

THE MINOR PROPHETS

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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

***THE
MINOR PROPHETS***

The Prophets of the Decline

Obadiah — Joel — Jonah
Amos — Hosea

by

Paul T. Butler

College Press, Joplin, Missouri

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College Press

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

MINOR PROPHETS

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

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

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

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

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

whose lives best express the poem below written by
my Mother

"MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE."

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

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

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

by Lois Butler

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MINOR PROPHETS

SPECIAL STUDY ONE

THE LITERARY GRANDEUR OF THE O.T. PROPHETS

by Janet McFarland

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

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

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

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

Amos 7:15

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

Jeremiah 1:4,5

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LITERARY GRANDEUR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This shows in Isaiah description of the majesty of God.

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

Isaiah 40:28-31

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

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

Selah

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

LITERARY GRANDEUR

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

Habakkuk 3:3-6

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

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

Joel 2:10,11

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

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

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

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

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

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SPECIAL STUDY TWO

INTERPRETING THE PROPHETS

Compiled and Edited by:
Paul T. Butler

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

INTERPRETING THE PROPHETS

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

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

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

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

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

TEN BASIC AXIOMS TO INTERPRETATION

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

INTERPRETING THE PROPHETS

DESCRIPTIVE

(Author's words throughout)

POETRY (Creative)	<p>EPIC Parts of Wisdom Literature</p>	<p>Mainly Description</p>	<p>HISTORY Genesis throughout Esther Gospels and Acts Prophets Revelation</p>	PROSE (Recounting)
	<p>LYRIC Psalms Song of Solomon Prophets</p>	<p>Reflection</p>	<p>PHILOSOPHY Prophets N.T. Epistles</p>	
	<p>DRAMA Job</p>	<p>Mainly Action</p>	<p>RHETORIC Deuteronomy N.T. Epistles Revelation Prophets</p>	

PRESENTATIVE

(Author nowhere appears)

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

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

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

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

LITERARY ASPECTS OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

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

— DEFINITION —

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

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

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

— ELEMENTS —

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

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

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

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

— FORMS —

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

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

— PURPOSE —

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

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

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— RESULT —

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— THE FACTS —

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

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

PRE-ASSYRIAN (Times of Prosperity)

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

Joel—The Day of Jehovah manifested in judgment and redemption

Jonah—God's love for all who will repent

Amos—The sovereignty of God over all nations

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

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ASSYRIAN (Decadence and impending destruction)

Isaiah—The glory of God in judgment and in redemption

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

Nahum—The vengeance of the Lord up His adversaries

CHALDEAN (Impending downfall of Judah and her utter degeneration)

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

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

Jeremiah—Lamentation, punishment, steadfastness, hope

EXILIC (Out of the chastizement of servitude comes hope)

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

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

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

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

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

Malachi—The One to come will be One who judges

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— THE FOCUS —

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

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

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

Pronouncement of sin

Prediction of judgment

Plan for repentance

Promise of salvation (both temporal and spiritual at times)

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

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

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

— THE FORMS —

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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— SPECIFIC FORMS —

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— THE FIGURES —

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

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

SOME RULES FOR INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY ARE:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SPECIAL STUDY THREE

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION OF O.T. PROPHECY

Abridged from *Prophecy Interpreted* by John P. Milton

I. Times Coloring, or, Historical Contemporaneity

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

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

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

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

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

II. Covenant Background

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

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

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

III. Eschatological Significance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IV. The Shortened Perspective

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

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

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

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

V. The Fulfillment Greater Than the Prediction

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

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

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

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

VI. The Double Emphasis in Prophecy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

B. He does so in Judgment and in Redemption.

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

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

Also upon the individual Israelite.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VII. The Unifying Focal Point

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

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

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

SPECIAL STUDY FOUR

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

CHRIST IS NOW SITTING UPON DAVID'S THRONE

by Burton W. Barber

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES PREDICTED IT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. The Fulfillment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Third, Heb. 12:2.

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

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

Sixth, (Heb. 8:1).

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

CHRIST IS NOW SITTING UPON DAVID'S THRONE

NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES CONFIRM IT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHRIST, AS KING, NOW REIGNS OVER HIS KINGDOM

I. It Was Predicted That Christ Would Receive A Kingdom.

1. It was predicted that Christ would His kingdom at His ascension.

(1) Prediction (Dan. 7:13-14).

(2) Fulfillment (Acts 1:8-9; Lk. 24:26; I Tim. 3:16).

Christ's glory and His kingdom denote the same thing (cf. Matt. 20:21; Mk. 20:34, both scriptures refer to the same event). When Christ entered His glory, He entered His kingdom. After the Jews' rejection of Christ, after His death and resurrection, at the time premillennialists tell us that Christ had abandoned all thought of establishing His kingdom, Christ Himself charged His disciples with being fools and of having slow hearts to believe that what all the prophets had predicted concerning Christ as king and His kingdom was coming to pass. Note that much later Paul affirms that Christ entered His glory at His ascension. Thus, He entered His kingdom at His ascension, premillennialists notwithstanding! Christ went to heaven for His kingdom—He did not come to earth for it (cf. Lk. 19:11-28). Upon His return, he sits in judgment, as the parable shows.

2. It was predicted that the kingdom would be established in the days with Christ's first coming.

(1) Prediction (Dan. 2:44).

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

TYPE: Ex. 19:6; ANTI-TYPE (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

4. It was predicted that Christ would share His kingdom with His subjects, who are alive during the present dispensation.
- (1) Prediction (Luke 22:29).
 - (2) Fulfillment.

Since Matt. 19:28 refers to a period of time, it must of necessity represent this present dispensation which began the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection—in other words, the period of time wherein men and women are *regenerated*, begotten

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I. QUESTION ONE

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

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God made four distinct covenants with Abraham:

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

II. QUESTION TWO

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

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

III. QUESTION THREE

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

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

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IV. QUESTION FOUR

"Was the land promise fulfilled?"

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

PROMISES AND PROPHECIES CONCERNING ISRAEL AND THE LAND OF PALESTINE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) The promise was conditional.

(Deut. 28:1, 2).

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

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

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

(Deut. 28:29).

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. II Sam. 7:12-16 is fulfilled, as Heb. 1:5 shows

2. I Chron. 17:11 is fulfilled, as Acts 2:29 shows

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

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

1. Psa. 2 is fulfilled, as Acts 4:24-26; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; and Heb. 5:5 show.

(1) Vs. 1, 2 are quoted in Acts 4:24-26 in reference to Christ's first coming, crucifixion, and kingship.

(2) V. 7 is quoted in Acts 13:33 in reference to Christ's resurrection.

(3) V. 7 is quoted in Heb. 1:5 and 5:5 in reference to Christ's priesthood.

2. Psa. 72, similar to Zech. 9:9, 10, is obviously fulfilled, because the latter is quoted in Matt. 21:9 as fulfilled.

3. Psa. 110 is fulfilled, as Heb. 5:6-10; 6:20; and 7:17 show.

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

1. Isa. 2 was fulfilled beginning on Pentecost.

Prophecy (Isa. 2:1-5)

Fulfillment (Luke 24:46-49)

Note: Mic. 4:1-7 is a prophecy identical with Isa. 2:1-5. Either one, or both, was cited by Christ as referring to the Christian era—not a premillennial age!

2. Isa. 11:1-10 is fulfilled as Acts 13:22-24 and Rom. 12:12 show. Prophecy (Isa. 2:1-5)

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

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Fulfillment

- (1) Verse 1 is cited in Acts 13:22-24 as having been fulfilled in the Christian era—not a premillennial time.
- (2) Verse 10 is cited in Rom. 12:1, 2 as having been fulfilled in the Christian era—not a premillennial theory.
3. Isa. 18 is fulfilled as the context shows. Note the series of chapters in which this prophecy is set:
 - (1) ch. 13—destruction of Babylon
 - (2) ch. 14—destruction of Philistia
 - (3) ch. 15—destruction of Moab
 - (4) ch. 17—destruction of Damascus
 - (5) ch. 18—destruction of Ethiopia
 - (6) ch. 19—destruction of EgyptNote: All of these are future or all are history. They were future when prophesied, but history now when fulfilled.
4. Isa. 28:14-16 is fulfilled as Rom. 9:33, I Pet. 2:6, and Eph. 2:20 show.
5. Isa. 31:1-5 is fulfilled as is evidenced by its message. It is merely a warning against Israel making an alliance with Egypt.
6. Isa. 55:3 is fulfilled as Acts 13:33, 34 shows.
7. Isa. 65:17-20 is fulfilled, as parallel passages show.

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

1. Jer. 23:5-8 is fulfilled in Christ as comparative passages show.
Prophecy (Jer. 23:5-8)
Fulfillment
 - (1) Zech. 6:13 is a comparative passage, and it has been fulfilled as a reference to earlier messages will show. (Zech. 6:13).
 - (2) Isa. 11:1 is a comparative passage, and it has been fulfilled, as the same reference will show. (Isa. 11:1).
2. Jer. 25:11-13 is fulfilled as II Chron. 30:20-23 and Ezra. 1:1-4 show.

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

Prophecy (Ezek. 36:16-28)

Fulfillment

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

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

VII. Daniel Prophesied During Israel's Exile.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prophecy (Joel 3:9-14)

Fulfillment (Joel 3:1, 2)

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

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

Prophecy (Amos 9:13-15)

Fulfillment (Acts 15:13-17)

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

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

Prophecy (Nah. 2:3, 4)

Fulfillment (Nah. 1:1)

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

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

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

Fulfillment (Zeph. 3:20)

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

Prophecy (Hag. 2:13, 14)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (6) Matt. 23:37, 38

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

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

- (1) Josh. 24:28

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- (2) Lev. 25:23-28

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

This Premillennial Theory Minimizes The Importance Of The Christian Dispensation:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

First: (Gal. 6:15, 16)

Second: (I Pet. 2:9)

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

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

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

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

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

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

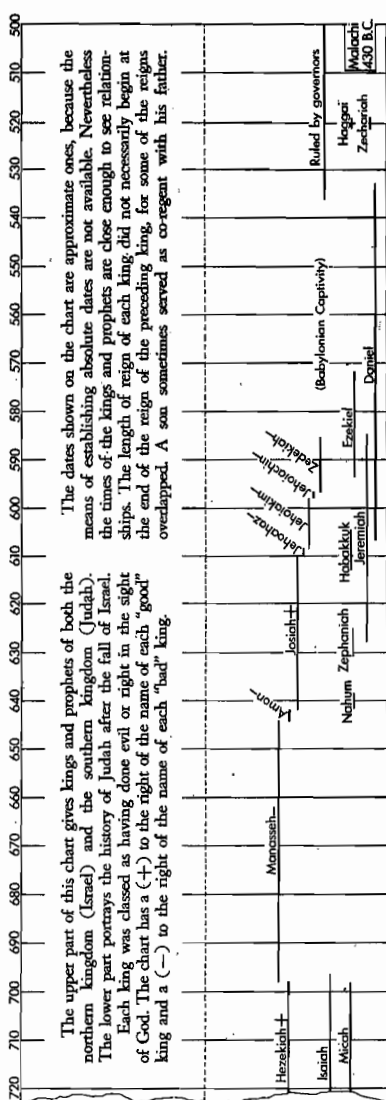
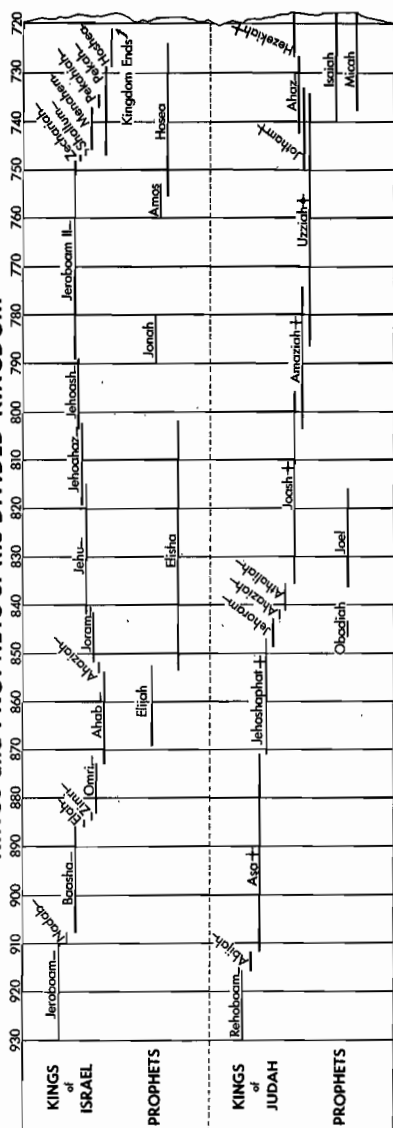
7. This Premillennial Theory Changes Paul's Allegory of Gal. 4:21-31:

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

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

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KINGS and PROPHETS of the DIVIDED KINGDOM



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

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

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SPECIAL STUDY FIVE

POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

by LeRoy Riley

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

by Karen Riley

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kirkpatrick says of this time:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SPECIAL STUDY SIX

OUTLINE OF O.T. HISTORY

by Seth Wilson and Paul T. Butler

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

OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

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

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

OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

<p>VII. Judges Period</p> <p>A. Condition of nation after Joshua</p> <p>B. Nations left in Canaan</p> <p>C. Six Principal Invasions</p> <p>1. Mesopotamian</p> <p>2. Moabite</p> <p>3. Canaanite</p> <p>4. Midianite</p> <p>5. Ammonite</p> <p>6. Philistine</p> <p>D. Story of Ruth</p> <p>E. Samuel, last "Judge", first "prophet", substitute priest.</p>	<p>1350 BC</p>	<p>Palestine</p>	<p>"Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."</p>	<p>Judges</p>
			<p>Othniel</p>	
		<p>Esdraelon</p>	<p>Eglon, Shud Shamgar Deborah & Barak</p>	
		<p>Mt. Gilboa</p>	<p>Gideon Abimelech Tola, Jair Jephthah</p>	
		<p>Gilead & Ammon</p>	<p>Ibzan, Elon, Abdon Samson</p>	
	<p>1100? BC</p>	<p>Gath, Gaza</p>	<p>Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, Orpah Eli Hannah & Elkanah</p>	<p>Ruth I Samuel 1-10</p>
		<p>Moab, Bethlehem</p>		
		<p>Ramah</p>		

MINOR PROPHETS

VIII. The United Kingdom A. The reign of Saul B. David E. Solomon	1050 BC	Gibeath, Michmash	Michael, Jonathan Witch of Endor Goliath, Joab, Abigail Abner, Nathan Bathsheba, Hiram Queen of Sheba	I Samuel 11-31 Psalms II Samuel I Chronicles Proverbs, Eccl. Song of Solomon I Kings 1-11 II Chron. 1-9
	1010 BC	Hebron		
	970 BC	Jerusalem Jerusalem		
	930 BC	Jerusalem	Jeroboam Rehoboam Abijah	I Kings 1 II Chron. 10
IX. The Divided Kingdom A. Origin of the Schism				

OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

<p><i>Northern</i> (Israel)</p>	<p><i>Southern</i> (Judah)</p>		<p>931 BC</p>		<p>931 BC</p>		<p>840? BC</p>		
<p>1. <i>Idolatry taking root</i> Jeroboam 22 Nadab 2 Baasha 24 Elah 2</p>	<p>1. <i>Decline</i> Rehoboam 17 Abijah 3</p>								<p>I Kings 12-22 II Chron 10-21</p>
<p>2. <i>Idolatry Triumphant</i> Zimri 7 Omri 11 da Ahab 22 Ahaziah 2 Joram 11</p>	<p>2. <i>First Revival</i> Asa 41 Jehoshaphat 25</p>			<p>Ramoth-Gilead</p>	<p>Ahab, Jezebel Elijah</p>		<p>II Kings</p>		
<p>3. <i>Idolatry Checked</i> Jehu 28 Jehoahaz 17 Jehoash 16 Jeroboam 41 Zechariah 6 mo.</p>	<p>3. <i>2nd Decline</i> Jehoram 8 Ahaziah 1 Athaliah 8 Joash 40 Amaziah 29 Uzziah 52</p>		<p>840? BC</p>		<p>Elisha, Naaman</p>		<p>II Chron 22-28</p>	<p>Obadiah Joel Jonah Amos Hosea</p>	<p>Obadiah Joel Jonah Amos, Hosea Isaiah, Micah</p>

MINOR PROPHETS

<p>4. <i>Idolatry ending in ruin</i></p> <p>Shallum 1 mo. Menahem 10 Pekabiah 2 Pekah 20 Hoshea 9</p>	<p>Jotham 16 Ahaz 16</p>	<p>722 BC</p>	<p>Assyria</p>	<p>Shalmaneser Sargon Sennacherib</p>	<p>Micah Isaiah</p>
<p>4. <i>2nd Revival</i></p> <p>Hezekiah 29</p>					<p>II Chron 29-36</p>
<p>5. <i>3rd Decline</i></p> <p>Manasseh 55 Amon 2</p>				<p>Nahum</p>	<p>Nahum</p>
<p>6. <i>3rd Revival</i></p> <p>Josiah 31</p>				<p>Zephaniah Habakkuk Jeremiah</p>	<p>Zephaniah Habakkuk Jeremiah</p>
<p>7. <i>4th Decline & Captivity</i></p> <p>Jehoaiah 3 mo. Jehoiakim 11 Jehoiachin 3 mo. Zedekiah 11</p>		<p>609 to 586 BC</p>			<p>Lamentations</p>

OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

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

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BIBLE KINGS MENTIONED ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSCRIPTIONS

KINGS OF EGYPT

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

KINGS OF ASSYRIA

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

KINGS OF BABYLON

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

KINGS OF PERSIA (Achaemenid)

- Cyrus—II Ch. 36:22; Cylinder of Cyrus; UAOT 298ff
 Darius—Ezra 5:3; Behistun inscription
 Xerxes—(Xerxes); Ester 1:1; ISBE 80
 Artaxerxes I—Ezra 7:1; Sachau papyri; R.D. Wilson SIOI, 69
 Darius (Nothus)—Neh. 12:22; *Zondervan Bib. Dic.*

KINGS OF SYRIA

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

KINGS OF ISRAEL

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

KINGS OF JUDAH

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

NOTES ON ARCHAEOLOGY

KINGS OF TYRE

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

Ethbaal—I K. 16:31—Wilson, SIOT, 70

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

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

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

EXPLANATION OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAOT

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

UAOT

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

ISBE

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

SIOT

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

IBA

Wiseman, Donald; *Illustrations from Biblical Archaeology*

SPECIAL STUDY SEVEN

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The day of the Lord follows this general outline:

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE DAY OF THE LORD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

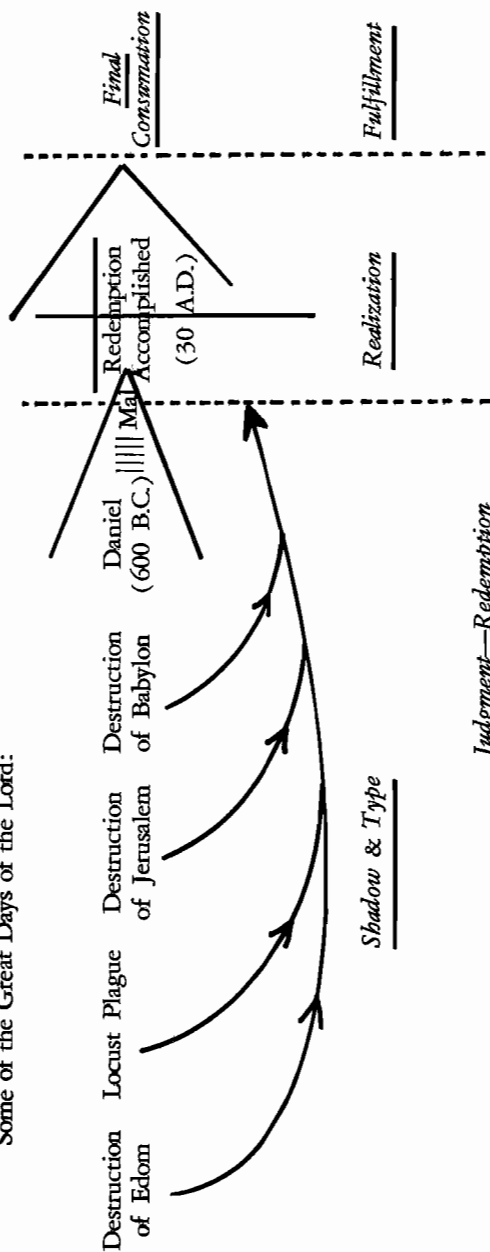
As the Old Testament is a type and a dark shadow of the brilliant reality set forth in the New, the contrast is seen too in the Old and New Testament perspectives of the "Day of the Lord." The darkness of the presentation of the day of wrath, or day of punishment in the Old Testament is foreboding. While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

THE DAY OF THE LORD

As Seen Throughout History

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

THE DAY OF THE LORD



Judgment—Israel Nations
Redemption—Israel Nations

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

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

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

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HAGGAI None?

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

SPECIAL STUDY EIGHT

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPHETS TO THE LAW OF MOSES

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT DO THE PROPHETS THEMSELVES SAY?

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

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

SPECIAL STUDY NINE

THEO-RAMIC PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thus we have considered God's concept of history.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kirkpatrick explains it thus:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE SOVEREIGN GOD SEEKING FOR HIS OWN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FOOTNOTES

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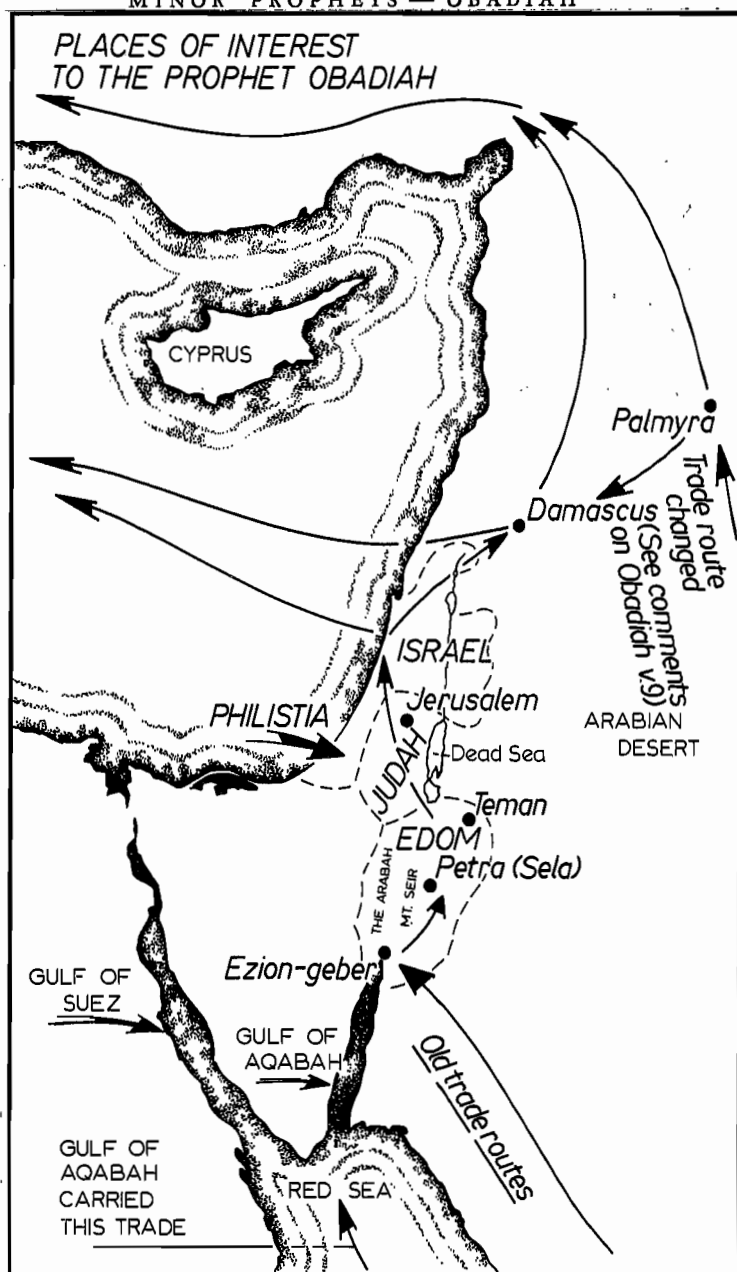
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18. Yates, op cit., p. 1.
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27. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
28. Edward J. Young, *The Study of Old Testament Theology Today*, (London, 1958), p. 31.

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OBADIAH

INTRODUCTION

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

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

OBADIAH

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Theme: The Kingdom Shall Be Jehovah's!

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CERTAINTY OF EDOM'S JUDGMENT

TEXT: v. 1-4

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

QUERIES

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

PARAPHRASE

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

SUMMARY

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUIZ

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

THE EXTENT OF EDOM'S JUDGMENT

TEXT: v. 5-9

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

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

QUERIES

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

PARAPHRASE

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

SUMMARY

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUIZ

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

THE JUSTICE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON EDM

TEXT: v. 10-16

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

QUERIES

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

PARAPHRASE

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

SUMMARY

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUIZ

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

VICTORY FOR GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE

TEXT: v. 17-21

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

QUERIES

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

PARAPHRASE

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

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

SUMMARY

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

v. 18-19 . . . JACOB SHALL BE A FIRE . . . JOSEPH A FLAME . . . ESAU . . . STUBBLE . . . NOT ANY REMAINING TO THE HOUSE OF ESAU . . . THEY OF THE SOUTH SHALL POSSESS MOUNT ESAU . . . PHILISTINES . . . FIELD OF EPHRAIM . . . SAMARIA . . . AND GILEAD. In spite of the fact that the Jews never again repossessed the entire land promised to them Obadiah prophesies that they shall not only regain all that had been promised to them but the covenant people would also possess territory which had never been promised them—namely Edom. In verse 18 Jacob represents the southern kingdom, Judah, while Joseph represents the northern kingdom, Israel. Thus Obadiah sees the great victory over Edom coming to a re-united covenant people. The fulfillment of this prophecy had its beginning when the Edomites were expelled from their homeland sometime between 550 and 400 B.C. by the Nabateans. The Edomites were driven to the southern wastelands of the desert Negeb, where they became the Idumeans. Simon of Gerasa (see Josephus, War, IV, ch. IX, 7) attacked Idumaea, ravaging cities and villages, laying waste the whole country.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUIZ

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

EXAMINATION

CONSIDERATIONS

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

O B A D I A H

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

ASSOCIATIONS

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

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

MEMORIZATIONS

Fill in the blanks:

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

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

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

EXAMINATION
CONTEMPLATIONS

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

"THE KINGDOM SHALL BE JEHOVAH'S"

SERMON ON OBADIAH

INTRODUCTION

I. PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETING THE PROPHETS

- A. N.T. passages
 - 1. Acts 3:17 ff; Heb. 12; Lk. 1:67 ff
- B. Times coloring
- C. Covenant Background
- D. Double Emphasis (Judgment/Redemption)
- E. The Unifying Focal Point

II. BACKGROUND TIMES

- A. In the times of Jehoshaphat, Obadiah was sent out to revive the spirit of true worship in the land by exposition of the law (II Chron. 17:7)
- B. Then in Jehoshaphat's son's time (Jehoram), Edom revolted from Judah's rule over her and joined, probably, with the Arabs and Philistines in pillaging the villages of Judea and the city of Jerusalem (II Chron. 21:16-17)
- C. But even when Jehoshaphat brought religious reform to its peak in Judah in Obadiah's earlier days, J. made a fatal mistake.
 - 1. He made military alliances with the pagan king Ahab of Israel and permitted his son Jehoram to marry Ahab & Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah
 - a. Athaliah brought idolatry and wickedness with her to Judah
 - b. Jehoram murdered his brother and quickly slipped into idolatry
 - c. Jehoram suffered and died unlamented from a horrible disease sent by God . . . his sons were all murdered, except Ahaziah, by the Arabians

III. OBADIAH'S WRITTEN MESSAGE

- A. Vengeance upon the enemies of God's faithful covenant people
- B. Ultimate victory for the faithful covenant people when Jehovah would rule in His kingdom
- C. The covenant people would possess the kingdom with Jehovah

IV. EDOM

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

V. TEACHING OF OBADIAH

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

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

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

DISCUSSION

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

v. 1-9

A. Announcement of Judgment by God's prophet

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

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

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

SERMON ON OBADIAH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OBADIAH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SERMON ON OBADIAH

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

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

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

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

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

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

HOW IS THIS TO BE DONE?

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

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

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

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

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

OBADIAH

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

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

B. They shall conquer their enemies, v. 18

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

SERMON ON OBADIAH

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

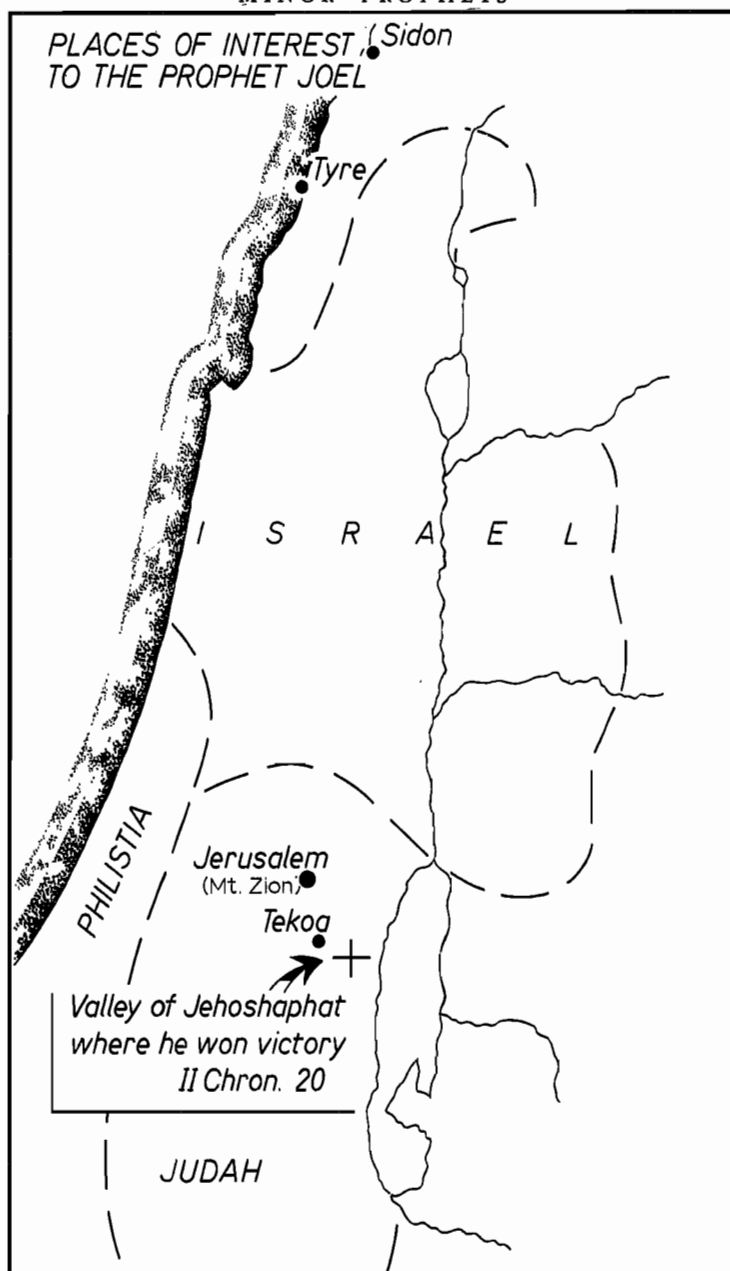
II. WHETHER YOU WILL BE CONQUEROR OR CONQUERED . . . YOUR ETERNAL DESTINY DEPENDS UPON WHERE YOU STAND IN RELATION TO GOD'S WILL AND PURPOSE AND HIS KINGDOM!

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

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

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

MINOR PROPHETS





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

Engraved by W. Pinner

STREET IN JERUSALEM.

JOEL

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

JOEL

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

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

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

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

Sermonic Outline of Joel:

REPENT

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

B. Future blessings 2:28—3:21

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

THE EXCLAIMER OF REPENTANCE— GOD'S PROPHET

TEXT: 1:1-3

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

QUERIES

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

PARAPHRASE

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

SUMMARY

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

THE EXTENT OF THE PLEA FOR REPENTANCE; VIVID, ARRESTING

TEXT: 1:4-12

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

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

QUERIES

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

PARAPHRASE

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

SUMMARY

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUIZ

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

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

TEXT: 1:13-20

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

QUERIES

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

PARAPHRASE

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

SUMMARY

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE EXECUTOR— GOD USING NATURAL AGENTS

TEXT: 2:1-11

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

QUERIES

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

PARAPHRASE

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

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

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

SUMMARY

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

COMMENT

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

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

"These trumpets of judgment, chapters 8:11, indicate series of happenings, that is, calamities that will occur again and again throughout this dispensation (the Christian dispensation). They do not symbolize single and separate events, but they refer to woes that may be seen any day of the year in any part of the globe. Hence, the trumpets are synchronous with the seals.

" . . . these trumpets of judgment are clearly retributive in character. Terrible calamities befall the wicked in order to punish them for their opposition to the cause of Christ and for their persecution of the saints. Yet even by means of these judgments God is constantly calling the ungodly unto repentance. These woes do not symbolize God's final and complete displeasure. On the contrary, they indicate His initial judgments. They are charged with serious warning, not with final doom . . . The very function of the trumpet is to warn (Ezek. 33:3).

"Observe also that these trumpets of judgment affect the various parts of the universe: the land, the sea, etc."

Joel is making the same interpretation of the locust plague and drought which has come upon the land. These calamities are God's "trumpet" warnings to call the sinful people to repentance. God uses natural agents in every age to turn impenitent people from their rebellious ways back to dependence upon Him. If they will not turn back to Him, He sends judgments of wrath upon them. These are principles of the Divine government of the universe which are constantly in force and which God executes through secondary causes day by day, year after year, millenium by millenium. The Old Testament prophets, covering nearly a thousand years of history, give us, in their inspired pronouncements and interpretations of natural calamities as judgments and warnings of God, *a divinely revealed philosophy of history.*

At this point we take the liberty of quoting at length again from Dr. Hendriksen's *"More Than Conquerors"* in regard to God's judgments as the commentary speaks on Revelation 15-16.

"In the history of the world a definite and ever-recurring order of events is clearly evident:

"Through the preaching of the Word applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit churches are established. Again and again this happens. (With the O.T. prophets we think in terms of a faithful "remnant" being called out by the preaching of the Word—parenthesis ours). They are lightbearers—lampstands—in the midst of a world that lies in darkness . . .

"Again and again God's people are persecuted by the world. They are subjected to many trials and afflictions. (seals).

"Again and again the judgments of God are visited upon the persecuting world. These judgments again and again fail to move men to repentance (trumpets).

" . . . The question now arises: whenever in history the trumpets of judgment, the initial plagues, fail to result in penitence and conversion, what then? Does God permit such impenitence, such hardness of heart, to go unpunished until the final judgment of the last day? Must we conceive of God's wrath as being completely pent up until the second coming . . . ?

"The answer in brief is this: whenever in history the wicked fail to repent in answer to the initial and partial manifestation of God's anger in judgments, the final effusion of wrath follows. *Final*, though not *complete* until the judgment day. These plagues are the last. They leave no more opportunity for repentance. When the wicked, often warned by the trumpets of judgment, continue to harden their hearts, death finally plunges them into the hands of an angry God . . . "

"Hence, throughout the history of the world God's final wrath again and again reveals itself; now it strikes this one; then another. It is poured out upon *the impenitent*. Thus a very definite connecting-link is established between the vision of the trumpets, chapter 8-11, and that of the bowls, chapters 15, 16. Trumpets *warn*; bowls are *poured out*.

"Throughout history, especially during this entire new dispensation, God is using every department of the universe to punish the wicked and impenitent persecutors of his people. Whoever refuses to be warned by the trumpets of judgment is destroyed by the bowls of wrath. For one individual a certain calamity may be a trumpet of judgment, while for someone else that same event may be a bowl of wrath. Thus,

the disease which hurled King Herod Agrippa I into hell served as a warning to others . . . "

So it was true in the days of Joel. The locust plague and the drought became a warning trumpet of God's wrath upon rebellion and sin and called those who were humble and penitent enough to hear back to God's word and His will. Those who heard and heeded became part of the faithful remnant. They would be the people through whom God would carry out His covenant promises and bring from them the Messiah. Some undoubtedly perished during the plague and drought. Those who died in sin and rebellion against God died under the judgment of God. In the wisdom of God they had had their last opportunity to repent. They rejected it. God's wrath fell upon them. Perhaps some who believed in God and were following His ways died also, but death did not harm them (cf. Zeph. 2:3; Nahum 1:7). Those who died in the Lord were blessed (Rev. 14:13).

V. 2 A DAY OF DARKNESS . . . A GREAT PEOPLE . . . STRONG . . . THERE HATH NOT BEEN EVER THE LIKE. The "darkness" here may be either literal or symbolic or both. When this "great people" (the locusts) came down upon them, myriads upon myriads, their coming would make the sky black. Darkness is also used to symbolize judgment or times of foreboding. The term "people" is a figurative way of describing the locusts (cf. Prov. 30:25ff). They will behave like an "army" and will go about their destruction with what seems to be a methodical intelligence beyond the native capacity of an insect. This would be one of the most unique disasters to happen to Judah so much so that it might be said, "nothing like it has ever been or ever shall be!"

V. 3 . . . THE LAND IS AS THE GARDEN OF EDEN BEFORE THEM, AND BEHIND THEM A DESOLATE WILDERNESS; Compared to what the land looked like *after* the locusts finished with it, it was like the garden of Eden *before*. The "fire" before and after them probably is a poetical description of the utter devastation that sweeps over the land, at their coming, overwhelming everything before it and leaving nothing behind it. In the *National Geographic Magazine*, 1915, from which we have quoted before, let us describe further the locust devastation. The first swarms of locusts in February, 1915, came in such thick clouds as to obscure the sun for the time being. In 1915 the sections where no eggs had been laid or where the eggs had been carefully removed by governmental orders did not suffer from the creepers, but later the full-grown locusts came and cleaned up every bit of vegetation. On a

television documentary, December 1966, sponsored by the National Geographic, one was able to see motion picture film of locust plagues in the Near East. These films substantiated Joel's graphic description in every respect! The prophet did not exaggerate!

v. 4 THE APPEARANCE OF THEM IS AS...HORSES; There is an old Arabian proverb which goes, "The locust has the form of ten of the giants of the animal world, weak as he is—face of a mare, eyes of an elephant, neck of a bull, horns of a deer, chest of a lion, stomach of a scorpion, wings of an eagle, thighs of a camel, legs of an ostrich, and tail of a serpent." Theodore, a bishop of Syria, said, "... you will find the head of the locust exceedingly like that of a horse." In verse 4, however, Joel is concerned with their behavior which is like that of cavalry horses.

v. 5 LIKE THE NOISE OF CHARIOTS...LIKE THE NOISE OF A FLAME OF FIRE... John wrote in Revelation 9:9ff, "the sound of their wings was as the sound of many horses rushing to battle..." They are described by the National Geographic as "a loud noise, produced by the flapping of myriads of locust wings... resembling the distant rumble of waves." One who has heard them says, "their noise may be heard six miles off." Others have likened their sound to all sorts of deep, rumbling sounds of torrential rivers or water-falls. One ancient wrote, "... there is a certain sharp sound, as they chew the corn, as when the wind strongly fanneth a flame." The noise of their foraging upon the vegetation crackles like a fire as it licks up the dry stubble of a wheat field.

v. 6...PEOPLES ARE IN ANGUISH...FACES ARE WAXED PALE...; One man who witnessed just such a plague wrote of the people, "... the people become as dead, saying, 'we are lost, for the Ambadas (so they call them) are coming.'... there were men, women, children, sitting among these locusts, as stupefied... they answered that they had no courage to resist a plague which God gave them for their sins." The verb translated *anguish* is the same verb used of women in birth travail (cf. Jer. 30:5-7). Their anxiety causes the color to drain from their faces and they grow pale as the dead.

v. 7 THEY RUN LIKE MIGHTY MEN;...CLIMB THE WALL...MARCH... AND BREAK NOT THEIR RANKS. National Geographic: Once started on their course, nothing could stop them; walls were scaled, they rolled on like a mighty, unconquerable flood. Their ranks remain unbroken by obstacles. Man can mount a wall a few at a time, but locusts pour over a wall in a literal flood.

v. 8 NEITHER...THRUST ONE ANOTHER...MARCH EVERY ONE IN HIS PATH; . . . THEY BURST THROUGH THE WEAPONS . . . They travel like a well-disciplined, regimented army in close-order-drill without jostling one another. They move in one body, giving the appearance of being organized and directed by one leader. Nothing checks or retards their attack. Nothing makes any impression upon them. Men have tried to kill them with canon fire, water-filled trenches, fire-filled trenches, insecticides—sprayed from airplanes, with clubs—beating them to death by the millions—but still they come, impervious to any weapon. Like waves they roll over one another on and on, and let themselves be stopped by nothing. Bundles of straw are laid in rows and set on fire before them; they march in thick heaps into the fire, but this is often put out through the great mass of those advancing from behind who march right on over the corpses of their dead companions. The sight is utterly appalling! On the television program referred to before it was stated that man, with all his modern scientific means of dealing out death, has not yet found a way to stop the locust.

v. 9 THEY LEAP UPON THE CITY...RUN FOR THE WALL...CLIMB INTO THE HOUSES . . . ENTER IN AT THE WINDOWS. National Geographic: "Disastrous as they were in the country, equally obnoxious they became about the homes, crawling up thick upon the walls and squeezing in through cracks of closed doors or windows, entering the very dwelling rooms. Women frantically swept the walls and roofs of their homes, but to no avail. They even fell into one's shirt collar from the walls above. A lady, after being away from home for half a day, returned with 110 of them concealed within the skirts. Whenever touched, or especially when finding themselves caught within one's clothes, they exuded from their mouths a dark fluid, an irritant to the skin and soiling the garments in a most disgusting manner. Imagine the feeling with a dozen or two such creatures over an inch long, with sawlike legs and rough bodies, making a race course of your back." Another man who experienced such a calamity in 1646 wrote, "...when the door was opened, an infinite number came in, and the others went fluttering about; and it was a troublesome thing when a man went abroad, to be hit on the face by those creatures, on the nose, eyes, or cheeks, so that there was no opening one's mouth, but some would get in. Yet all this was nothing; for when we were to eat, they gave us no respite; and when we went to cut a piece of meat, we cut a locust with it, and when a man opened his mouth to put in a morsel, he was sure to chew one of them." The television report of December, 1966,

showed that airplanes flying through clouds of locusts spraying insecticides were forced to the ground because the thickness of the locusts made visibility for flying impossible!

v. 10 THE EARTH QUAKETH BEFORE THEM; THE HEAVENS TREMBLE . . . National Geographic: "When anything neared their thickened masses, it seemed as if the entire surface of the ground moved, producing a most curious effect upon one's vision and causing dizziness, which in some was so severe as to produce a sensation not unlike seasickness. The clouds of locusts caused the entire atmosphere to be in a state of commotion as if the very heavens trembled."

v. 11 JEHOVAH UTTERETH HIS VOICE BEFORE HIS ARMY... HE IS STRONG THAT EXECUTETH HIS WORD; FOR THE DAY OF JEHOVAH IS GREAT AND VERY TERRIBLE; AND WHO CAN ABIDE IT? To this day the nations of the Near East speak of the locusts as *Yaish Allah*, Allah's army. God does use natural phenomena to execute His warnings and judgments. He uses natural elements of weather, laws of "nature," wild beasts and insects, and heathen nations and leaders (Isa. 10) to execute His vengeance upon the ungodly, even now! Hendrikson in *More Than Conquerors* again, on chapters 4-5 of Revelation concerning the Throne of God: "These chapters do not merely give us a picture of heaven. They describe *the entire universe from the aspect of heaven*. The purpose of this vision is to show us, in beautiful symbolism, that all things are governed by the Throne-Occupant. All things; hence, also our trials and tribulations. That is the point. Hence, the description of the Throne precedes the symbolic prediction of the trials and tribulations which the church must experience here on earth . . . Behold, a Throne! The Throne is the very center of the universe. The universe of the Bible is . . . theocentric. Here, too, is the true philosophy of history. The newspapers and radio announcements give you the headlines and news-flashes. The magazines add the explanations. But these explanations are, after all in terms of secondary causes. The real mind, the real will which—while fully maintaining the responsibility and freedom of the individual instruments—controls this universe in the mind, the will of *the Almighty God!* Nothing is excluded from his dominion." And so God can use the king of Assyria as the "rod of His anger and the staff of His fury" (Isa. 10) and He can stir up the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia, to release the captive Jews (II Chron. 36: 22ff; Ezra 1:1ff). And so the locusts are God's mighty army. When He commands that they go forth to de-

stroy, none can stop them. If man cannot stop an army of locusts when God sends them, who can be saved from any of God's judgments? Joel will take up this question in the next section when he presents *God's Plan for Repentance*.

QUIZ

1. What does "trumpet" signify symbolically in Hebrew literature?
2. In what way is the locust plague a warning? a judgment?
3. Do locusts appear and behave with such frightening appearance as Joel describes?
4. Are they impossible to stop? Can not modern methods of insect control stop them?
5. Does God Himself control these locusts or did this plague just happen and Joel attribute its happening to God?

II PLAN FOR REPENTANCE

TEXT: 2:12-17

- 12 Yet even now, saith Jehovah, turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:
- 13 and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repenteth him of the evil.
- 14 Who knoweth whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal-offering and a drink-offering unto Jehovah your God?
- 15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly;
- 16 gather the people, sanctify the assembly, assemble the old men, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth from his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.
- 17 Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Jehovah, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?

QUERIES

- a. How may the people "rend" their hearts?
- b. Does God "repent"?
- c. Why were the priests called upon to weep and pray?

PARAPHRASE

But, the Lord says, there is still time, even now, to avert the full judgment predicted if you will come back to Me and do My will with all your heart and soul. Show that you are coming back to Me by the self-denial of fasting and self-abnegation of mourning for your sins. You must tear and break your hard heart until it is contrite and penitent and then return to My ways. Mere ceremonial tearing of the garments will not suffice.

Let your motive for coming back to the Lord be His grace and mercy, His longsuffering toward sinners, His immutable love and His promise to withhold judgment from those who repent.

If you persevere in your repentance you may hope for acceptance in the Lord's eyes and He shall withhold judgment and give blessing instead. You may indeed hope that He will give you so much that you can once again offer your grain and wine as offerings in the temple as before.

Sound the long alarm blast on the far-sounding horn from the midst of the Holy City; declare a time of fasting; call the people together for a serious and solemn meeting. Call the entire congregation to rededication; from the elders to the children, even the infants. Let all festivities cease in this most solemn and serious hour, even the bride and the bridegroom should forego their honeymoon to assemble to hear the word of the Lord.

Let the priests, who are ministers of the Lord for the people, come to the entrance of the Holy Place on behalf of the people and there, between the vestibule and the altar of burnt offering weep, praying, O, Lord, do not cause your peculiar people to be poverty stricken, but spare them this degradation. Do not cause those who are yours in a special way to be reproached and slandered by the heathen and to become dependent upon the heathen for sustenance. "Why should they be permitted to shame your chosen ones by taunting them with "Where is this God of theirs? How weak and helpless He must be!"

SUMMARY

Jehovah now, through the prophet Joel, declares there is yet time for salvation from impending judgment through repentance. It must be a true repentance which manifests itself in self-denial, self-abnegation and prayers of dependence upon God.

COMMENT

v. 12-13 . . . TURN UNTO ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART . . . AND REND YOUR HEART . . . FOR HE IS GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL . . . AND

REPENTETH HIM OF THE EVIL. This is one of the clearest statements of the Bible on the meaning of repentance. The Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament translated about 300 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt, by 70 Jewish scholars), uses the word, *epistraphets*, which is in the aorist tense. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary the aorist of this verb "indicates an immediate and decisive change, consequent upon a deliberate choice;" It is nothing less than a "conversion!" The Hebrew word is *Shoov* which means "return." Repentance means a complete turn-about, and not only so, but a turning *toward the Lord*. Reformation is not repentance! One must not only change by giving up former habits and sinful ways but one must in a positive way turn unto the Lord and do His will and walk in His way! It is *all* the heart which God demands. The heart, of course, means the dwelling place of the personality—the intellect, the will, the emotions. *All* of man's mind, all of man's will, all of man's desires are to be turned toward God's will. None of it is to be reserved for self. We remember the "Rich Young Ruler," whom Jesus loved, holding back his great riches but wanting to give the rest of himself in discipleship to Jesus.

The prophet points out that this "turning" unto the Lord involves self-denial ("fasting") and self-abnegation ("weeping and mourning"). The people of Joel's day needed to cease concentrating upon themselves and concentrate upon God and His will, and this they could best do by fasting. They had need of self-examination and self-abhorrence for sinning against a gracious and merciful Father—they needed to weep and mourn over their sins. "Rend" and tear your hearts, Joel said. Their hearts were hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. They had become calloused. They were impervious to God's goodness because in their material abundance they had forgotten from whence their abundance came and said, "Mine own hand hath gotten me this." (cf. Deut. 8:11ff). They needed to have their hearts broken in contrition (cf. Psa. 51:17; Isa. 57:15, 66:2; Ezek. 36:26). They must "break up the fallow ground of hearts which have too long lain unbroken (cf. Jer. 4:3; Hosea 10:12). This must be a turning of the inner man, not merely an outward, ritualistic "rending of the garments."

The repentance of which Joel speaks implies a "conscious, moral separation, and a personal decision to forsake sin and to enter into fellowship with God." It means turning away from sin and turning unto righteousness (cf. Dt. 4:30; Neh. 1:9; Psa. 7:12; Isa. 1:16-17; Jer. 3:14; 25:5; Mk. 1:15; Acts. 2:38; II Cor. 7:9-10). Repentance is always conjoined with faith. Where there is true faith there will always be true repentance. And this is exactly the appeal Joel makes as to the motive for the people's repentance. They must have true, un-

reserved faith in the grace and mercy of God. They must trust in His lovingkindness. They must also believe that He will punish sin. In order to come to this trust in God—in both His mercy and His wrath—God has more than abundantly revealed His character in both instances. Prophets were sent to preach the call of God for repentance. Prophets were sent to prove the existence of God and declare His nature. Preaching is still the only means by which men may be called to repentance. The existence of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the infallible authority of the Bible is the call to repentance (cf. Acts 17:22-31). The nature of God must also be preached to lead men to repentance (cf. Rom. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).

v. 14 WHO KNOWETH WHETHER HE WILL NOT TURN AND REPENT, AND LEAVE A BLESSING BEHIND HIM . . . ? To adapt the action of God to finite understanding the Bible speaks of God "repenting." God does not change (cf. Heb. 13:8; James 1:17; Malachi 3:6; Num. 23:19). He does not even change His mind. He has spoken His will once for all. His word is immutable. His covenant is irrevocable. Man may change—man must change! God's immutable Word has said: For sin a curse and judgment; for repentance a blessing and salvation. Only because we know that this is the immutable Word of God may we have hope! If God changed, how could we repent in hope of blessing? And so this verse should be understood as we have paraphrased it, "If you persevere in your repentance you may *hope* for acceptance in the Lord's eyes and *hope* for withholding of judgment and *hope* for blessing instead." As Keil and Delitzsch put it, "On the strength of these facts (facts about God's immutable nature of mercy upon repentance of man) he hopes . . . for forgiveness on the part of God, and the removal of judgment."

v. 15-16 BLOW THE TRUMPET . . . SANCTIFY A FAST . . . CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY; GATHER THE PEOPLE . . . THE OLD MEN . . . THE CHILDREN . . . THOSE THAT SUCK THE BREASTS . . . THE BRIDEGROOM . . . AND THE BRIDE." Again the "trumpet" was to be sounded to herald the solemn meeting (cf. comments on Joel 2:1). The trumpet was customarily used to call together the people for holy meetings, to usher in the beginnings of their months and their feasts with festival gladness. Now in the Holy City the trumpet is to be used for the sounding of alarm. They were to be called to rigorous self-denial. They were to fast in order that their minds might be directed away from the earthly and concentrated on the heavenly. This was a time for seriousness, for solemnity. No one was to be absent—there were no

exceptions to be made. Even the infant children nursing at the breasts of their mothers were beckoned. The bride and bridegroom must forego their honeymoon to assemble for penitent worship. When the Lord of all the earth beckons nothing is so important that it cannot be left in favor of listening to Him.

v. 17 LET THE PRIESTS . . . WEEP . . . AND . . . SAY, SPARE THY PEOPLE, O JEHOVAH, AND GIVE NOT THY HERITAGE TO REPROACH . . . A priest is a mediator between man and God. He is a "bridge," a "go-between." He receives his appointment by the grace and mercy of God. Only one priest ever merited the office by His own nature and that was Jesus Christ, High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Priests are ministers serving both God and man.

In this serious and solemn hour when God was calling man to repentance and when man was seeking the favor of God the priests of God were bidden by God to perform their ministry of intercession. They were summoned to the space between the door to the Holy Place and the altar of burnt offering. This seems to have been a place especially consecrated for intercessory prayer.

The prayer is that God might withhold further judgment and at the same time bless the devastated land with new abundance. This prayer assumes, of course, that the people have repented. This is actually the case as verses 18-19 show. Keil and Delitzsch believe that the word "rule" in this verse is an unfortunate translation. There was no immediate (or future, for that matter) prediction by Joel that the people would be subjugated by heathen. Verse 19 seems to indicate that the Lord removed what the people prayed would be removed, "reproach from the heathen." K & D translate it, "Spare, O Jehovah, Thy people, and give not up Thine inheritance to shame, so that the heathen scoff at them." Except the Lord restore, upon their repentance and calling upon Him, that which He has taken away by the locust plague and the drought, the heathen would scoff and taunt those who claimed to be the Lord's chosen with, "Where is this God of yours?" "You have repented and called upon Him, but He does not hear you!" The heathen would sneer at Jehovah, the God of the Jews, and the people plead that God should protect His own honor and glory. This is always the right attitude. We ought always to pray for the Lord's deliverance not for our sake but that the Lord might be glorified. The Lord does not save us for our own merits but in order to glorify, vindicate and exalt Himself and His Son, Jesus Christ. He saved the penitent elect of the Old Testament for the same purpose—to glorify His name (cf. Ezek. 36:21ff).

QUIZ

1. What does the word which is translated "turn" mean here?
2. What connection does "fasting" and "weeping and mourning" have to their "turning" to the Lord?
3. What motives and what means direct men to repentance?
4. Why is it important that God does *not* repent?
5. Why was everyone without exception called to the assembly?
6. What were the priests instructed to pray for?
7. Why were the Jews desirous that the heathen not be given an opportunity to scoff at Jehovah?

III THE PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE IMMEDIATE BLESSINGS

TEXT: 2:18-27

- 18 Then was Jehovah jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.
- 19 And Jehovah answered and said unto his people, Behold, I will send you grain, and new wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations;
- 20 but I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive it into a land barren and desolate, its forepart into the eastern sea, and its hinder part into the western sea; and its stench shall come up, and its ill savor shall come up, because it hath done great things.
- 21 Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice; for Jehovah hath done great things.
- 22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth its fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength.
- 23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah your God; for he giveth you the former rain in just measure, and he causeth to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain, in the first month.
- 24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.
- 25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you.

- 26 And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of Jehovah your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be put to shame.
- 27 And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am Jehovah your God, and there is none else; and my people shall never be put to shame.

QUERIES

- a. Whose "army" is this "northern army" which is to be removed?
- b. What is the "former rain and the latter rain?"
- c. Why is the phrase, "and my people shall never be put to shame," repeated so often?

PARAPHRASE

Then Jehovah burned with eagerness to vindicate His name in His land and so He had compassion upon His people in order to uphold His power and trustworthiness. Jehovah said unto His people, Pay attention now, for I am going to bless the land and send you an abundance of grain, fresh vintage from the grape, and oil from the olive tree. There will be enough to satisfy all. In blessing you so I will cause the heathen to cease their ridicule of you. I will remove far away from you the army of locusts which have swooped down upon you from the north. I will drive it into the arid desert-land putting its front part as far east as the Dead Sea and its rear part as far west as the Mediterranean Sea. The stench of its destruction shall be so putrid and vile as to be unbearable. Jehovah has done these great things.

Indeed, there is no reason for fear, O land of my people. Be glad and rejoice and praise His name for your God has done great and marvelous things. You need not be dumbfounded any longer, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness spring forth with new grass. The trees are now bearing their fruit and the fig tree and the vine yield abundance. Be glad then, you children of the covenant promises made to Zion, and rejoice in your covenant God, Jehovah. He is giving you the Teacher unto Righteousness. And He will send down to you rain, the early rain and the late rain in the first month. And the threshing floors shall be full of wheat and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. I will recompense you for the years which the locust and the licker and the stripper and the gnawer have devoured, My great army which I sent among you. You shall have plenty of food to satisfy your hunger and for this you will praise the name of Jehovah your God because He has delivered you in a wondrous

way. I will so bless you that you will not be held up to shame by your enemies any more. When this comes to pass you will know of a truth that I am dwelling in the midst of Israel, my covenant people, and that I am Jehovah, your covenant God, and that there is no other god beside Me. When this comes to pass you will not be an object of shame for your enemies any more.

SUMMARY

For the most part (with the exception only of verse 23b) the prophet predicts (future perfect—as if it had already come to pass) the immediate, material blessings with which God is going to bless His covenant people, because they repented.

COMMENTS

v. 18 THEN WAS JEHOVAH JEALOUS . . . AND HAD PITY: The word translated jealous means literally, "to be red, to glow; hence, be fiery, eager, zealous." The reason Jehovah was jealous for His land is due to the fact that it is impossible to separate in any way the covenant God from the covenant land and people. Whatever is done to the land and the people of the covenant is also done to the covenant God. Whatever is done for the covenant land and people is done by the covenant God. He is jealous for the land and the people because He is jealous of His own name and character.

He had promised centuries before to curse them for rebellious sin and to bless them upon their repentance. They had been judged and punished for their sin, by the locust plague and drought. We presume they have now followed the prophet's instructions and manifested their repentance. Now God, in order to fulfill His immutable Word, was eager to vindicate His name and so He had compassion upon them and blessed them. He said, "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:13-15). He would cease to be what this name involves if He did not fulfill His word. He must, by His very nature, show His absolute sovereignty (cf. Ex. 20:5; Deut. 29:18-20; Zeph. 1:17-18; 3:7-8). He also loves His people as the apple of His eye (Deut. 32:10; Zech. 2:8) and He is just as eager to vindicate their name when they are in harmony with His will.

v. 19-20 BEHOLD, I WILL SEND YOU GRAIN, AND NEW WINE, AND OIL . . . AND I WILL NO MORE MAKE YOU A REPROACH AMONG THE NATIONS; . . . I WILL REMOVE . . . FROM YOU THE NORTHERN ARMY . . . The Lord now promises to bless the people with prosperous crops. They will have enough to satisfy the gnawing hunger that came with

the destruction of their crops by the locusts and the drought. They will have enough now to eat and plenty left to reinstitute the offerings of grain and wine which had to be stopped earlier (cf. 1:13). In His deliverance of Israel He will prove to the heathen world that Israel is still the people of the Omnipotent God who delivers with a miraculous hand and their reproach would be removed.

We recall an instance when God, by His mighty power through one of His servants and through miraculous providence, brought an emperor to praise His name and cease reproaching the people of God (cf. Daniel 4:1-37).

God also promised to remove the "northern army" ("my army" v. 25) from the land. This army is none other than the locusts. Usually these locust plagues come from the south but they have also been known to blow in on the winds which come from the north. Facing the rising sun in Palestine, before you is east, behind you is west. God caused some to fall into the Dead Sea, some in the Mediterranean and some in the arid desert of the Negeb. Jerome says of the locusts of Palestine, when the shores of both seas were filled with heaps of dead locusts which the waters had cast up, their stench and putrefaction were so noxious as to corrupt the air, so that a pestilence was produced among men and beasts. Stench is all that is left of the great and powerful enemy of God's people. This enemy had wrecked great destruction—it had done terrible things but Jehovah God not only removed it but He also restored what had been destroyed. Yes, God even holds the creatures responsible for their devastation upon "the apple of His eye" (cf. Gen. 9:5; Ex. 21:28-32).

v. 21-22 FEAR NOT, O LAND, BE GLAD AND REJOICE . . . BE NOT AFRAID, YE BEASTS OF THE FIELD . . . It is not strange that God would call upon nature itself to praise His name (cf. also Psa. 65:13; 98:8; 148:3). Nature is also represented "groaning and travailing in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22-23). Just as the fields and the beasts were before called upon to mourn and be confounded at the Majestic Power of God in judgment, so now they are called upon to take comfort and security in His Compassion.

v. 23-24 BE GLAD THEN, YE CHILDREN OF ZION . . . FOR HE GIVETH YOU THE FORMER RAIN . . . AND HE CAUSETH TO COME DOWN FOR YOU THE RAIN, THE FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN . . . AND THE FLOORS SHALL BE FULL . . . AND THE VATS SHALL OVERFLOW The term "Zion" is a covenant-relation term. God speaks to them as "children of the covenant" here, (cf. Isa. 40-66; Heb. 12:22; Rom. 11:26), and this is to reach its fulfillment in Christ, King of Zion,

the church of the living God! The first phrase, "the former rain," should be translated, "he causeth to come down for you the teacher unto righteousness," according to Keil and Delitzsch. They make the blessings of the grace of God at this time not to consist merely in material things but also in spiritual (which is undoubtedly true), and both these material and spiritual blessings (especially the spiritual) were "a teacher unto righteousness." But, further, just as Moses was a type and the whole law was a type of the Messiah to come (Heb. 10:1), so these blessings at this time were also a type predicting the coming of the ultimate covenant blessing in "The Teacher unto Righteousness," the Messiah. Other commentators think this Hebrew word *tsedaqah*, which has a definite article, can refer only directly (not indirectly as K & D) to the Messiah.

For the sake of the Messianic people, because they have become such by faith and repentance, and for the sake of the Messiah, God will graciously send the former rain (falling from October to December) and the latter rain (March to April). God will send them, *first of all* (and this is what is meant by the phrase translated "in the first month,") the material blessings—He will bless the temporal Israel with temporal things—but later He will bless spiritual Israel with spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:3ff). These spiritual blessings are spoken of next in Joel 2:28—3:21. There will, however, be, first of all, abundance of moisture which brings in turn overflowing abundance of agricultural blessings.

v. 25-27 AND I WILL RESTORE TO YOU THE YEARS THAT THE LOCUST HATH EATEN . . . AND YE SHALL . . . BE SATISFIED, AND SHALL PRAISE THE NAME OF JEHOVAH . . . AND YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM IN THE MIDST OF ISRAEL . . . God promises to repay or recompense the people of Israel for the years which the various stages of the locust plague took away that is the produce of their fields. See 1:4 for a description of the various names used for the locusts. This repayment will be so gracious and abundant that the people will be caused to praise the name of Jehovah. It will also be another of the many evidences that the God of all the earth dwells in their midst—that He is their God and that He is jealous for them when they repent. The mighty deeds of Jehovah are appealed to time and time again as empirical evidence for His existence and His nature (both of wrath and compassion) in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. ch. 41:45; Rom. 1:18ff; Acts 14:15-17). Ezekiel's most prominent refrain is "then shall ye know that I the Lord have done it . . . or spoken it." The Lord has never left Himself without a witness. He has constantly appealed

to man with evidence directed at the senses of man (eyesight, hearing, touching, etc). And so here Joel tells the people that when God's rich blessings of deliverance from the locusts and His miraculous, providential restoration of the grain and wine is seen and experienced they will have evidence that Jehovah is God and that He is among them, and that there is no other god besides Him. And as Joel has hinted (by the teacher unto righteousness) when the Messianic age (of which Joel will speak more fully next) comes the covenant people of God will know that God has shown even more abundantly the immutability of His purpose (Heb. 6:17-18) to keep His covenant, for all the promises of God find their "yea" in Christ (are affirmed) II Cor. 1:20.

QUIZ

1. Why is God jealous for His land? Give two reasons!
2. How would God demonstrate His pleasure at their repentance (three ways)?
3. How should the phrase "the former rain" be translated and to whom does it refer?
4. How does God prove the immutability of His purpose (what type of evidence does He give)?

III THE PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE (cont'd) FUTURE BLESSINGS (GOD PREPARING A NEW PEOPLE)

TEXT: 2:28-32

- 28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:
- 29 and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.
- 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.
- 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh.
- 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call.

QUERIES

- a. How will "all flesh" have the Spirit poured out upon them?
- b. When are we to look for a fulfillment of the wonders of "blood and fire, and pillars of smoke?"
- c. What does the prophet mean by saying that only those in "mount Zion" and "Jerusalem" will escape from the "terrible day of the Lord" be possible?

PARAPHRASE

And it will come to pass in the Messianic age, that I will no longer limit the blessings of the Holy Spirit to a specific race and to certain people within that race but I will pour out the blessings of my Spirit upon all races of people who believe in Me; the Spirit will come to old and young, to man-slaves and women-slaves alike and they will all proclaim that God has revealed Himself. At the end of this Messianic age will come the great and terrible day of the Lord but before that day comes I will demonstrate its coming over and over again by showing portents of its coming through terrifying wonders in the heavens and in the earth; wars, natural disasters and fearful phenomena in nature. And then it will come to pass that God's covenant promise made to Abraham will be vindicated and fulfilled for whosoever, whether he be Jew or Gentile, shall believe and obey Jehovah will be delivered from the great and terrible day of the Lord. In the new covenant city, where the Messianic presence of God dwells, will be found those who have escaped even as Jehovah has said, and the Messianic remnant are those whom Jehovah calls.

SUMMARY

With one dramatic sweep of the brush this prophet-artist has graphically portrayed the entire scope of the Messianic age from its beginning with the pouring out of the Spirit, to the working of God during this age in fearful phenomena calling men to repent, to the conclusion of the age at the great and terrible day of Jehovah.

COMMENT

v. 28-29 . . . AFTERWARD . . . I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH . . . SONS AND DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY . . . OLD MEN . . . YOUNG MEN . . . SERVANTS AND . . . HANDMAIDS . . . Although a veil of discontinuity obscures this whole section (vs. 28-32), the *ideas* in the the prophecy are definite. It is the time element,

the near and the distant blended into one picture, which is temporarily disconcerting.

The inspired pronouncement as to the fulfillment of this prophecy is the final authority. There can be no question that Joel's prophecy began to have its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, for the inspired apostle declares it to be so. In the Old Dispensation particular members of the covenant people received special dispensations of the Spirit, but in the New, Messianic Dispensation, the Spirit would be poured out on people of all races, as many as would call upon the name of the Lord. Calling on the name of the Lord is, of course, synonymous with believing, repenting and obeying in baptism as is shown in Acts 22:16 when Paul was exhorted to call on His name by being baptized! In other words, Joel says that all who become Christian (who call upon the name of Jehovah) will receive the Spirit of God. Peter confirms it by saying "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For unto you is the promise and unto those who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him." (Acts 2)

That this general giving of the Spirit to all believers was not to be accomplished until the establishment of the church is at once evident from the words in John 7:38 " . . . for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified . . . " Peter's words in Acts 2 also confirm the fact that this outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh was to continue even to those "afar off" (the Gentiles), even as many as God would call.

Joel specifically states that the Spirit will come without limitation as to age, sex or race. The only limitation is that those who expect to receive it must call upon the name of the Lord (v. 32). The outpouring of God's Spirit upon slaves (servants and handmaids) is something extraordinary for not a single case occurs in the entire O.T. of a slave receiving the Spirit or gift of prophecy. Even the Jewish expositors could not reconcile themselves to this announcement. The translators of the Septuagint substituted "servants of God" in place of "slaves of men" in this text.

That these who have called upon the name of the Lord and have received the Spirit of God would prophesy, dream dreams and see visions could mean either of two things or both. It undoubtedly means that some in the Messianic age would receive special gifts of the Spirit to prophesy or to receive direct, infallible revelations of God's will through dreams and visions. We know from the historical record of the New Testament that this is so. There were even some women who

prophesied (Acts 21:9). But we believe the word "prophesy" is also used in a general sense to mean that all in the Messianic age who receive the gift of the Spirit will go everywhere preaching and teaching the revealed will of God (Acts 8:4). We do know from the figurative and hyperbolical usage of language in the Bible that it is not necessary to assume that when Joel says "your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams; your young men shall see visions..." thus all who receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit and become Christians will be given direct dream or vision revelations from God. All who become Christians will receive the Spirit, but only some of the sons and daughters would receive the special, miraculous gifts of prophecy, visions, dreams, etc. If we let the New Testament interpret the Old Testament we will know what Joel means.

The important point of this passage is often missed in an effort to dogmatize or theologize about miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The important point is that in the "latter days" that is, in the Messianic age the fulfillment of God's covenant promises—the pouring out of His Spirit—would come to *all* people. It would no longer be a covenant restricted to a certain nation but to men of every tongue and tribe who would call upon Him in trustful obedience. God was going to do something unique in the Messianic age (Isa. 43:19) and this would be the "pouring" out of the Spirit from on high (Isa. 32:15)—the creating of a "new Spirit and a new heart within man" (Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26ff; 37:1-28 and Zech. 12:10).

This outpouring of the Spirit of God, as Peter interprets it, ushers in the Messianic age. Furthermore, as Peter declares, all during this age, men of every race and station who call upon the name of the Lord will receive the indwelling Spirit. If we will but follow the inspired apostle's interpretation we will see that Joel's prophecy was not limited only to the special, miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

v. 30-32 AND I WILL SHOW WONDERS IN THE HEAVENS AND IN THE EARTH . . . BEFORE THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF JEHOVAH COMETH . . . AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL ON THE NAME OF JEHOVAH SHALL BE DELIVERED; . . . In highly figurative language Joel tells both the people of his day and all generations that during this entire Messianic age God will be showing "wonders in the heavens and in the earth; blood and fire, and pillars of smoke." This, as is evident from the context, will be one of the means by which God will call men to repent in preparation for the "great and terrible day of Jehovah." It is without question that these "wonders" are to transpire *before* that "great and terrible day," so they

must be before the second and final coming of Jesus Christ who comes on that terrible day to judge all who have not called upon the name of Jehovah. These "wonders" are both natural disasters and human holocausts. God certainly sent a warning upon an impenitent Jewish nation which had rejected the Messiah when He destroyed their city and their nation in 70 A.D. (cf. Matt. 24:1-28). God has also permitted nation after nation to be destroyed in blood, fire and smoke because of ungodliness. He has permitted the forces of the heavens (nature) to carry out His warning judgments upon the earth (cf. comments on Joel 2:1ff).

Then at the end of the ages, the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come (v. 31). God will call during the entire Christian age through Spirit filled men proclaiming His word and by sending terrifying wonders in the heavens and on the earth; and then suddenly, without warning the consummation of the ages.

For those who call upon the name of the Lord (v. 32) this day of the Lord will be one of deliverance. Their faith and their works will be vindicated. They shall receive an eternal weight of glory when they are recognized and glorified by God Himself. But for those who do not call upon His name in faith and obedience shall be His perfect, divine wrath.

Keil and Delitzsch's statement here will help to clarify our interpretation:

"For the signs in heaven and earth that are mentioned in vers. 30 and 31 were to take place before the coming of the terrible day of the Lord, which would dawn after the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, and which came, as history teaches, upon the Jewish nation that had rejected its Saviour on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and upon the Gentile world-power in the destruction of the Roman empire, and from that time forward breaks in constant succession upon one Gentile nation after another; until all the ungodly powers of this world shall be overthrown (cf. Ch. 3:2). On account of this internal connection between the day of Jehovah and the outpouring of the Spirit upon the church of the Lord, Peter also quoted vers. 30-32 of this prophecy, for the purpose of impressing upon the hearts of all the hearers of his address the admonition, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40), and also of pointing out the way of deliverance from the threatening judgment to all who were willing to be saved."

So Joel, blending the events of the Messianic age into one picture with the near and the distant painted like mountain peaks and ranges seen from a distance, does not portray for us the valleys of centuries of time between the mountain-top-events. This is what is called the "shortened perspective" of prophetic literature. It should caution us to pay more attention to what the prophets preach of the fundamentals of faith and practice and much less to what prophecy may seem to say about "times and seasons."

In the Messianic age God intended to bless all who would answer His call in Christ Jesus with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." For it was in the New Testament dispensation that He "set forth in Christ . . . a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." It is in Christ that men of all races "have heard the word of truth, the gospel of . . . salvation, and have believed in him, and were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit . . ." Yes, Ephesians, chapter one, is the completed revelation of that which Joel wrote in long ages past!

QUIZ

1. When did the pouring out of the Spirit of God on all flesh take place? Is it still taking place?
2. Does this promise of Joel mean that all Christians should expect to prophesy, receive revelations by dreams, and have visions? Why not?
3. What and when are the "wonders in heaven and on earth?"
4. How does God "call" the remnant?
5. Why do we say it is not important that men should attempt to force these great mountain-top events into a rigid schedule of times and seasons?
6. How is Ephesians I a completed revelation of this section of Joel?

GOD'S VICTORY OVER THE ENEMIES OF HIS PEOPLE FUTURE BLESSINGS (cont'd)

TEXT: 3:1-15

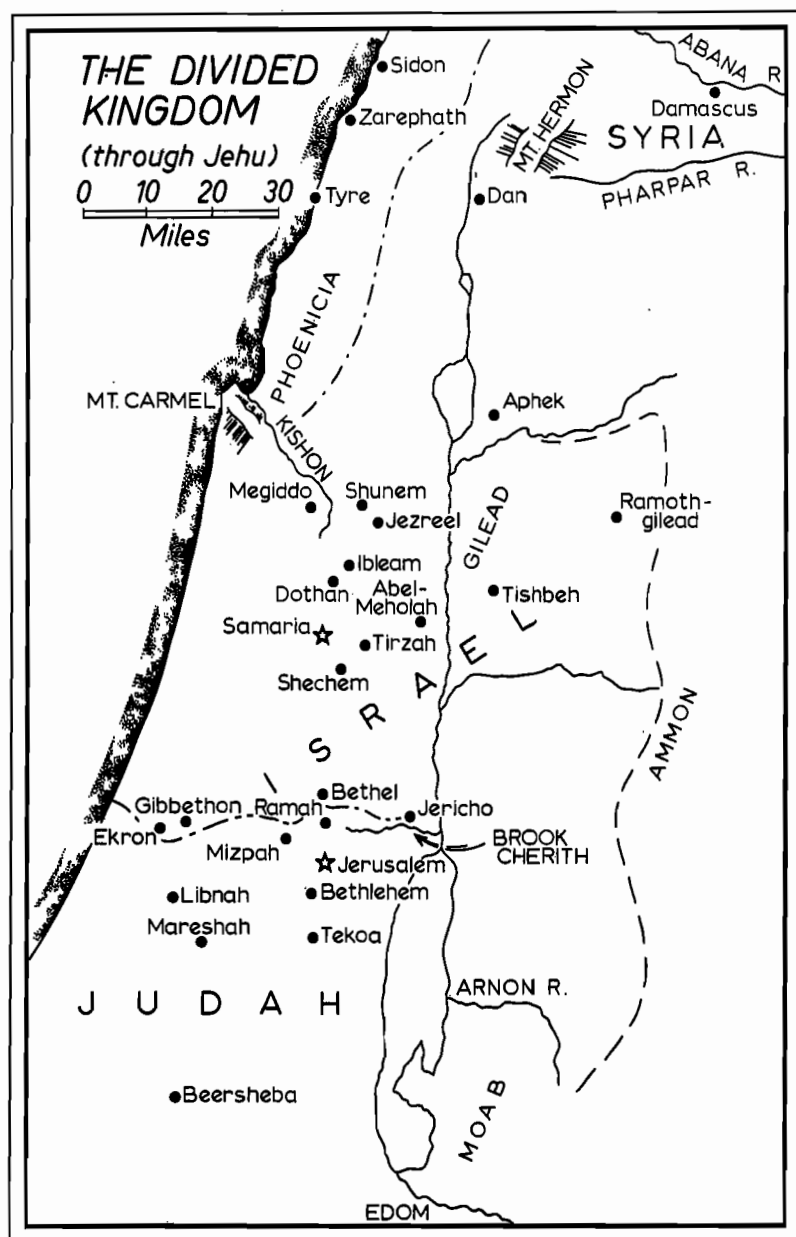
- 1 For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,
- 2 I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will execute judgment upon them there for

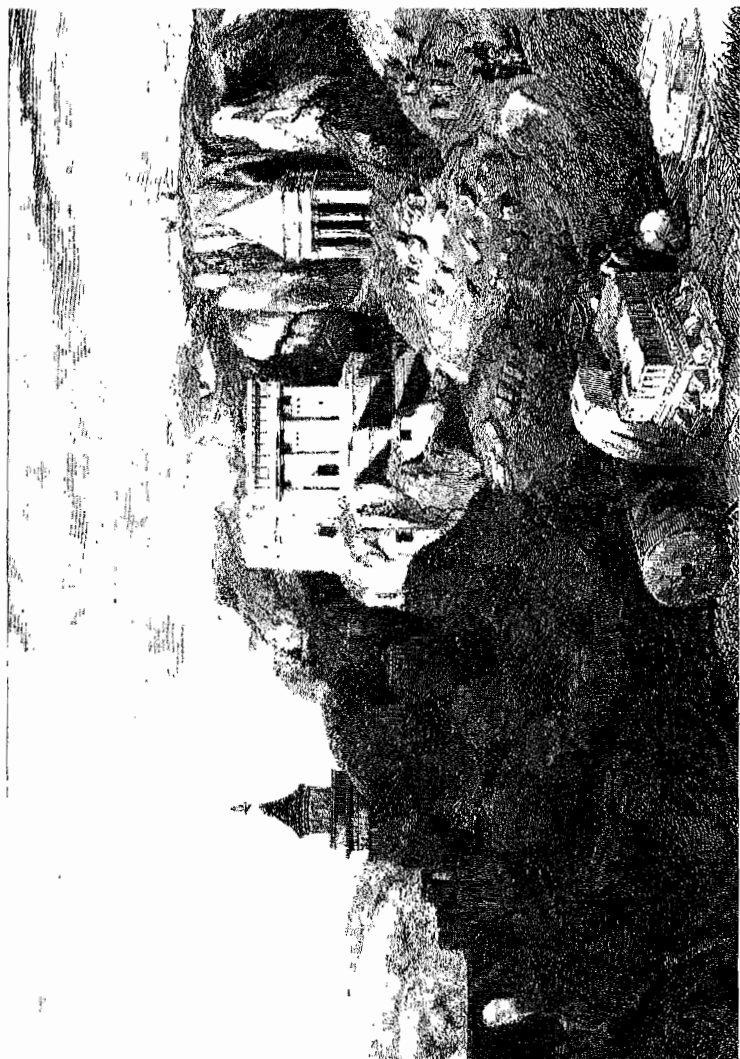
REPENTANCE -- FUTURE BLESSINGS 2:32—3:15

- my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations: and they have parted my land,
 3 and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.
 4 Yea, and what are ye to me, O Tyre, and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? will ye render me a recompense? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head.
 5 Forasmuch as ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have 'carried into your temples my goodly precious things,
 6 and have sold the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem unto the sons of the Grecians, that ye may remove them far from their border;
 7 behold, I will stir them up out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head;
 8 and I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the men of Sheba, to a nation far off: for Jehovah hath spoken it.
 9 Proclaim ye this among the nations; prepare war; stir up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near, let them come up.
 10 Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.
 11 Haste ye, and come, all ye nations round about, and gather yourselves together: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Jehovah.
 12 Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about.
 13 Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.
 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision.
 15 The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

QUERIES

- a. When are "those days . . . when I shall bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,"?
- b. How will God "gather all nations . . . into the valley of Jehoshaphat"?
- c. What war does the prophet tell the nations to prepare for?





Drawn by D. Roberts from a sketch by the Rev. R. Maister;
Engraved by J. Fisher.
TOMB OF ASAIAH.

TOMB OF ST. JAMES.

TOMB OF ZACHARIAH.

'THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT.'

Between Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives.

JOURNAL, JUL. 18. 53.

PARAPHRASE

Behold! In those glorious latter days which are the Messianic days, when I shall make an end to the oppression of My covenant people finally and completely, I will gather all who have been enemies of My people since the beginning of time and bring them into My presence for judgment. I will execute judgment upon them in vindication of My precious saints whom they have despoiled and violated, and shamefully used for their own indulgence.

Yes, O Tyre, and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia, you are included among those of my enemies! Are you actually daring to oppose Me—to do evil to Me? Even as you attempt to do something against Me, I will swiftly and speedily pay back your deeds upon your head! In plundering My people you have plundered Me; in selling My people into slavery to the Greeks you have despoiled My precious heritage. Behold! I will deliver those you have sold into slavery and use them to pay you back in kind. They shall sell your sons and daughters to foreigners. What you have sown you shall reap!

Let this proclamation be made among the enemies of God: Prepare for war! Arouse your mighty warriors! Bring on your powerful armies—let them come! Transform all your implements of peace into weapons of war and let even the weak be seized with warlike enthusiasm. Let all this be done with haste.

Now, where these are gathered, O Jehovah, cause thy mighty angels to come down and fight against the enemies of your people. So shall it be! Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to war against Me in the place where I have appointed each one and I will sit to judge the nations there. Let My mighty angels fulfill their grim reaping of My enemies for their wickedness is like a harvest which is ripe; let the winepresses of their vileness be trampled for their wickedness is full to overflowing. Throngs upon throngs of these enemies of God's people surging in a noisy din blindly and wilfully straight unto the judgment of Jehovah. This day of Jehovah will be so terrible that the whole universe trembles and shakes and withdraws at its severity.

SUMMARY

First the prophet makes a general introduction to the effect that God will, in these Messianic days He has spoken of before, bring final judgment upon His enemies. Then the prophet turns to the contemporary enemies of God's people and announces their judgment. Finally Joel declares the challenge of Almighty God to His enemies that though they do their utmost in war against Him they will still be defeated and judged.