28:4, 13-15). They would no longer be a divided kingdom.
- These Jews would no longer defile themselves with idols, other detestable things, or transgressions of the Lord's (Mosaic) covenant. Then they would enter into a proper relationship with Him.
- Note parallel to Hosea 1:11 here as well.

V.24-28:

- "God's servant David would rule over the Jews and be their king (34:24; 2 Sam. 7:13, 16; Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:5). They would have only one king who would shepherd them so that they would follow the Lord faithfully (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:18-19; 27:9; Jer. 30:22; 31:33; 32:38). They would live in the Promised Land forever, and the Lord's servant David would be their appointed ruler forever. In view of God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13, this must refer to the Son of David, Messiah. In sum, Israel will enjoy three new realities: a new commitment to Yahweh's will (v. 24b), occupation of her hereditary homeland forever (v. 25a), and the rule of David forever (v. 25b)."⁶
- "The Lord also promised to make a covenant of peace with His people (cf. 16:62; 20:37; 34:25). He would plant them securely in the land and multiply their numbers (cf. Gen. 22:17-18). He would also set His sanctuary in their midst forever (cf. 20:40; 40:5—43:9; Zech. 6:12-13), not temporarily as He had done with the tabernacle and temple. His dwelling place would be with them forever, and He would also establish an intimate relationship with them. The people of the world would know that He is Yahweh who sets aside Israel as sacred for His glory and special purpose in the earth when He would set up His sanctuary in Israel's midst forever (cf. Exod. 19:5-6)."⁷
 - God's sanctuary being in our "midst" takes on a whole new meaning when the Spirit indwells believers! (c.f. 2 Corinthians 6:16; Revelation 21).
- What is the purpose of all this blessing? So that the nations may know that I am the Lord! (c.f. Ezekiel 36:20-24)

Tough Question:

1. How are the blessings promised here in Ezekiel to the Nation of Israel available to us who are not Israelites?

⁶ Constable, 190.

⁷ Constable, 190.

Profit from the Prophets

Week 8 :: Hosea

Authorship & Date¹

- Hosea's name means "salvation" or "deliverance" or "Salvation is of Yahweh" or "Yahweh has saved."
- Hosea was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II (760-715 b.c.). Hosea's ministry spanned 4 kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.
- Some scholars speculate that Hosea's ministry spanned a 45 year time span from 760 – 715 BC give or take.

Historical Background

- Hosea's ministry begins during a time of brief military success and prosperity for both Israel & Judah (2 Kings 14:25-28; 2 Chron. 26:2, 6-15). However, the nation of Assyria became more powerful and Tiglath-Pileser III began a conquest of the important land bridge between Egypt and Mesopotamia: Israel.
- By 734 BC. Tiglath-Pileser III had overrun the Northern Kingdom essentially making it into a puppet kingdom of the nation of Assyria (2 Kings 15:29). An attempted revolt by the Israelites in the north proved unsuccessful and the Assyrian army conquered Samaria – the capital city of the Northern Kingdom – in 722 BC and deported the entire nation into exile (2 Kings 17:1-6; 18:10-12). Hosea's ministered during these last days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
 - The Northern Kingdom of Israel never had a good king (a king who honored God and followed the Law). The first king of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam I, began the idolatrous practices that corrupted the nation. He set up rival temples to the one in Jerusalem (not wanting any of his citizens to have to go into the Kingdom of Judah to worship) and even set up golden calves to worship in those temples (1 Kings 12:26-33).
- Naturally, this led to further idolatry in the nation as the years went on. The kings themselves began to worship not only the Lord, but also other Canaanite deities like Baal, Asherah, and Molech (the fancy word for this is called syncretism). The idolatry in the Northern Kingdom had gotten so bad and so out of hand, that God sent this final message of judgment to His people telling them to turn from their ways or be carried off into exile.

Key Passages

- Hosea 1 & 3
- Hosea 6
- Hosea 11:1
- Hosea 14

Hosea Chapter 1

Fast Facts & Context:

- Three themes emerge in chapter one that are a foundation for the entire book: Israel's unfaithfulness, the certainty of judgment, and the ultimate restoration of the nation.²

¹ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. "Hosea"

² Bible Knowledge Commentary. "Hosea."

Exposition:

V.2

- Here the analogy is set up: The Lord will use Hosea & his family as signs to communicate his displeasure, coming judgment, *and* faithful love towards Israel.
 - “A wife of harlotry” – Gomer (v.3) is Hosea’s wife who is a prostitute – as such, she represents the Northern Kingdom of Israel & her unfaithfulness to God.
 - “children of harlotry” – Hosea and Gomer will have three children: Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi who will be prophetic futures for the Nation.
- “for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD.”
 - The Northern Kingdom’s harlotry against God was both metaphorical *and* literal – spiritual *and* physical. God calls Hosea to this ministry because it parallels both literally and metaphorically what was going on in the hearts of God’s people.
 - To properly understand the context of this book, we must understand what was involved in the practice of Baal worship (the most commonly worshipped idol). Although it is X-rated, it lends much to our understanding of this book.
 - Baal is the Canaanite god of fertility. Whether a person wanted to have a child or to have a bountiful harvest of crops, Baal was the deity responsible for reproduction of both people and agriculture.
 - The north of Israel has some of the most lush and bountiful farmland in the entire region. In fact, the Jezreel valley is considered to be the most fertile valley in all of Israel. Thus, it stands to reason why people in the north would be so easily tempted to worship Baal: he was the key to their survival.
 - So, the worship of the fertility god was, not surprisingly, a sexual act. The idea was to perform sexual acts in front of Baal in order to arouse him so that he would “send his rain” and “fertilize” the land.
 - Thus, temple prostitutes (both male and female) were priests of Baal and would assist worshippers when they came to worship.
 - We don’t know much about Gomer and whether or not she was a temple prostitute or just a worshipper herself. It doesn’t really matter. She represents an entire Kingdom of God’s chosen people who were both physically and spiritually being unfaithful to their husband by engaging in worship of false gods.
- There is much debate on how we are supposed to understand the Hebrew term “wife of harlotry” and the way Hosea’s marriage to Gomer is supposed to function as the message of the book. There are four major interpretations of the phrase:
 - Allegorical view: the book is a spiritual allegory – like *Pilgrim’s Progress* – and not an actual historical account of a real man and a real woman.
 - Metaphorical view: Hosea didn’t marry a *real* cult prostitute; he married an idolatrous woman (a *spiritual* harlot) of Israel.
 - Literal View #1: Hosea married a woman who was a prostitute.
 - Literal View #2: Hosea married a woman who later become a prostitute.

V.3-5

- Hosea obediently married Gomer (whose name likely means “completion”) who was the daughter of Diblaim (“fig cakes”).
- The first of Hosea & Gomer’s children of harlotry was to be named Jezreel (“God sows” or “God scatters” – as in sowing/scattering seed in a field).
 - The city of Jezreel had been a place of national humiliation. It was the place where King Jehu of Israel did a good thing and massacred the house of Ahab, but then did a bad thing in killing King Aahaziah of Judah & his 42 relatives (2 Kings 9-10). Because of that, God promised to punish Jehu’s house/dynasty by wiping it out forever (2 Kings 10:29-31).
 - The Valley of Jezreel will also be the place where Israel will meet her military demise (“breaking of the bow”). It was where Tiglath-Pileser III conquered Israel, it was the

place where Saul was killed by the Philistines (1 Samuel 31), and also where King Josiah was defeated by Pharaoh Neco II (2 Kings 23:29-30).³

- Bottom line: the first-born son of Hosea and Gomer is a prophecy of the imminent destruction and dissolution (scattering) of the Northern Kingdom of Israel into exile. His name was to be Jezreel because the place of disobedience in the past will become a place of discipline in the future.
 - “You reap what you sow” (c.f. Galatians 6:7-8) is an appropriate expression to be used here given the name of Hosea’s son and the spiritual state of the Nation of Israel.

V.6

- “Lo-Ruhamah” means “she is not loved.” “Yahweh had been very compassionate toward Israel in the past, but her persistent unfaithfulness to Him and His covenant with her made continuing compassion impossible (see Exodus 34:7).”⁴
- So, Jezreel prophesied the coming demise and scattering of the Northern Kingdom. Lo-Ruhamah prophesied the end of compassion for the people of the North. Judgment was coming.

V.7

- On the other hand, God *would* have love/compassion on the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Judah was a nation that had some semblance of faithfulness to Yahweh in some of her kings. Specifically in King Hezekiah – who seems to be in view here. The Assyrian army after overthrowing the Northern Kingdom marched on Jerusalem in 701 BC. The city and King Hezekiah were delivered from an army of 185,000 when the Lord slew them all in one night (2 Kings 19:32-36) – without bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.
- Despite the Northern Kingdom’s unfaithfulness, God could still fulfill His promises to His people through the remnant in Judah.

V.8-9

- “Lo-Ammi” means “not My people.” This name cuts deep because it invokes covenant language & imagery. Throughout so many of the covenants God made with the people of Israel is the phrase “I will be your God and you will be My people.” For God to say that they would no longer be His people meant that they would no longer have access to His promise and protection. While this may sound like God breaking His promise to the people, He is merely stating the fact of the matter: the people have chosen to go after other gods – they have chosen not to be my people, therefore that is what they shall receive.
 - Again, this does not invalidate the unconditional promises He has made to His people (e.g., Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 26:17-18) because they would be preserved through the line and nation of Judah. The people of the Northern Kingdom thought they would be better off with other gods, so God gives them exactly what they want. He would no longer protect the Northern Kingdom from her enemies.
 - The last clause of 1:9 is literally: “and I am no longer “I AM” to you.”⁵
- Thus, Jezreel prophesied the scattering and destruction of the Nation. Lo-Ruhamah prophesied the end of God’s compassion for the people of the North. And Lo-Ammi meant the complete severing of relationship between God and the people of the Northern Kingdom; they no longer had access to Him or His promises.

V. 10

- Throughout the book of Hosea there is a pattern of judgment and then promises of restoration and blessing. Chapter one is very much a summary of the entire book in one chapter. The Book

³ Bible Knowledge Commentary. “Hosea”

⁴ Dr. Thomas Constable. Expository notes on Hosea. 2004.

⁵ Bible Knowledge Commentary. “Hosea”

of Hosea is a demonstration of God's loyal love to his people in spite of and together with their behavior towards Him.

- "sand of the sea" – undoubtedly a reference back to the unconditional promise made to Abraham about his descendants (Genesis 12, 15, 22:17; 32:12).
- "sons of the living God" – They will indeed be His people again once more.
- The Nation as a whole will eventually be restored back to a right relationship with God.
 - "[Hosea's] prophetic oracles appear to presage absolute judgment, but that was so only for his unbelieving generation. The nation's unfaithfulness to God and their trust in Assyria would be their downfall, but God would preserve a people, and out of them would spring an innumerable multitude."⁶
 - For an interesting parallel, see also Romans 9:19-33 where Paul uses this passage from Hosea to defend God's intent to preserve the nation of Israel in the future.

V.11

- "gathered together" – The northern and southern kingdoms will be reunited and have only one king instead of two (the ideal Davidic ruler of the Kingdom) (2 Samuel 7:11-16; Hosea 3:5; Isaiah 9:6-7; Ezekiel 37:22; Amos 9:11; Micah 5:2).
- "Jezreel" means "God sows." The nation will "come up out of the land" just like a sprout comes up out of the ground. Three elements from the Abrahamic covenant that we see restored here in 10 & 11: Relationship with Yahweh, a multitude of descendants, and the promise of being in the land (See also 2:22-23).
 - "According to Hosea 2:23, the Lord promised that He would "plant" (*zāra'*, the same word used in the name Jezreel) the nation in the land as one sows seed on the ground (cf. 2:22, where the name Jezreel, "God sows," appears). Because the Lord Himself will be the One who sows, Israel will sprout forth and grow luxuriantly."⁷
 - Jezreel been a place of national humiliation & bloodshed, but it now will be a place of victory. It will begin with Gideon's victory over the Midianites in Judges chapter 7 and continue on into the future until the Messiah, Jesus Christ, returns to reign over all nations (Hosea 3:5; Isaiah 9:4-7; 41:8-16; Jer. 30:21; Joel 3:9-17; Amos 9:11-12; Rev 19:11-21).⁸

"These three great revelations—sin, judgment, and love—constitute the living message of the Book of Hosea. These are the great lessons that we as Christians must apply to ourselves and to those to whom we minister. We need a constant re-emphasis of each of these truths, because we tend to get away from them, both individually, and corporately as the church. We fail to appreciate the love of God, because we fail to appreciate the essential nature of our sin, and that it makes judgment inevitable. Jesus said that the person who is most impressed with his or her own sin is the person who is most impressed with God's love for him or her (Luke 7:47)."⁹

Tough Question

1. Was God just kidding when he told the Israelites "I am no longer I AM to you?" How can God have "loyal love" and say "Lo-ruhamah" to His people? What does this teach you about God? Does He make promises that are breakable?
2. Has the Day of Jezreel happened yet? Has this prophecy been fulfilled? If so, when did it happen? If not, can we know when it will happen?

⁶ McComiskey as found in Constable's expository notes, p.16.

⁷ Chisholm, R. B., & Jr. (1985). Hosea. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Ho 1:11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁸ Dr. Thomas Constable. Expository notes on Hosea. 2004.

⁹ *ibid*, p. 8.

Profit from the Prophets

Week 9 :: Micah

Authorship & Date^{1 2}

- Micah was a prophet to the southern Kingdom of Judah. His name is also his message as it means, "Who is like Yahweh?". The question of Micah's name is obvious: there is no one like Him, so Micah's message is a strong encouragement to cling to the Lord and to reject idols.
- Micah was a pre-exilic prophet and wrote this book around 730BC. This would have been during the reign of Hezekiah and just prior to the collapse of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC.
- The book is in poetry, not prose. Thus, he employs several poetic elements: parallelism, puns, wordplays and probing questions. The organization of the book is in the form of a *rib* oracle (pronounced reeb). A *rib* oracle was a legal accusation of wrongdoing in a courtroom of cosmic proportions (1:2). God is both the accuser and the judge; the Nation of Israel is the defendant without an attorney. Each oracle has three stages: accusation, judgment, and a promise of future salvation.
- Micah contains prophecies about Messiah's birthplace, lineage, origin, and reign (5:2, 4:1-7, 5:4, 2:13). In fact, Micah contains more prophecies about Messiah and the coming Messianic Kingdom than any other prophetic book.
- "The Book of Micah consists of three messages, each of which begins "Hear" (Heb. *shema*; cf. Deut. 6:4). They may have been messages that he preached, or probably condensations of several addresses he delivered during his ministry. In each one the theme of judgment is prominent, but there is also mention of restoration and a remnant. Eventually God would restore the Israelites to a position of world prominence under their Messiah."³
- "God's standard of measurement in the Book of Micah (as in all the prophetic writings) was the Mosaic Covenant God made with His people when the nation was redeemed from Egypt. The people were expected to live according to the covenant stipulations. If they did they would be blessed by God (Deut. 28:1-14). If they did not, they would be judged by God and eventually He would cast them out of the land of promise (Deut. 28:15-68). Micah pointed up how the people had failed to live up to the covenant stipulations. He announced that God was just in disciplining them. Actually God's discipline on the nation showed that He cared for them and would restore them."⁴

Historical Background

- His ministry occurs during the same time as prophets Isaiah, Amos & Hosea and under the reign of Judean Kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.
 - **730 b.c.** Micah's ministry in full swing
 - **722 b.c.** Destruction of the Northern Kingdom
 - **701 b.c.** Invasion of Sennacherib during Hezekiah's reign (see 2 Kings 18-19).
 - **587 b.c.** Destruction of the Southern Kingdom

Key Passages

- Micah 1:2-7 – Backdrop for entire book
- Micah 4:1-8 – 11 characteristics of the millennial kingdom
- Micah 5:1-15 – Messiah's birth in Bethlehem prophesied & Kingship described
- Micah 6:6-8 – What the Lord requires of you. . .

¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary.

² Ronald B. Allen class notes. Dallas Theological Seminary. 2001.

³ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Expository Notes on Micah*. 2013, p.4.

⁴ Martin, J. A. (1985). Micah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), . *Vol. 1: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (1474-1475). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Micah 6:1-8

Fast Facts & Context:

- Chapter 6 begins the third of three *rib* oracles against Judah. The first (1:1-2:13) describes Israel's guilt, impending judgment, and future restoration in general. The second (3:1-5:15) is an indictment against the leadership of Israel and how they have poorly shepherded the nation. The final oracle (6:1-7:20) describes God's final judgment against Israel along with his future redemption of the nation.

Exposition:

V.1-3:

- The courtroom scene is spelled out for us. The Lord has brought his accusations in the previous two *rib* oracles and now offers the Nation a chance to defend themselves to the jury of mountains, hills, and the very foundation of the earth. This jury seems strange, but who better to hear the complaint of Israel than the very land that has held her since her release from captivity? If the hills and mountains could talk . . .
 - Another way of putting what God is saying here: "My dear dear child, what wrong have I done to you that has given you good cause to stop obeying me? Give your side of the story. Have I been unrighteous in my shepherding of you? I'm all ears."
 - Notice that there are no words offered by the Nation. She is silent. She has nothing to say for herself. She knows she cannot speak because she knows she is guilty. She knows the hills and mountains know – and so does God. She is silent.

V.4-5:

- She is silent for good reason. God has been nothing but loving and generous to the Nation since her birth. He delivered them from slavery, gave them good shepherds to lead the nation (through whom they received the Law, the priesthood, the feast of Passover, and the entire sacrificial system), and protected them through the wilderness and safely into the Promised Land.⁵
 - "God had always done what was consistent with His covenant obligations to His people, never burdening them but always protecting, defending, and enabling them. He had lovingly led them from slavery, in a hostile foreign land, to settlement in their own comfortable country."⁶
 - The evidence for God's goodness and righteousness towards His people is overwhelmingly convincing. No one can speak against Him.

V.6-7

- Finally, after who knows how much awkward silence, Micah speaks up on behalf of the people.
 - He asks the question that, hopefully, everyone is thinking: "Okay, Lord, what do we need to do to make this right? Our plea is guilty-as-charged. . . but what can we do? We've been offering sacrifices, but our hearts have been far from you & we know you don't delight in those offerings (Isaiah 1:10-16). You have been good to us; we have no case against you, but nothing that we have – not even our own children – could possibly atone for the wrong that we have done. What can we do to regain your favor?"
 - This statement is very much rhetorical in nature. Micah isn't so much asking the Lord what to do as he is showing the nation that the solution to the problem isn't going to be more offerings/sacrifices. If they wanted to avoid God's judgment, they would have to change their hearts and attitudes. They would need to repent and turn back to what God had been asking them to do all along.

⁵ See Numbers 22-24 for the story of Balak, Josh 3:1; 4:18-19 for the crossing of the Jordan River from Shittim to Gilgal, and Joshua 24 for a good summary of God's deliverance from captivity to Promised Land.

⁶ Constable, p.33.

V.8

- So, Micah turns from addressing the Judge to now speaking to the Nation ("O man"). God has already spoken to the Nation on this subject (Deut. 10:12-16, 18; 1 Sam. 12:24; Hos. 12:6), but apparently Micah was the only one listening.
- "what is good": God has told his people what is beneficial for them (God doesn't give us bad information nor does He withhold from us anything but His best). He has given them the way, the truth, and the life in the *Torah*. We translate the word, *torah*, as Law (Exodus 24:12 for example). While that translation is accurate, it would be more appropriate to translate *torah* as "teaching". In other words, God has taught us how to experience life as He intended for it to be experienced. He has also taught us how to repent when we disregard His teaching.⁷
 - Knowing what God wants from us or how we ought to live to experience life to the fullest are not things that are discernable or discoverable with our senses. They must be *shown* to us; they must be *revealed* to us; they must be *taught* to us. The "Law" was given not as a set of directions that would lead people to salvation, but as a means to *show* people how to live in order to experience life as God designed it to be.
 - "require" is the Hebrew word *darash* and means 'to seek'. So, another way of putting this verse would be, "this is what the Lord is looking for".
- Micah summarizes "what is good" in three simple statements:
 - "do justice": Instead of plotting and practicing unfairness toward one another (c.f. 6:11; 2:1-2; 3:1-3), they should be generous and fair. When we do justice (notice that justice is a noun not a verb) we are not blind to oppression or injustice by our own selfish desires or petty ideals; instead, we seek to make things right with whatever we have at our disposal. We are to promote justice in the way we live with others rather than just talking about it.
 - "love kindness": The Hebrew word for kindness here is *hesed* and is usually defined as loyal love or faithfulness. Instead of being unkind and unfaithful in our dealings with others (2:8-9; 3:10-11), we can choose to love people by meeting their needs not on the basis of how well they perform for us, but by loving them as we would want to be loved (Matt. 7:12). The people of God should *love* to love. Faithfulness and loyalty (to God and to neighbor) should be characteristic markers of the people of God (Matt. 22:36-40).
 - "walk humbly with your God": We cannot do justice unless we love kindness and we cannot do either of those unless we walk humbly with God. This means we walk at *His* pace, in *His* same direction, and with *His* presence. Instead of dictating, we obey. Instead of questioning, we praise. Instead of judging, we trust. We cannot walk with God if we are not humble. A position of humility means that we are modest in our estimation of ourselves and that we have come to trust in God's way (rather than relying on ourselves – i.e. 2:3; 3:11).
 - Think about what happens when you take a walk with someone:⁸
 - You have a moment by moment awareness of the other person's awareness of you. You never forget they are there or that they care about what you are doing.
 - You don't go on walks with someone you're not friends with and whom you don't trust. So, as you walk, He speaks & you listen. When you speak, He listens.
 - Walks take a while. They are methodical & slow; they are non-dramatic and even rhythmic. That extended time not only gives the relationship time to grow, but also the spiritual growth God wants to see in us has time to grow as well.

⁷ This is just as true in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) as it is in the New Testament. Jesus comes to us as the fulfillment of the "Law" and the Prophets. Jesus is the *Torah* made flesh – the perfect embodiment and example of a life lived in complete submission to the teaching of God (because His teachings are life).

⁸ I heard these points while listening to a Tim Keller sermon on Luke 24.

"This verse contains one of the most succinct and powerful expressions of Yahweh's essential requirements in the Bible (cf. Matt. 22:37-39; 23:23; 1 Cor. 13:4; 2 Cor. 6:6; Col. 3:12; James 1:27; 1 Pet. 1:2; 5:5). It explains the essence of spiritual reality—in contrast to mere ritual worship. Though the Lord asked His people to worship Him in formal ways, which the Mosaic Covenant spelled out, His primary desire was for a heart attitude marked by the characteristics Micah articulated (cf. Ps. 51:16-17; Jer. 7:22-26)."⁹

7:7-20

- When confronted with failure, Micah responds on behalf of the Nation in confidence, petition, and praise. It is a model for us as we encounter our own failure (and the discipline that comes with it). As the Lord continues to conform us into the image of Jesus, our perspective on who He is and what He is doing (and why) is most important.
- It is a Jewish tradition for modern orthodox Jews to read verses 18-20 in synagogue at the end of the Day of Atonement (a day of solemn reflection on personal and national sin).
- "The basis of Micah's confidence was that God would be faithful to His promises "to Jacob," and loyal to His commitment (Heb. *hesed*) to bless "Abraham" (cf. Gen. 12:2-3; 13:15; 15:18-21; 17:7-8, 13, 19, 21; 28:13-14; 35:10-12; 48:4; et al.). These were ancient promises to their "forefathers," that God had sealed with His oath, vowing to fulfill them (e.g., Gen. 22:16-18; cf. Rom. 4:13; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 4:1-10; 8:10; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 21:3, 7)."¹⁰

Tough Question

1. What are some things you *know* God has commanded you to do that you are simply not doing (not just personal commandments, but things from the Text)? Why not?

⁹ Constable, 2013. p.34.

¹⁰ Constable, 2013. p.40.

Profit from the Prophets

Week 10 :: Joel

Authorship & Date

- Joel the son of Pethuel and that's about all we know about him. He is not mentioned anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible, nor is his father. "Joel" means "Yahweh is God" and he was a prophet to the Nation of Judah.
- No one knows a date for the book of Joel for sure. There are arguments that span from an early pre-exilic date all the way to a post-exilic time frame (anywhere from 835 BC to 400 BC). Since there are no definitive references to any historical figures or events in the book, it is difficult to be dogmatic about the date when it was written. Strong arguments can be made for four possible dates:¹
 - 872-796 bc During King Jehoshaphat or King Joash
 - 792-740 bc During King Uzziah
 - 597-587 bc just before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587.
 - 515-500 during and just after the Babylonian captivity.
- Fortunately the date of the book doesn't affect the interpretation all that much and in cases where it would, these four options all must be considered in making an interpretation.

Historical Background

- Apparently a recent drought and subsequent locust plague prompted Joel to use those images to speak of the coming "Day of the Lord" which will be full of devastation and calamity. Without repentance and turning back to the Lord, the Nation could expect even greater devastation than the present drought and locust plague.

Key Passages

- "Day of the Lord" imagery throughout the book
- "Though the description of "the day of the LORD" was certainly influenced by traditions relating to the Lord's intervention in Israel's early wars, the expression itself is ultimately derived from the idea, prevalent in the ancient Near East, that a mighty warrior-king could consummate an entire military campaign in a single day. So generally speaking, "the day of the LORD" is an idiom used to emphasize the swift and decisive nature of the Lord's victory over His enemies on any given occasion. In the Old Testament "the day of the LORD" may refer to either a particular historical event or an eschatological battle which will culminate the present age."²
 - "The day of the Lord" can involve the judgment of God's people (at the hands of foreign nations), the judgment of foreign nations (at the hands of foreign nations), or it is a picture of the purification and restoration of the Nation herself. In most cases it promises great finality and restoration preceded by a time of great tribulation and suffering.
 - Joel contains all three of these uses of "the day of the Lord".
- Joel 2:28-32

Joel 2:28-32

Fast Facts & Context:

¹ Constable Notes

² Chisholm, R. B., & Jr. (1985). Joel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), . *Vol. 1: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (1412). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- In chapter 1, Joel has described the immediate threat of a locust plague and then a more apocalyptic threat in chapter 2 – along with the Lord’s answer of recovery and deliverance of the immediate threat of locusts.³
 - 1:2-20 is a description of a “day of the Lord” in the past: a severe locust plague and drought that destroyed the agriculture (and economy) of the land.
 - 2:1-27 is a description of a “day of the Lord” in the not-too-distant future. The locust plague of the past is used to personify the invasion of an army coming from the north to destroy the nation of Israel. Fortunately, the nation will repent and find deliverance.
 - 2:28-3:21 contains a “day of the Lord” in the distant future that simultaneously promises destruction against foreign nations and deliverance for the nation of Israel.
- This section (2:28-ff) is the Lord’s answer to the apocalyptic “day of the Lord” threat (2:1-11).
 - 2:28-32 will be the fate of Judah in the “day of the Lord.” A day of salvation and vindication.
 - 3:1-17 will be the fate of the gentiles in the “day of the Lord.” A day full of the full fury of Yahweh in holy war.⁴
- “The deliverance experienced by Joel’s generation foreshadowed that of the end times. The day of the Lord, so narrowly averted by Joel’s repentant contemporaries, will come in full force against the enemies of God’s people (perhaps foreshadowed by the northern army of 2:20). The promises of 2:19–27 will find their ultimate and absolute fulfillment as the Lord intervenes on Israel’s behalf (2:28–32), decisively judges the nation’s enemies (3:1–16a, 19), and securely establishes His people in their land (3:1, 16b–18, 20–21).⁵

Exposition:

V.28-29:

- “after this” – Some unknown amount of time after the nation has been delivered from this invading army from the north. There is a significant change in the day of the Lord events being referred to between verses 27 and 28 (see fast facts & context in the section above).
- “A drought has been prophesied and it will be relieved not just by real water, but also by the living water of the Spirit of God, so that the end of the famine also represents the end of the famine of hearing the word of God.”⁶
- “God promised to pour out His Spirit on all the Israelites—without gender, age, class, or position distinctions. Other similar promises identify the Israelites as the recipients of the Spirit (e.g., Ezek. 36:27; 39:29; Zech. 12:10), and here “your sons and daughters” (i.e., Israelites) are the object of this blessing. God never gave His Spirit to unbelievers, so believing Israelites are in view.”⁷
- “At that time recipients of the divine Spirit will exercise prophetic gifts which in the past had been limited to a select few (cf. 1 Sam. 10:10–11; 19:20–24). . . This extensive outpouring of the Spirit will signal the advent of divine blessing (contrast 1 Sam. 3:1, where the absence of prophetic visions characterized a period of sin and judgment).”⁸
- It is possible that Joel is reflecting on the narrative of Numbers 11:1 – 12:8. God is going to answer Moses’ prayer, but He will take a considerable amount of time in answering it (Num. 11:29; c.f. Isaiah 32:15; 44:3-4; Ezek. 36:27-28; 37:14; 39:29; Zech. 12:10).

³ Dillard, Raymond. “Joel.” *An Exigetical and Expository Commentary on the Minor Prophets*. Thomas Edward McComiskey, editor. Baker Books, publisher.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Chisholm, R. B., & Jr. (1985). Joel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Joe 2:28–3:21). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁶ Dillard, Raymond. “Joel.” *An Exigetical and Expository Commentary on the Minor Prophets*. Thomas Edward McComiskey, editor. Baker Books, publisher.

⁷ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Expository Notes on Joel*. 2013. p.19.

⁸ Chisholm, R. B., & Jr. (1985). Joel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Joe 2:28–29). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- For the Spirit to be poured out on all – not just prophets or priests and not just men, but women, children, *and* servants. This was a spiritual *and* sociological overhaul.
 - No doubt this verse is closely connected with the promises of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:34. For all to have a close relationship, for all to know Him – the indwelling of the Spirit is essential. No one will have any greater access to God than the other – for all will have the ultimate access.

V.30-31

- These verses indicate what will precede the day of the Lord that, here, is still future. At the time of Jesus, they were still future and used in reference to His second coming (cf. Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28).
- “The day of the Lord in view here begins with the Tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 6-18), continues through the return of Christ (Rev 19-20) and culminates in the eternal state (2 Peter 3:10-13; Rev 21-22).”⁹

V.32

- There will be a remnant...survivors of the great and terrible day of the Lord. These survivors will call on the name of the Lord, but also be called by the Lord. This leads into the inevitable and mysterious paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.
- Calling upon the Lord is not mentioning His name at random or even in time of distress. The Hebrew word literally means “to call out to Yahweh.” It is to make proclamation on His name. It is to pray to Him and entreat His help, but it is also to preach of His power and identify yourself with that power.¹⁰
- “The Apostle Paul quoted this verse and applied it to spiritual salvation (Rom. 10:13). His usage does not fulfill what God promised here, namely: physical deliverance in the coming day of the Lord. Paul meant that, just as God will deliver all who call on Him in that future day of the Lord, so He will deliver all who call on Him for salvation from sin. They will avoid the terrible day (i.e., the Great White Throne Judgment day) when all unbelievers will suffer condemnation by their Judge (Rev. 20:11-15).”¹¹

Acts 2:14-21

- During the Jewish feast of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 after they and the other believers experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them (Acts 2:1-13). Why would Peter quote Joel 2 during such an event? Certainly the Holy Spirit had been “poured out”, but the celestial signs were all absent. What was Peter trying to communicate to his listeners (who all would have been familiar with the passage from Joel)? Here are some possible interpretations:
 - Partial Fulfillment View: Only a part of what Joel predicted was fulfilled on Pentecost (2:28-29) and the rest (2:30-31) will be fulfilled in a day yet to come. The problem? Thousands of years would separate these two fulfillments that are supposed to happen on the “day” of the Lord.
 - Comparison View: Peter’s quotation of Joel 2 was a comparison of the two events and he was not suggesting that what had just happened to the believers was a fulfillment of the prophecy at all. While Pentecost was analogous to Joel 2 (c.f. Gal. 3:28), the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy still remains in the future.
 - Delayed Fulfillment View: “In the early chapters of Acts the kingdom was being offered to Israel once more. Peter admonished the people to repent so that they might receive the promised Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38–39 where he alludes to Joel 2:32). Shortly thereafter Peter anticipated “times of refreshing” and the return of Christ in response to national repentance (cf. Acts 10:19–21). Not until later did Peter come to understand more fully

⁹ Constable, p.21.

¹⁰ Ronald B. Allen. Class Notes. Dallas Theological Seminary. 2001.

¹¹ Constable, p.20.

God's program for the Gentiles in the present age (cf. Acts 10:44–48). When he observed the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost he rightly viewed it as the first stage in the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Apparently he believed that the kingdom was then being offered to Israel and that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit signaled the coming of the Millennium. However, the complete fulfillment of the prophecy (with respect to both the extent of the Spirit's work and the other details) was delayed because of Jewish unbelief."¹²

- "This has led many Bible students to conclude that God has fulfilled His promises to Israel in the church. This is the viewpoint of amillennial and postmillennial interpreters who believe that God has no special future plans for Israel. Others see a double or partial fulfillment on the day of Pentecost with the church, and a future fulfillment with Israel in the Millennium. This is the viewpoint of many premillennialists. A third view is that fulfillment will only be in the Millennium, and that what Peter meant was that what happened on the day of Pentecost was similar to or like what Joel prophesied."¹³

"Whether people recognize it or not, God is executing His plan for the world. He will break into human experience again in the future. Thus it is imperative that we sound the same warning that Joel did. Judgment is coming, but people can avoid God's judgment by repenting. "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered" (2:32; Acts 2:21). Humanity as a whole will fail to repent, just as the apostate Israelites failed to repent (cf. 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3). In that day, a far worse fate will befall the unrepentant. Yet, God's plans for His people include incredible blessing, even though we fail Him. This evidence of God's grace should motivate God's people to repent and remain faithful to Him now. Thus, God's government of Israel and His plan for Israel serve as a paradigm for His dealings with all humanity."¹⁴

Tough Question

1. Do you know what you believe about the end times? Why or why not?
2. Should Christians have an opinion on how the end times will play out? Why or why not?

¹² Chisholm, R. B., & Jr. (1985). Joel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Joe 2:32). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹³ Constable, p.6.

¹⁴ Constable, p.7.

Profit from the Prophets

Week 11 :: Daniel

Authorship & Date

- Daniel means “Yahweh is my judge”. He was a prophet during the time of the exile of the Nation of Judah in the land of Babylonia. He was also a dream interpreter (ch 2), interpreter of signs (ch 5), a seer of visions (last 6 chapters of the book), and even an official for the kings.
 - “Daniel was born into the royal family and was of noble birth (Dan. 1:3, 6). He was physically attractive and mentally sharp (1:4). He lived at least until the third year of Cyrus, that is, till 536 b.c. (10:1). Therefore he must have been a young man when he was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 b.c. (In 1:4 Daniel was one of the “young” men of Israel.) If he were 16 when captured, he was 85 in Cyrus’ third year.”¹
- The book was written in two languages: Aramaic (2:4b-7:28) & Hebrew (1:1 – 2:4a; ch.’s 8-12). The Aramaic portions are likely for the people of Babylon and Persia and the Hebrew for those parts that pertain especially to the Israelites.² Conservative scholars date it in the 6th Century BC.
- Daniel is an apocalyptic book meaning that much of what it contains came through visions that were particularly unique. This type of literature usually has the basic characteristics of dreams and visions that contain unusual symbols that help the people understand what the future holds for the people of God. (Ezekiel and Zechariah contain some apocalyptic form in them as well).
- In our English Bibles, Daniel is located after Ezekiel and considered one of the “major” prophets. In the Hebrew Bible, however, it not found with the other prophetic books, but instead in a section called “Writings”. In fact, the designation of ‘prophet’ is never used of or about Daniel in the book, nor did Daniel deliver a message publically to the Nation. However, Jesus considered Daniel to be a prophet (Matt. 24:15).

Historical Background

- Historical background to the book of Daniel is of UTMOST importance to understanding his message.
 - **612 BC** – Nineveh, the capitol of Assyria (the major superpower at the time) was destroyed by the Babylonian army.
 - **609 BC** – The Assyrians appeal to Egypt for help and Pharaoh Neco II responds by bringing an army North through Israel to assist. King Josiah, hoping to incur favor with the Babylonians, goes out to fight against Neco II and is killed at Megiddo (2 Kings 23:28-30).
 - **605 BC** – Nebuchadnezzar defeats Egyptians & Assyrians at battle of Carchemish.
 - **605 BC** – Nebuchadnezzar’s first invasion. Daniel and several others were taken captive back to Babylon as a result (Daniel 1:1-3; 2 Chron. 36:7).
 - **597 BC** – Nebuchadnezzar’s second invasion. 10,000 captives were taken away to Babylon including the prophet Ezekiel (2 Kings 24:10-17; 2 Chron. 36:10).
 - **586 BC** – Nebuchadnezzar’s third attack on Jerusalem. The entire city of Jerusalem is destroyed and the temple leveled to the ground (2 Kings 24:18 – 25:24).
 - **538 BC** – Cyrus, king of Persia, overthrew the Babylonians and issued a decree that allowed the Jews to return to their homeland to rebuild (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4).
 - **536 BC** – The rebuilding of the temple begins with the laying of the foundation.
 - **515 BC** – The temple is completed (Ezra 6:15).
- 70 years pass from the first attack on Jerusalem (605 BC) until the Jews returned and rebuilt the temple foundation (536 BC). There are also 70 years between the destruction of the temple in 586 BC until it was rebuilt in 515 BC. In both cases, Jeremiah’s prophecy about the 70-year exile was fulfilled (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10-14; 36:23,28).

¹ Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), . *Vol. 1: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (1323). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Dr. Thomas Constable. Expository Notes on Daniel. 2004.

Key Passages

- "Though the Book of Daniel is a single literary work, it has two major emphases. One has to do with God's program for the Gentile nations. This is contained in 2:4b–7:28. . .The second major emphasis is on the nation Israel and the influence or effect of the Gentiles on Israel. This theme is developed in 1:1–2:4a and chapters 8–12.³
- The book is easily divided in half with the first half (ch's. 1-6) focusing on Daniel's story and the second half (ch's. 7-12) focusing on his visions.

Daniel 9:24-27

Fast Facts & Context:

- Chapter 9 is the third of three visions Daniel has received (ch 7, 8, 9). The vision itself is contained in verses 24-27, but the entire chapter helps us understand the need for the vision.
- This is one of the most important prophecies of the Old Testament. Unless the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel is properly understood, the great prophetic discourse of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24–25, Mark 13, and Luke 21 will be misunderstood, as will the greater portion of the book of Revelation.⁴
- The history and background of Daniel 9:1-2:
 - The first year of Darius the Mede (also known as Cyrus) as King (over the now former Babylonian empire⁵) was 538 BC (c.f. Ezra 1:1; 6:3-5; 2 Chron. 36:21-23). Daniel had been in exile for over 60 years at this point in his life.
 - Somehow, Daniel obtained a copy of Jeremiah's prophecy about the length of Jerusalem's exile (Jer. 36:23, 28) wherein Jeremiah predicted the 70-year exile & destruction of Babylon (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10-14, 17-19; c.f. 2 Chron. 36:21). So, Daniel understood that the inauguration of Darius the Mede meant that the end of the exile was near. Thus, verse three: "So, I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer . . ."
- By verse 21, the angel Gabriel shows up and interrupts Daniel's prayer to give him an answer! He then delivers the vision to Daniel that gives him "insight with understanding." It's interesting to note that the next time we see Gabriel in the Text is his proclamation to Mary about the birth of Jesus – the One whom Gabriel delivers this prophecy about.

Exposition

V. 24

- "Seventy Weeks" – the Hebrew word here for 'weeks' means a unit or period of seven. So, some translations have rendered this verse: "Seventy sevens have been decreed. . .". The question is, what are the units? Are they days, weeks, months, or years? Most conservative evangelical interpreters consider the "sevens" to be seventy units of 7-year periods which would be a total of 490 years.
 - "Since Israel and Judah had failed to keep the sabbatical years (every seventh year the land was to lie fallow, Lev. 25:1–7) throughout her history, the Lord enforced on the land 70 "sabbaths" (cf. Lev. 26:34–35). Thus 490 years would be required to complete 70 sabbatical years with one occurring every seventh year."⁶
- Daniel lists six reasons for this 490-year period:
 1. To finish the transgression (end the rebellion/disobedience against Yahweh)
 2. To make an end of sin (sin that had gone unpunished will be punished & removed)
 3. To make atonement for iniquity (sin will be expiated)

³ Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), . *Vol. 1: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (1324). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Feinberg, Charles Lee. *Daniel: The Kingdom of the Lord*. 1981. p. 117.

⁵ The Medo-Persian takeover of the Babylonian empire (as prophesied by Daniel in 5:25-30) was instrumental in making it possible for the Jews to return from exile.

⁶ Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Da 9:24). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

4. To bring in everlasting righteousness (an age/era of sinlessness)
 5. To seal up vision and prophecy (all prophesies will be fulfilled/completed)
 6. To anoint the most holy place (the enthronement of the Holy One of Dan. 7:25-27)
- "By the time these 490 years run their course, God will have completed six things for Israel. The first three have to do with sin, and the second three with the kingdom. The basis for the first three was provided in the work of Christ on the cross, but all six will be realized by Israel at the Second Advent of Christ. . . [They] summarize God's whole program to bring the nation Israel the blessings He promised through his covenants (Gen. 15:18-21; 2 Sam. 7:16; Jer. 31:31-34)."⁷

V.25-26

- There will be time markers to let God's people know the various stages of this time period. Gabriel informs Daniel that the "issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" will mark the beginning of the 70 weeks.
 - While there are four separate decrees that this could refer to, most conservative scholars agree that this is a reference to Artaxerxes' decree to Nehemiah authorizing him to rebuild Jerusalem in 444 BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8). So, 444 BC marks the beginning of the 490-year period that Gabriel is describing to Daniel.
- The next time marker that Gabriel gives to Daniel is when "Messiah will be cut off". From the issuing of a decree to the cutting off of Messiah, there will be "seven weeks and sixty-two weeks".
 - Seven weeks (49 years) and sixty-two weeks (434 years) is sixty-nine weeks (483 years).
 - We should understand the 'cutting off' of Messiah as his crucifixion.
 - The problem we encounter is that 444 BC plus 483 years gives us a date of AD 39 – six years after the universally agreed upon date of AD 33 for Jesus' crucifixion.
 - Both the Jews and the Babylonians, however, observed a 360-day calendar.
 - So, 483 years multiplied by 360-day years is 173,880 days (476 years by the Gregorian calendar). 444 BC plus 476 years gives us AD 32. Depending on the month in which the decree was issued, it could be AD 32/33.⁸
- Why did Gabriel divide this period into seven weeks and sixty-two weeks?
 - "The first period of 49 years may refer to the time in which the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, permitted by Artaxerxes' decree, was completed (444-395 b.c.). Though Nehemiah's wall construction project took only 52 days, many years may have been needed to remove the city's debris (after being desolate for many decades), to build adequate housing, and to rebuild the streets and a trench."⁹
- "The prince who will come seems to be a different person from the Messiah. A legitimate translation is "the people of a ruler who will come." His people, not he himself, would destroy the city. This happened in A.D. 70 when the Roman army under Titus leveled Jerusalem. The prince who will come, however, was evidently not Titus but a future ruler, namely, the Antichrist (7:8)."¹⁰

V.27

- Gabriel has explained 69 of the 70 weeks thus far. This last verse details what the final week of the 70 weeks will entail.
- The beginning of the final week will involve "he" making a covenant with "the many" for one week.
 - "The nearest antecedent of "he" is "the prince who is to come" (v. 26). Titus made no covenant with Israel, so who is in view? Apparently a future ruler of the revived or reorganized Roman Empire, the little horn of chapter 7, is in view. This seems preferable to

⁷ Pentecost, Dwight D. *Daniel*. p.1361.

⁸ For a detailed explanation of the days between the decree and the crucifixion see Harold Hoehner's *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*. In the book, he gives a much more detailed explanation of the entire passage as well as a full mathematical proof (down to the calendar date) of this particular interpretation.

⁹ Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Da 9:25). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁰ Constable, *Expository notes on Daniel*. 2013. p.114.

taking the antecedent of "he" as Messiah, since Jesus Christ did not do the things predicted of the prince here."¹¹ The "many" are likely Daniel's people who are ethnic Jews.

- "The covenant he will make will evidently be a peace covenant, in which he will guarantee Israel's safety in the land. This suggests that Israel will be in her land but will be unable to defend herself for she will have lost any support she may have had previously. Therefore she will need and welcome the peacemaking role of this head of the confederation of 10 European (Roman) nations. In offering this covenant, this ruler will pose as a prince of peace, and Israel will accept his authority."¹²
- In the middle of that week (3.5 years later) Antichrist will break the covenant and bring an end to the sacrifices and offerings that the covenant he made with them allowed.¹³
- "Daniel 12:11 refers to a future stopping of the Jewish sacrifices, forty-two months before Messiah returns to the earth. Revelation 13:4-7 also describes this future ruler in harmony with what Gabriel revealed here. Jesus warned of him, too, in Matthew 24:15-28, as did the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and the Apostle John in 1 John 2:18. The complete destruction decreed by God and poured out on this prince will come, according to these passages, when Messiah returns to the earth."¹⁴

Tough Question

1. If Jesus has told us that we cannot know the day or the hour of his second coming, then why does it look like it will be fairly predictable when this time comes?

¹¹ Constable, p.115.

¹² Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Da 9:27a). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹³ Bringing an end to offerings and sacrifices means that sacrifices and offerings were being made again (after the destruction of the Temple). This is where many get the idea that a 3rd temple will need to be built & the Jewish sacrificial system re-instituted before the end-times can begin.

¹⁴ Constable, p.116.