

5. How is this evidenced in the circumstances addressed by Micah?
6. How can a just God devise evil? (Micah 2:3)
7. What was the power by which the social leaders of Micah's day enforced their evil designs?
8. How does God's punishment predicted by Micah "fit the crime" of those He will punish? (Micah 2:5)
9. What is the relationship between the wickedness addressed by Micah and the false prophets of the day?
10. What part did national pride and racial arrogance play in the downfall of the wicked northern and southern kingdoms?
11. How does God's purpose in Israel rule out such pride and arrogance on the part of the faithful?
12. How do you answer the tendency to blame God for social calamities?
13. Discuss mistreatment of people as evidence of enmity with God.
14. What single fact made God's punishment of social sin in Israel and Judah necessary to the accomplishment of His purpose in the covenant?
15. What single characteristic of the Israelites during the Babylonian captivity stood out above all else?
16. Describe the kind of prophet the people desired in Micah's time. (Micah 2:11)
17. Discuss the problem of textual unity of the scriptures. (cf. Micah 2:12-13)
18. The idea of a restored remnant, as presented by Micah, presupposes the destruction of _____ and the rejection of the _____ *per se*.
19. The doctrine of election, divine choice, is, in the Bible, always related to the _____.
20. What is the similarity of modern denominationalism and the attitude of racial and national priority with God on the part of the Jewish people of Bible times?
21. Discuss the figures of the "shepherd," the "breaker," and the "king" in connection with the remnant.

CHAPTER VIII

THIRD CYCLE

OUTRAGES OF CIVIL OFFICIALS . . . Micah 3:1-4

RV . . . And I said, Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel: is it not for you to know justice? ye who hate

the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. Then shall they cry unto Jehovah, but he will not answer them; yea, he will hide his face from them at that time, according as they have wrought evil in their doings.

LXX . . . And he shall say, Hear now these words, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and ye remnant of the house of Israel; is it not for you to know judgement? who hate good, and seek evil; who tear their skins off them, and their flesh off their bones: even as they devoured the flesh of my people, and stripped their skins off them, and broke their bones, and divided them as flesh for the caldron, and as meat for the pot, thus they shall cry to the Lord, but he shall not hearken to them; and he shall turn away his face from them at that time, because they have done wickedly in their practices against themselves.

COMMENTS

(Verse 1) Micah's concern for the return of the people to the covenant reaches its highest pitch in chapter three, as he pleads with the official leaders of the people. He has dealt in chapters one and two with the economic and social leaders of the northern and southern kingdoms. Now he turns his attention to the *official* leaders. He is acutely aware that no nation can rise any higher than the moral standards of its officials, especially of its courts.

Repeatedly Micah couches his appeal to people in high places in terms calculated to remind them that they are the temporal rulers of God's people. He addresses them as the "heads of Jacob" and "the rulers of the house of Israel." To these he addresses a warning of imminent doom, but with the underlying hope that they will repent.

The King James version has "princes" of the house of Israel in this verse. This is unfortunate, since it is generally agreed that this passage is intended for the magistrates and judges rather than for the royal family.

These are obviously not included in the remnant mentioned in the closing verses of chapter two. The prophets warning to them follows immediately the glowing hope expressed for the deliverance of the remnant so that they will make no mistake about their own predicament. They must not mistake themselves for inclusion in the

real Israel of God just because they sit in the seats of temporal judgment over the people.

"IS IT NOT FOR YOU . . ."

In *Micah 2:1-ff*, we saw Micah's denunciation of the wealthy and influential for their merciless mistreatment of the poor. The prophet now challenges the judges that they have the responsibility of preventing and dealing with such injustice. The wealthy could not do what they do were it not for corrupt courts. (See above on *Micah 1:5*) Magistrates and judges above all others should be aware of the penalties of wrong doing and injustice. Micah's warning is that the laws apply equally well to the lawyers.

"YOU WHO HATE GOOD AND LOVE EVIL". . . v. 2

These corrupt judges not only hate good men and love evil men, worse than that, they hate good as a principle and love evil as a principle.

Modern existential philosophy and situation ethics notwithstanding, there *is* such a thing as absolute good and absolute evil . . . as abstract reality as well as in tangible experience.

That the early church fathers believed this to be true is seen in such ancient writings as that attributed to Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate, "It is sin not to love good; what guilt to hate it. It is faulty not to flee from evil, what ungodliness to love it."

"PLUCK OFF THEIR SKIN AND FLESH FROM THEIR
BONES . . . v. 2(b)-3

Such allusions as this to describe the cheating advantage taken by one man over another are to be found in every culture. Examples of it in the historic writings of Israel are to be seen in such passages as *Psalms 14:4* and *Proverbs 30:14*. We still speak of such practices as "skinning" someone.

A proverb attributed to the American Indian says, "The Indian scalps his enemies, the white man skins his friends." It seems the white man cannot claim to be original in this maltreatment of his fellowman. The judges of Israel are warned here of the consequences of it.

This particular passage in Micah, denouncing the loving of evil and the hating of good brings to mind a very significant change in civilized man's evaluation of right and wrong. In 1867, Robert Milligan wrote, "It will, I presume, be generally conceded that the will of God

is the natural and only proper standard of all that is right. If God is our Sovereign King and Lawgiver, it is His right to command, and it is our duty to obey."

To this the Christian will readily say "amen!" To this also the ancient pagans would agree, although their confusion of deities could furnish no uniformly acceptable standard of right and wrong. To this even the evil doers addressed by Micah gave lip service, else the prophet could not have appealed to them on the ground of a clear cut distinction between good and evil.

We are something more than naive if we believe we can approach modern man, and especially the members of the intellectual and academic communities or young people on this basis today.. Beginning with Hegel (1770-1831) through Kierkegaard (1813-1855) to the existential thinking of Karl Jaspers Sarte, Camus, Julian and Aldous Huxley, *et al*, to the ultramodern (now passé) God-is-dead cult, twentieth century man has reached the rationale which says there not only *is not* but that there *cannot be* any absolute good or evil. Everything is relative. Absolutism is dead and man must decide in the context of a given set of circumstances the situation ethics of the moment.

To try to cut through such layers of ignorance by quoting the dictums of God from the Bible is to try to sweep back the tide with a broom. To give up in despair of being able to reach those who think like this is to abandon an entire generation, and possibly an entire civilization to spiritual darkness forever.

Somehow modern Christians must learn, as it is said the early Christians did, to "out-think, outlove and outdie" those whose spiritual eyes have been blinded by the self-acclaimed wisdom of men. The warnings of the prophets concerning the consequences of loving evil and hating good must be gotten through to modern man, but our task is twice as difficult as that of Micah and the others. They at least shared with those whom they sought to warn the common presupposition that there is a Sovereign God and His word determines the difference between objective good and objective evil. It is no longer so in our day. We share no such common ground with those whom we seek to turn from the error of their ways.

MERCENARY PROPHETS . . . Micah 3:5-8

RV . . . Thus saith Jehovah concerning the prophets that make my people to err; that bite with their teeth and cry, Peace; and whoso putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him: therefore it shall be night unto you, that ye shall have no vision; and it

shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them. And the seers shall be put to shame, and the diviners confounded; yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God. But as for me, I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgement, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

LXX . . . Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that lead my people astray, that bite with their teeth, and proclaim peace to them; and when nothing was put into their mouth, they raised up war against them: therefore there shall be night to you instead of a vision, and there shall be to you darkness instead of prophecy; and the sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be dark upon them. And the seers of night-visions shall be ashamed, and the prophets shall be laughed to scorn: and all the people shall speak against them, because there shall be none to hearken to them. Surely I will strengthen myself with the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of power, to declare to Jacob his transgressions, and to Israel his sins.

COMMENTS

As in the case of the arrogant misleaders (*Micah* 2:1-3) so with the unjust magistrates (*Micah* 3:1-4), the prophet relates their sin to false preachers.

(Verse 5) Here the accusation is direct. It is the false prophets who "make my people err." By not denouncing sin, the false prophet encourages his hearers to sin. By flattering sinners in their sin and telling them that God is not really all that demanding, the false preacher leaves the impression desired by his hearers. Namely, that sin will not really be punished.

When these false prophets do denounce some action or inaction in their hearers it is not because of the righteous demands of God but because they do not feel their salaries are big enough. This reveals them to be part of the total picture of a decadent social order. They are as mercenary as those who lay awake nights figuring how to cheat someone of his possessions.

The agreeableness of the message of a false prophet was determined by the size of the "bite" placed in his mouth by his hearers. When the "religious payola" was sufficient they foretold peace and prosperity. When it was not, they sanctified war as a judgement against those who failed to feed them. In such pronouncements they sounded like the true prophet, but they would change their "tune" when the

offerings were good. Such preaching is not calculated to bring about repentance on the part of the hearer.

(Verse 6) Micah's warning concerning such despicable practices on the part of those who claim to speak for God is that the light of God will be withheld from them. There will be no vision. The implication is clear, for where there is no vision, the people perish. (*Proverbs 29:18*)

The calamities which Micah has predicted for Israel and Judah will be shared by the false preachers as well as the social and official misleaders. When the calamity strikes they will no longer be able to claim to speak for God. When the judgements of God come, as they have promised His judgements will not come . . . when it is learned that God is not, after all, the tolerant benevolent benefactor the false teachers have made Him out to be, but rather the God of the covenant demanding faithful obedience to His will and His law, no one will listen any longer to those who made Him out to be what their hearers hoped He was.

(Verse 7) In that day of judgement, the false seers will be put to shame and confounded. Everything of which they have been warned will have come to pass . . . the laxity of judgement on the part of God which they have predicted will be shown for what it is . . . wishful thinking.

They will be put to shame. The covering of the lips may be explained in one of several figures. In the custom of the day, the moustache and beard were matters of great pride. The covering of them was an act expressing shame.

Another reference to the covering of the lips is found in *Leviticus 13:45*. There the command is that the leper is to "cover his upper lip and cry unclean unclean." This was one of the laws of God pertaining to hygiene. In *Micah 3:7* the implication seems to be that spiritual and moral infection being spread by the false prophet will finally be stopped when the calamity predicted by Micah finally stops their mouths.

In verse eight, Micah contrasts himself, as a true prophet to the false prophets he has just denounced. Three things characterize him. He has within himself the *POWER* of God's Spirit, without which no one can speak accurately and effectively concerning the will of God. (Cp. *Acts 1:5,8*)

He possesses *JUDGEMENT*, *ie.* a sense of justice which moves him to speak the truth no matter how unpopular as opposed to the false prophet whose motivation was money.

He possesses *MIGHT* or courage to say what needs saying in the face of ridicule and even persecution. (Cp. *II Timothy* 1:7)

He possesses these three graces "to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and unto Israel his sin." Jacob and Israel originally referred to the same individual. Jacob was his name before God confirmed to him the everlasting covenant. Israel was his covenant name. Micah apparently intends to distinguish here between the physical descendants of Jacob and the faithful covenant people among them to whom he refers by the covenant name, Israel.

Transgression is a specific term for the deliberate infraction of God's law. For these deliberate transgressions Micah has the power and the judgement and the might to speak out against those unfaithful to the covenant. Sin is a more general term. Even those who were faithful to the covenant were not free from sin completely. The prophet also has the power and the judgement and the might to speak to the covenant people whenever necessary.

One can scarcely read this denunciation of false and mercenary preachers without being aware of the present religious climate of our day. I have before me as I write the most recent publication of COCU (the Consultation On Church Unity). It is entitled *A Plan of Union*. Its authors make bold to claim that what they are doing in their eccumenical designs and ambitions is led by the Spirit of God. They claim the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit while they are denying the same to the writers of the Bible. They are teaching theology and proposing practices which are diametrically opposed to the Scriptural teaching and order of things in the church. One suspects their motivation, like that of those false prophets of whom Micah spoke, is something less than the selfless desire to see God's people do God's will.

One does not have to be a prophet of doom to foresee the possible collapse of our culture which is following the lead of such men. Just as those who misled the eighth century Jews into believing that God would not exact judgement against the followers of false teachers, so these twentieth century clergymen have denied the judgements of God. If our culture should collapse it will owe much of its failure to the teaching of these men. And, in that day as in the day of Judah's fall, the false prophet will be shown for what he is.

CONCLUSION OF THE DENUNCIATIONS . . . Micah 3:9-12

RV . . . Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that abhor justice, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads

thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet they lean upon Jehovah, and say, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

LXX . . . Hear now these words, ye chiefs of the house of Jacob, and the remnant of the house of Israel, who hate judgment, and pervert all righteousness; who build up Sion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof have judged for gifts, and the priests thereof have answered for hire, and her prophets have divined for silver: and yet they have rested on the Lord, saying, Is not the Lord among us? no evil shall come upon us. Therefore on your account Sion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall be as a storehouse of fruits, and the mountain of the house as a grove of the forest.

COMMENTS

To this point, Micah has denounced specifically the wealthy whose wealth is gained by cheating the poor, the false prophet who preaches what his listeners want to hear while he ignores their sins, the judges who are unconcerned with justice and the political officials who, like their constituents, hate good and love evil. In this passage he summarizes and concludes the list of those whose greed for power and wealth, along with their unconcern for human misery have brought God's covenant nation to her downfall.

The list of their sins has an ominously familiar ring to anyone aware of the present spiritual condition of our own nation. They abhor justice and pervert all equity. They judge for reward, teach for hire and divine for money. And through it all they have the audacity to "lean upon Jehovah." Rather than repent and obey His laws, they presume to believe that they are yet His people, so that no evil can befall them.

False teaching is always recognizable by its emphasis on the goodness of God accompanied by the denial of His wrath . . . its proclamation of the promises of God while denying the condition of those promises. The preaching of such lies only makes the judgements of God the more certain.

(Verse 9) "Hear" is here resumed from verse one, indicating that Micah is about to sum up his denunciation of the evils of those who claim to be God's people.

The term "heads of Jacob" as in verse one calls attention to the civil rulers of the commonwealth, while "rulers of the house of Israel" here as there refers to the religious leaders. The sum of all of which he has accused them is that they "abhor justice and pervert all equity."

Pusey remarks concerning verse 9, "They abhorred judgement he says, as a thing loathsome and *abominable*, such as men cannot even bear to look upon; they not only dealt wrongly, but they *perverted*, distorted, all *equity* . . . whatever was right by conscience or by God's laws, they distorted, like the sophists making the worse appear the better cause."

A rather sadistic anecdote will illustrate how this attitude toward social justice is very much alive today. The story is told of two black men walking along a limited access highway in the deep south. A wealthy plantation owner's Cadillac struck them both, throwing one into a nearby cotton field and the other through the car's windshield and onto the back seat. A sheriff soon arrived on the scene and announced, "We'll charge one with leaving the scene of an accident and the other with breaking and entering." The humor of this story lies not in the judgement of the sheriff against the unfortunate blacks, but in the unlikely circumstances of the accident. Perversions of justice just as "far-fetched" are matters of court record throughout the United States. The reasons are the same as those which brought about the corruption of Micah's day.

(Verse 10) Maintaining his distinction between the civil and religious authorities, Micah accuses the latter of building up Zion with blood and the former of building up Jerusalem with iniquity.

Religion consisted of meticulously observing the formal sacrifices daily in the temple while ignoring the moral implications of the law, particularly the matter of human relations. The charge is reminiscent of that leveled against the religious leaders of first century Zion by Jesus, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe the mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; but these things ye should have done and not to have left the other undone." (*Matthew 23:23*) Both Micah and Jesus would have agreed with *Proverbs 15:8*, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to Jehovah . . ." The covenant purposes of God, symbolized here in the term Zion, cannot be built upon the blood of religious sacrifices offered by evil men.

We cannot but note in passing that one of the chief reasons for the disenchantment of modern man with the institutionalized church is that the religious people who are members of the churches have too

often failed to relate their duty to God to their duty to man and particularly to the social injustices exacted from the poor and the ignorant. It is easy to say that the purposes of God are redemptive rather than reformative . . . that the business of the church is to preach the gospel and win the lost, but it is not so easy to reach the lost whose stomach is empty because some influential member of the church has denied him work because of the color of his skin. It is easy to say the church's business is to proclaim the redemption of Christ to those outside the church, but it is not so easy to get the outsider to listen to a recital of his spiritual needs while we remain aloof and unconcerned for his physical needs. No doubt this is why Jesus' only detailed account of the judgement has to do with those who fed and visited and clothed the downtrodden in His name . . . or who while performing great religious works had failed to do so. (*Matthew 25:31-46*) In the prophecy of Micah, as well as that of the Lord, the punishment of such evil is severe and total.

Just as the religion of Zion was built upon the blood of mockingly meaningless sacrifices, so the political structure of Jerusalem's civil government was built upon social iniquity. Matthew Henry's comment here says it about as well as it can be said, "They pretend in justification of their extortion and oppressions, that they have built up Zion and Jerusalem: they add new streets and squares . . . and adorn them; they establish and advance the public interests both in church and state, and think therein they do God and Israel good service."

Could there be any more accurate illustration in an ancient writing of the social injustices of modern America? In the name of progress we move underprivileged people out of inadequate homes for which we pay them little or no remuneration to make way for our expressways and urban renewal projects . . . we exact exorbitant taxes to subsidize such urgent projects as the scientific study of earthworms while many who pay the taxes are forced to deprive their children of the necessities of life . . . the list of our iniquities is as long as that charged by Micah against the leaders of his society. We will be something less than wise if we fail to understand that the moral dry rot which destroyed Israel and Judah in the eighth and seventh century B.C. will also destroy ours in the 20th and 21st centuries A.D.

"HEADS . . . PRIESTS . . ." v. 11

Following still farther his denunciation of both the civil and religious leaders of the nation, Micah again accused the judges of being corrupt, deciding cases on the basis of bribes rather than justice.

To this charge, the prophet adds a new note. Heretofore, he has denounced the false prophet as representative of the corrupt religious system. Now he turns to the priest. The priest, he alleges, teaches for hire. The duty of the priest was to teach the law and decide controversy with justice. (*Leviticus 10:11, Deuteronomy 17:11*) Instead, these spiritual representatives of God among His people were emmeshed in the same materialism that polluted the rest of the upper classes of society.

Nor does Micah forget the false prophet in making this summary of his charges. He again asserts that the prophets preach only to fill their purses. They divine, that is they proclaim what they know the people want to hear as the will of God in order to receive pay.

And while they do this, they tell the people that God is among them, that the doom predicted by Micah and Isaiah and others cannot come to pass because they are, after all, the chosen people of God.

Such a claim brings up a rather moot question, very relevant in our day: Who is the real patriot? Who is really concerned for his country? The person who says "my country right or wrong" or the person who, like Micah, sees the faults of his homeland and sets about in the name of God to do something about those faults?

It should be apparent from the subsequent doom pronounced against Zion and Jerusalem, as well as from the testimony of more recent history, that God's relationship to the Jews as a race or as a nation is not unconditional. They have rejected Jehovah for Baal . . . they have abandoned spiritual justice for materialistic gain and fleshly pleasure. As their ancient uncle Esau, they have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage and so no longer have any claim to the promises of Jehovah!

"THEREFORE . . ." v. 12

In consequence of the sin of those in high places, the sacred mountain, Zion, is to be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem their capital is to be as any other high place in the forest. ("On the 6th September, A.D. 70, Jerusalem fell and the Romans destroyed it so completely that they drove a plough across the ruins. As a nation the Jews had come to an end; and their own mad folly had brought their end upon them." Barclay)

The kingdom is finished. The north will go first, the south will soon follow. And God will recall a remnant through whom to accomplish His promise ". . . in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (*Genesis 12:3 (b)*)

One hundred years later another prophet, Jeremiah, would quote

these verses from Micah in defense of his own denunciations of an equally sinful generation. (*Jeremiah 26:18*)

Chapter VIII—Questions

Third Cycle

1. Discuss Micah's concern for the covenant in light of his plea in *Micah 3:1-4*.
2. Discuss the concept of absolute good and evil in contrast with modern situation ethics (new morality). *Micah 2:1-ff*
3. What is meant by "pluch off their skin and flesh from their bones (*Micah 2:2(b)-3*)?"
4. Discuss the will of God as "the only natural and proper standard of all that is right."
5. Discuss ways to penetrate the "layers of ignorance" in modern philosophies with the truth of God's sovereignty.
6. Are the prophetic warnings of the consequences of loving evil and hating good relevant to our current moral revolution?
7. What three classes of people does Micah denounce? (*Micah 2:1-3, 3:1-4, 3:5*)
8. What specific class of leaders are accused of making the people to err?
9. What seems to have been the chief concern of the false prophets?
10. What is God's warning to mercenary prophets?
11. Comment on the idea that God is a "tolerant benevolent benefactor."
12. What is to be the fate of the false prophets in the day of the judgement against the wicked nations as pronounced by Micah?
13. What three things characterize Micah as a true prophet as opposed to the false prophets?
14. Compare the false prophet syndrome of Micah's day with our present religious climate in America.
15. What is the relationship between false religious teaching and the cultural collapse of a civilization?
16. What are the specific sins with which Micah charges the wealthy, the false prophet, the magistrates, the political officials?
17. False teaching is always recognizable by its emphasis on the _____ of God accompanied by a denial of His _____.
18. The term "head of Jacob" calls attention to _____.
19. "Rulers of the house of Israel" refers to _____.

CHAPTER IX

FUTURE EXALTATION AND
MESSIANIC HOPE

XION, CENTER OF WORSHIP . . . Micah 4:1-5

RV . . . But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem; and he will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it. For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his God; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever.

LXX . . . And at the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest, established on the tops of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and the peoples shall hasten to it. And many nations shall go, and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and they shall shew us his way, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many peoples, and shall rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares; and their spears into sickles; and nation shall no more lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn to war any more. And every one shall rest under his vine, and every one under his fig-tree; and there shall be none to alarm them: for the mouth of the Lord Almighty has spoken these words. For all other nations shall walk every one in his own way, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.

COMMENTS

(Verse 1) "It will come to pass" gives us transport to the future

(from Micah's day). We leap the centuries far beyond the captivity to Messiah's day.

"In the latter days" is the English rendering of the phrase which fixes the time when it shall come to pass. The phrase is reminiscent of *Hebrews 1:2*. There we are told that God, having spoken to the fathers in the prophets has spoken to us in a Son. No more conclusive evidence is needed to connect Micah's prophecy with the Messianic age. The rabbis so understood this term. (The age was to be final and eternal. Nothing lies beyond it so far as earthly history is concerned. It is itself the final goal of history.) "Upon the last of the days" is the exact opposite of "in the beginning" of *Genesis 1:1* (LXX) and *John 1:1*. As Lange points out, it denotes "the completion of the world in contrast to its beginning."

John indicates that we are in this end time. (CF. *1 John 2:18-f*)
 *(See my comment in *Hereby We Know*, College Press, pp. 59-ff)

In this end time, says Micah, the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on top of (or at the head of) the mountains. In the place of the literal mountain which is to be plowed as a field (*Micah 3:12*), the ideal of God will be established.

Those who would take Micah literally here see "the ultimate establishment of the kingdom with Jerusalem as the capital" (*The New Scofield Reference Bible*). This is, of course, not in keeping with Jesus' concept of true Jehovah worship. Just as Micah predicts that all peoples shall flow into God's exalted mountain, so Jesus said "Neither in these (Samaritan Gerazim and Ebal) mountains, nor in Jerusalem (Mt. Zion and Mt. Moriah) shall ye worship the Father . . . but the hour cometh *and now is* (italics mine) when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth . . . God is spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth."

The psalmist used this same metaphor in *Psalms 68:17* to indicate the eminence of Jehovah worship on Mt. Zion over the other high places. The emphasis upon and contrast of high places, or mountains, is set against the backdrop of the tension between Jehovah worship on Mt. Zion and Baal worship on the various surrounding high places. In the last times, or Messianic age, true worship is to be firmly and finally exalted above all else.

In verse 5, Micah says "all the peoples walk everyone in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for

ever and ever." The coming of the Messianic age has not eliminated false religion. The very site of Jehovah's temple is now the second most holy spot in Islaam. But true Jehovah worship, *ie.* Christian worship, has been exalted above them all.

(Verse 2) "Many nations" here is not be understood in terms of political empires. *The people* in the Old Testament are generally all those in covenant relation to God while the *nations* are all those not in covenant relationship.

Many who in Micah's day were "seperate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise . . ." (*Ephesians* 2:12) are now "made nigh in the blood of Christ." (*Ephesians* 2:13)

Isaiah looked forward to this same glorious day (*Isaiah* 2:2) when the universal concern of God for all men would be realized.

Significantly, both Micah and Isaiah see the movement of Gentiles toward the exalted "mountain of Jehovah's house" as voluntary. The religion of the prophets is of such quality as makes it independant of nationality or election. As the Jews understood election, any interperatation of prophecy which overlooks this basic truth cannot be correct.

The statement ". . . out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem" is not to be understood as limited to or even indicative of the law of Moses. Rather it is the "law of the Spirit of life." (*Romans* 8:1,2) It is in keeping with Jesus' ascertainment that "thus it is written . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (*Luke* 24:45-47) There is little doubt that such passages as this in Micah were in Jesus' mind when He taught the apostles to so read and understand the Old Testament.

(Verse 3-4) Men are at war with men because men are at war with God. In the Messianic age (our own time included) the ideal is peace based on His judgement. He will judge between peoples . . . He will decide concerning strong nations. When and if the leaders of nations seek His will together . . . when His judgement is taken seriously, there can be peace.

History has demonstrated in blood that this peace will not prevail so long as each nation believes God has only its own national interests at heart. When asked if he did not believe that God was on the side of the north, Abraham Lincoln answered that it was more important that we be on God's side than He on ours. This is the Messianic ideal.

Both in the matter of war as described in verse 3 and the relation

of races described in verse 2, the church, as Messiah's kingdom does not *have* the answer. The church *is* the answer. In the true church there is no Jew nor Greek, east nor west, male nor female. We are all one, and until we *are* all one, we are not truly the church!

The implements of war will be beaten into implements of peace, not by voting funds for welfare rather than warfare, but by seeking the will of God's Messiah in international relations.

The ideal described in verse 4 of every man in the security and plenty of his own vine and fig tree will come not by civil rights agitation and legislation but by seeking the will of God's Christ in human relations. God must become the ruler of our economy as well as our church doctrine!

(Verse 5) On this verse we noted above that all false religion would not be obliterated in the age of the Messiah. This is obvious to anyone with definite conviction concerning the "faith once for all delivered . . ." We would simply add here that this verse is evidence Micah is not describing the final "summing up of the ages" when all false religion will be forever wiped out. When Micah says " . . . all the peoples walk everyone in the name of his god, and (but) we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God . . ." he is not condoning false religion. He is describing an era of tolerance or religious freedom unknown in the ancient world. It is, after all, better to discuss religious differences than to kill over them, as in the great religious wars of western European history.

THE RESTORATION OF THE DIASPORA . . . Micah 4:6-8

RV . . . In that day, saith Jehovah, will I assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted; and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever. And thou, O tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.

LXX . . . In that day, saith the Lord, I will gather her that is bruised, and will receive her that is cast out, and those whom I rejected. And I will make her that was bruised a remnant, and her that was rejected a mighty nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. And thou, dark tower of the flock, daughter of Sion, on thee the dominion shall come and enter in, even the first kingdom from Babylon to the daughter of Jerusalem.

COMMENTS

(Verse 6-7) "In that day" refers us back to 4:1. What Micah is about to say is to take place during the same "last of the days" which, as we have seen, is the Messianic age.

(Verse 6) "That which is lame . . ." Micah uses here the image of the covenant people as God's flock. His sheep are pictured as limping or halting as the result of much wandering. These will be assembled. Part of the worship of Baal, the chief cause of their impending captivity, was a limping, halting dance about the altars of Baal in the high places. When God finished punishing them they will have real cause to limp!

HER THAT HALTED IS TO BECOME A REMNANT . . . v. 7

The covenant people are no longer identified with the race of Abraham's descendants nor the political commonwealth which was national Israel. From this point forward, true Israel is the faithful remnant. (See above on 2:12)

There is a distinction here between two groups. The one Micah calls "that which was lame" (LXX "bruised"). The other he styles "that which is driven away . . . afflicted . . . cast off."

The lame or bruised are the faithful obedient few. Although they will be bruised in the captivity and dispersion of the nation, God will make of them a remnant. Through them He will yet fulfill His covenant promise.

That which is cast off He will make a strong nation. Paul informs us emphatically (*Romans 11:1*) that God *has* not (from Micah's point of view, *will* not) cast off His people. His people are the remnant. Those whom He cast off are the rebellious majority.

Of both, the remnant and the strong nation composed of those cast off, Micah says, "Jehovah will reign over *them*."

TOWER OF THE FLOCK . . . v. 8

The flock is the remnant, God's faithful covenant people, Zion out of whom shall proceed the law of God to all people. (Cf. 4:2 above.) The tower of the flock . . . the hill of the *daughter* of Zion (not Zion herself) is the cast-off ones who shall become a strong nation. As the tower of the flock was a lookout post to guard the shepherd's flock, so the nation would shield within her the covenant remnant until the time of Messiah's coming.

The term "tower of the flock" is literally the "tower of Ophel."

Ophel is not Mt. Zion, but a precipitous slope on the south of the temple mount. This brings to sharper focus the distinction between Zion, the *remnant*, and the tower, the *nation*.

It is to the nation that "the former dominion" shall come. The remnant shall become the nucleus of the Christian church.

DISTRESS AND REDEMPTION . . . Micah 4:9-5:1

RV . . . Now why doest thou cry out aloud? Is there no king in thee, is thy counsellor perished, that pangs have taken hold of thee as of a woman in travail? Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail; for now shalt thou go forth out of the city; and shalt dwell in the field, and shalt come even unto Babylon: there shalt thou be rescued; there will Jehovah redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies. And now many nations are assembled against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye see our desire upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah, neither understand they his counsel for he hath gathered them as the sheaves to the threshing-floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thy horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many peoples: and I will devote their gain unto Jehovah, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. Now shalt thou gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

LXX . . . And now, why hast thou known calamities? was there not a king to thee? or has thy counsel perished that pangs as of a woman in travail have seized upon thee? Be in pain, and strengthen thyself, and draw near, O daughter of Zion, as a woman in travail: for now thou shalt go forth out of the city, and shalt lodge in the plain, and shalt reach even to Babylon: thence shall the Lord thy God deliver thee, and thence shall he redeem thee out of the hand of thine enemies. And now have many nations gathered against thee, saying, We will rejoice, and our eyes shall look upon Zion. But they know not the thought of the Lord, and have not understood his counsel: for he has gathered them as sheaves of the floor. Arise, and thresh them, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horns iron, and I will make thine hoofs brass: and thou shalt utterly destroy many nations, and shalt consecrate their abundance to the Lord, and their strength to the Lord of all the earth. Now shall the daughter of Zion be completely hedged in: he has laid siege against us: they shall smite the tribes of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

COMMENTS

WHY DOST THOU CRY ALOUD? . . . v. 9-10

The term "tower of the flock" (v. 8) appears also in *Genesis* 35:16-ff. There is the record of Rachel, beloved of Jacob, dying in childbirth as they journeyed from Bethel to Bethlehem.

Just as Rachel died in childbirth, so the nation of Israel would die at the hands of Titus (70 A.D.) and Hadrian (135 A.D.) in the height of her Messianic expectancy. First century Israel looked for a king, but could find none. Micah's question is pertinent, "Is there no king in thee?" The king would indeed be in her, but she would die in travail without seeing (recognizing) Him just as Rachel died.

The nation, even in Micah's time, in pain would go away into Babylon . . . there to be rescued. To all outward appearances the Hebrew nation was dead when they were led away into Babylon. In truth, however, it was there they were molded into a people who never again forgot God.

True, their national ambition blinded them to the Christ. He was recognized only by the *remnant*, not the *nation*.

Nevertheless, there is a real sense in which Micah can truly use the plural, both the remnant and the nation (v. 7) shall be ruled over by Jehovah.

In all this, Micah is looking beyond the Assyrian Dynasty to the supremacy of Babylon, and through Babylon to the Persians, and beyond Persia to the Messianic Age.

(Verse 11) It is the prophet's purpose in these verses to return to the warnings of 3:12. Before there can be a national restoration and a deliverance of the remnant there must be the captivity.

Having projected hope which lay nearly two centuries in the future in its first instance *ie.* the deliverance from Babylon, and some eight centuries in the future in its Messianic fulfillment, Micah returns in verse 11 to the situation immediately before him. Between the present and the blessed future was an array of enemies bent on Israel's destruction.

In Micah's own time the Assyrians dominated the international scene. They would wipe out the northern kingdom and in their turn be replaced by Babylon. Babylon would enslave the southern kingdom, only to be destroyed by the Persians.

The Medo-Persians would themselves yield to Alexander and the Greeks.

Against the oppression of the Greeks would rise a blood bath

known to history as "The Maccabean Period," including a Jewish civil war, to be ended only by Roman occupation.

(4:12-5:1 . . .) This array of foreign powers who, from the beginning of recorded history, have used the land of Israel as a military pawn and buffer state have reckoned without God's thought and counsel. *He has gathered them, ie. the nations arrayed against Israel, as sheaves to the threshing floor.* Jerusalem, "daughter of Zion," is called to arise and thresh. Jehovah will make her horn iron and her hoofs brass.

Thus, against the figure of oxen treading out grain, God promises power which will beat many people "in pieces."

Nothing in history to date, fully accords with the prediction. The only period of history since Micah in which Israel has had any military power was the Maccabean period of victory over Antiochus Epiphanes and that victory was on nothing like the scale indicated here in the threshing of many nations.

To find the fulfillment of this prophecy, we must look to more recent history. We have previously referred to *Romans 11* in reference to the first group here presented by Micah *ie. the true Israel, the covenant people called the remnant.* But what of the cast off ones who are to become a *strong nation* to whom the former dominion shall come?

It is concerning *them* that Paul writes "as touching the Gospel, they are enemies for your (Christians) sake, but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sake. For the gifts and calling of God are not repented of. For as ye in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown you they also may now obtain mercy." (*Romans 11:24-ff*) (See Don De-Welt, *Romans Realized*, p. 174-f)

The Jews are precious to Jehovah because of His past relations with them. There is little doubt that the Bible predicts another period of national life and prosperity. To recognize this ought, not, however, to engender in us such earthly, material and sordid hopes as proved their undoing in the rejection of Christ two thousand years ago. Whatever is in store for the Jewish nation in terms of earthly identity, it can in no way preclude the longing of God and His church to win them to Christ.

It is my opinion that in our day, which is called the latter days, the time of the Messiah. (Cp. *Micah 4:1 & 6*), we are seeing the fulfillment of *Micah 4:9-5:1* in the present history of the Israeli nation.

As we have previously indicated, no time in the interval between Micah and the present has met the fullness of this passage. From Assyria to now many nations have been assembled against the Jews (*v.* 11). In all this historic desire to see these people defiled, the nations have not considered God's will nor known His counsel (*v.* 12). The present Arab-Russian-Chinese coalition against modern Israel certainly takes none of this into account.

Yet, in a strength unbelievable, reported by every news media of our time, this little postage stamp country has not once but four times in turn defied the strength of Britain and all the Arab world could hurl against her and has each time "threshed" them soundly (*v.* 12). In six days in June, 1967, Israel literally "*beat in pieces many people.*"

Micah promised this would come to pass *during the Christian era*. It ought be no great source of amazement that we are seeing it happen!

(5:1) But before the remnant shall be gathered by Messiah, before those cast off can become a strong nation, the inevitable must happen. The kingdoms will gather their armies together and attempt in vain to hold off the armies of Assyria and of Babylon. But it will be to no avail. The price of their apostasy must be paid.

FOCUS ON THE MESSIAH . . . Micah 5:2-6

RV . . . But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth; then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand, and shall feed his flock in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God: and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be our peace. When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our border.

LXX . . . And thou, Bethlehem, house of Ephratha, art few in number to be reckoned among the thousands of Juda; yet out of thee shall one come forth to me, to be a ruler of Israel; and his goings forth were from the beginning, even from eternity. Therefore shall he appoint them to wait till the time of her that travails: she shall bring forth,

and then the remnant of their brethren shall return to the children of Israel. And the Lord shall stand, and see, and feed his flock with power, and they shall dwell in the glory of the name of the Lord their God; for now shall they be magnified to the ends of the earth. And she shall have peace when Assur shall come into your land, and when he shall come up upon your country; and there shall be raised up against him seven shepherds, and eight attacks of men. And they shall tend the Assyrian with a sword, and the land of Nebrod with her trench: and he shall deliver you from the Assyrian, when he shall come upon your land, and when he shall invade your coasts.

COMMENTS

(Verse 2) In the Hebrew text this verse is the *first* verse in chapter five. In the Septuagint it appears, as in all subsequent texts as verse two of this chapter. Actually, 5:1 belongs with the last paragraph, beginning with verse nine, of chapter four.

When the bloodied-handed Herod sent to the rabbis to ask the place of Messiah's birth, he was pointed to Bethlehem. (*Matthew 2: 4-6*) It was on the strength of this passage (5:2-ff) of Micah's prophecy. No prophecy concerning His coming is more clear. No predictive Scripture is more universally agreed upon as to its meaning.

Having described the nature of the Messianic age (4:1-13) and having inserted a reminder of the punishment which must come first (5:1), Micah now focuses our attention on the birth and work of the Messiah Himself.

Bethlehem! Birthplace of David. Ancient Ephratah of the Gentiles. (*Genesis 35:16*) The entire race of men have an acute interest in what will happen there. To the Jew first but also to the Greek, there will be born in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.

As villages go, Bethlehem is no more nor less than average. Nestling on the eastern slopes of a ridge some five miles southwest of Jerusalem, this was, among other things, the traditional home of many whose trade was carpentry. Compared to many districts in Judea, the prophet calls Bethlehem little.

We might have expected the Son of God to be born in Jerusalem, or the King of Kings to be born in Rome, or some other center of power and influence. Instead, He came to a peaceful little Judean town, so insignificant in worldly eyes that Josephus doesn't bother to mention it. Nor for that matter, is it included in the catalogue of Joshua in late Hebrew manuscripts.

Jerome suggested Bethlehem was stricken from the later Hebrew texts to obscure the evidence of Jesus' Messiahship. In light of the fact that the Septuagint does include Bethlehem in the text of Joshua, Jerome may have been right.

In any event, the selection of this humble village of shepherds and carpenters as the birthplace of God's Messiah speaks volumes concerning the value of human status symbols and pride of ancestry. (*Luke 1:52*)

It is also not without significance that the sheep tended on the slopes of Bethlehem's hills were traditionally those intended for temple sacrifice. He who was born there was the lamb of God! The shadow of a cross fell across the manger bed.

So firmly fixed was Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah in the minds of the Jews that Hadrian would allow none of them to live in or near the town.

ONE . . . THAT IS TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL . . .

Perhaps no other single term in the Old Testament has been more grossly misunderstood or the subject of more theological controversy. To the post-exilic Jewish mind it conjured up dreams of one who would establish the Jewish nation as the final worldpower. Upon this dream was based most of the nationalistic pride, the religious narrowness and the racial bigotry which marked the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus.

It was this ambitious vision of world conquest and Gentile enslavement that brought about the death of Jesus (humanly speaking) for He would have no part of such an earthly kingdom. It was this same racio-nationalistic ambition that brought about the death of the first Christian martyr, and which hounded Paul across three continents.

It is this same materialistic concept of Messiah's kingdom which today preoccupies many Christians with eschatological charts and proof-texts whose time might more profitably be spent preaching the Gospel.

On the other hand, it is the failure of many to recognize the kingly office and authority of Jesus that has brought about the spiritual uncertainty of the modern church. It was a *king* who was to be born in Bethlehem, not merely a Galilean carpenter or a pale religious philosopher.

So aware was Jesus of His royal office that even He was tempted by Satan to fulfill the Jewish dream of power by setting up a worldly kingdom. This is the meaning of Jesus' temptations at the opening of His public ministry (*Luke 4:1-12*). His awareness of His kingship was so intense that His preaching is termed "the gospel of the kind-

dom." (*Mark 1:14-15*) (cp. *Luke 4:43*) It requires more than a little carnal imagination to force Jesus' Gospel of the kingdom into the rabbinical doctrine of an earthly kingdom. Regretably, since the advent of the Plymouth Brethren (1830), the teaching of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and the publication of the Scofield Reference Bible, many preachers (particularly of the "faith only" persuasion) have spent a great deal of time and energy doing just that.

The real issue here is the assurance that, just as the return of the remnant will insure the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth, so the one who shall rise out of Bethlehem shall assure the fulfillment of His promise to David. (Cf. *II Samuel 7:16*) Peter saw the fulfillment of this promise in the resurrection of Jesus. (*Acts 2:30-31, 34-36*)

He was to be "ruler in Israel." He was to rule over the house of Jacob forever. (*Luke 1:1-2*)

The Jews object that Jesus could not be Messiah because He was so far from being ruler in Israel that Israel ruled over Him . . . put Him to death. But He Himself answered this objection, and in doing so put the lie to all who would claim for Him a materialistic kingdom. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." (*John 18:36*)

It is a spiritual Israel He reigns over, the children of the promise . . . all the followers of believing Abraham. (*Galatians 3:7*)

Concerning the One to be born in Bethlehem, Micah says His "goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Literally the term means "from the days of ages."

There could scarcely be a more forceful statement of the pre-existence of Christ. It denotes His existence "in the form of God." (Cp. *Philippians 2:5-ff*) It is fitting such a term should be used in connection with a prediction of His birth. We will see the same words in *Habakkuk 1:12*.

Jesus laid claim to the truth of this designation when He claimed to have been before Abraham (*John 5:58*).

THEREFORE WILL HE GIVE THEM UP UNTIL THE TIME
THAT SHE WHO TRAVAILETH HATH BROUGHT FORTH

... v. 3

God will not fully vindicate His people and exalt them until, through suffering, Israel brings forth His Son.

"Then the remnant (residue) shall return unto the children of Israel." The covenant people, within the race and nation and without

... the genuine children of Israel in covenant with God ... all believers shall all be incorporated into the Israel over which Messiah shall rule. And He shall not be ashamed to call them brethren. (Cp. *Hebrews* 2:11)

AND HE SHALL STAND AND SHALL FEED . . . v. 4

He shall be a glorious prince, but His relationship to His people is that of shepherd. (Cp. *John* 10:11-ff) It is no coincidence that the Twenty-third Psalm is the most dearly beloved Old Testament passage among Christians.

He shall do this, not as other men, but in the strength and majesty of Jehovah. It would be said concerning Him that He taught "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The prophets prefaced their message with "thus saith the Lord," Messiah would say, "verily, verily I say unto you!"

"And they shall abide . . ." The nation of Israel was perishing. Soon the northern tribes would be disbursed so completely as to make them, in subsequent history, unidentifiable. The southern kingdom would endure longer . . . even be in a measure re-established following the captivity, but any hope of national honor related to God's covenant promise had gone up with the smoke of their sacrifices to Baal. But Messiah's flock would abide.

Jesus' own words re-affirm this, "and this is the will of Him that sent me, that of all that which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."

It is most regrettable that those who teach the Calvinistic nonsense of "eternal security" should be allowed to so pervert this doctrine of assurance as to deprive God's people of its blessing.

"... He shall be great unto the ends of the earth . . ." He *alone* is great. (Cp. *Joel* 2:21- and *Luke* 1:32) And His greatness shall be to the ends of the earth. Here is another of the myriad evidences in the Old Testament of God's universal concern for all men. The Messianic intent of God has ever been that "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."

AND THIS MAN SHALL BE OUR PEACE . . . vs. 5-6

In the original here there is no word for man. It is simply and emphatically *this one* . . . He alone . . . who is our peace. The words "our peace" are reminiscent of *Ephesians* 2:14. It is only the Messiah who can bring peace . . . who can bring an end to the warfare between God's people and those who, before He came were "separate from

Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Cf. *Ephesians* 2:11-15)

Assyria, being Israel's most powerful enemy at the time of Micah's ministry is made here to represent all the enemies of God's people. When Messiah appears, He will destroy them. (Cf. *Ezekiel*, chapter 38)

"Seven shepherds . . . eight principal men." A strange array, it would seem, to send against the Assyrians. Micah is obviously using well understood figures to convey the truth of Messiah's conquest over the enemies of God's people.

"Seven" expresses perfection. We shall raise against (or depend upon) the Messiah . . . the perfect shepherd.

"Eight" is seven plus one. The Messiah plus those "principal men" or "anointed men," such as the twelve, (Cp. *Isaiah* 32:1) "shall lay waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrance thereof . . ." The Lord's strength is more than enough.

Lange points out that the terms "palace," "seven," and "eight" connect themselves with the threatening formula employed by Amos (*Amos*, chapters 1-2) to announce the approach of the destruction which was about to break. God's grace will be greater than the sin; hence, instead of three and four sins which make the judgement necessary (*Amos* 2:4) seven and eight heroes are named who shall drive away the enemies when Messiah has come.

Just as the Roman empire, during *Pax Romana*, in which period Jesus was born, enforced peace with the Roman sword, so Messiah and those who stand with Him will enforce His peace by subduing His enemies with the sword of the Spirit. (Cp. *Hebrews* 4:12, *Ephesians* 6:17) Those who stand against the Gospel of Christ, and continue in league with idolatries and witchcrafts, as did Assyria and Babylon of old, shall be consumed by it.

In our day, when tolerance of any and all false teaching has become a sacred cow and when unbelief is regarded as a normal reaction to God, it is difficult to think in these terms. There is, however, a "hard" side to the Gospel. The sword has a cutting edge. There is destruction for those who resist it. (Cp. *1 Peter* 2:8)

THE GLORIOUS FUTURE OF THE REMNANT . . . Micah 5:7-15

RV . . . And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as dew from Jehovah, as showers upon the grass, that tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, as a lion

among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he go through, treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and there is none to deliver. Let thy hand be lifted up above thine adversaries, and let all thine enemies be cut off. And it shall come to pass in that day; saith Jehovah, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and will destroy thy chariots: and I will cut off the cities of thy land, and will throw down all thy strongholds. And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy hand; and thou shalt have no more sooth-sayers: and I will cut off thy graven images and thy pillars out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands; and I will pluck up thine Asherim out of the midst of thee; and I will destroy thy cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations which hearkened not.

LXX . . . And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many peoples, as dew falling from the Lord, and as lambs on the grass; that none may assemble nor resist among the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many nations, as a lion in the forest among cattle, and as a lion's whelp among flocks of sheep, even as when he goes through, and selects, and carries off his prey, and there is none to deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up against them that afflict thee, and all thine enemies shall be utterly destroyed. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will utterly destroy the horses out of the midst of thee, and destroy thy chariots: and I will utterly destroy the cities of thy land, and demolish all thy strong-holds: and I will utterly destroy thy sorceries out of thine hands; and there shall be no soothsayers in thee. And I will utterly destroy thy graven images, and thy statues out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt never any more worship the works of thine hands. And I will cut off the groves out of the midst of thee, and I will abolish thy cities. And I will execute vengeance on the heathen in anger and wrath, because they hearkened not.

COMMENTS

Micah writes glorious things in this passage concerning the remnant. Israel according to the flesh dwelt alone until her destruction. The nearer destruction finally came, the more she dwelt alone, turned in upon herself the less certain it was God's Messiah would save her and make the Gentiles her slaves. Not so the remnant, the true Israel; she will be in the midst of many people . . . as the salt of the earth, or as seed sown upon the ground. (Cp. *Hosea* 2:23)

The remnant shall be as dew from the Lord, covering all as dew in a summer morning. (Cp. *Psalm 110:3*) They shall be pure and clear as dew drops, as the water of life. Dependant upon the Spirit, they shall "tarry not for man, nor wait upon the sons of man." They shall be a great blessing to those people among whom they live, just as the refreshing dew from heaven is a blessing to thirsty earth.

But the remnant shall not be tread upon as is the dew. They shall be "as a lion among the flocks of sheep". . . as a lion "treadeth down and teareth in pieces and there is none to deliver."

Messiah's people shall be silent and gentle and bringers of blessings, as the dew, but they shall be as bold as lions. The forces which today threaten to destroy Christian civilization cannot stand against the power of the Gospel in the lives of committed people any more than a hyena can stand against a lion.

The strength of God's covenant people is that which derives from the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Israel of old had been instructed to not go to Egypt for horses (*Deuteronomy 17:16*) lest they depend upon chariots and cavalry rather than upon God. (*Psalm 20:7*) From Solomon on they would disregard this command (*1 Kings 10:26-28*). The new Israel has no such arms. She stands or falls upon her trust in Christ. So long as she is faithful nothing can stand against her. (Cp. *Romans 8:31-ff*)

Note those things against which His people are to prevail. *Verse 10* . . . horses and chariots are cut off and destroyed. *Verse 11* . . . Cities and strongholds will be thrown down. The temptation to trust worldly power are so to be eliminated. The church has been slow to relinquish these things, but the circumstances of our day now leave us no choice. Only the Gospel can stand against the armed atheism which threatens our existence.

Witchcrafts and soothsayers (*v. 12*) are also to be cut off. There is a revival of such evil in our day, but not in the hands of the church.

Graven images and pillars and the graven images which are the works of our hand (*v. 13*) are to be eliminated. Even the Roman church has recently "decommissioned" two hundred saints before whose idols thousands have prayed! In the New Testament church such things were an abomination.

Verse 15 must be almost unbelievable to the one today who thinks the God of the Old Testament was only a primitive fore-shadowing of the God of Love revealed in the new. Nevertheless, the prophet sees, IN THE AGE OF THE MESSIAH, God executing "vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations which hearken not."

The concept of a God Who does not bring vengeance against anyone is of very recent origin and completely foreign to the Christian God of the New Testament as well as the Old.

Chapter IX—Questions

Future Exaltation and Messianic Hope

1. Demonstrate that Micah's prophecy in Micah 4-5 has to do with the day of the Messiah, our own Messianic time.
2. What does John tell us about this end time? (*1 John 2:18-f*)
3. What is the meaning of "the mountain of Jehovah's house"?
4. Comment on "all peoples walk everyone in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever." (*Micah 4:5*)
5. Discuss "many nations." (*Micah 4:2*)
6. Discuss ". . . out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." (*Micah 4:2 cp. Luke 24:44-f*)
7. Men are at war with men because _____.
8. God must become ruler of our _____ as well as our church doctrine. (*Micah 4:4*)
9. "In that day" (*Micah 4:6-7*) refers us back to _____.
10. "That which is lame" is the image of _____.
11. Discuss "her that halted is become a remnant." (*Micah 4:7*)
12. Distinguish between "that which was lame" and "that which was driven away."
13. Discuss "I will make . . . that which was cast far off a strong nation" in *Micah 4:7* in light of *Romans 11:1*.
14. What is meant by "tower of the flock"? (*Micah 4:8*)
15. Discuss *Micah 4:11* in connection with *Micah 3:12*.
16. In Micah's own time the nation of _____ dominated the international scene.
17. _____ would wipe out the northern kingdom.
18. _____ would enslave the southern kingdom.
19. _____ would conquer the Medo-Persian empire.
20. The Maccabean revolt was against the rule of _____.
21. All these powers, and others since have used the land of _____ as a political pawn and a _____ state.
22. Discuss *Romans 11*, *Micah 4:11-13* in light of current events in the Middle East.
23. The Jews are precious to Jehovah because _____.

MICAH

24. This does not imply _____.
25. What New Testament reference is made to *Micah 5:2-ff*?
26. What is the meaning of Ephratah? (*Micah 5:2*)
27. Bethlehem nestles on the _____ slopes of a ridge some _____ miles _____ of Jerusalem.
28. Discuss the conditions of Jesus birth in contrast to what might have been expected for the birth of a king.
29. The sheep tended on the slopes of Bethlehem were traditionally intended for _____.
30. Why did the Roman emperor Harian forbid Jews to live in or near Bethlehem?
31. Perhaps no other term in the Old Testament has been more grossly misunderstood than _____.
32. Humanly speaking, it was the Jews' ambitious vision of _____ that was responsible for the death of Jesus.
33. It is the failure of many to recognize the kingly office and authority of Jesus that has brought about the _____ in the modern church.
34. Discuss the temptation of Jesus (*Luke 4:1-12*) in relation to the Jewish dream of world power in the Messianic age.
35. The real issue in *Micah 2:6* is the assurance that _____.
36. Why do the Jews object that Jesus cannot be the Messiah?
37. Discuss the pre-existence of Christ in light of *Micah 5:2*.
38. God would not, Micah promised, fully vindicate His people and exalt them until _____.
39. The Messiah is to be a glorious prince, but His relationship to His people is that of a _____.
40. What is the significance of "His greatness shall be to the ends of the earth"?
41. Discuss "and this man shall be our peace . . ."
42. Discuss "seven shepherds . . . eight principal men." (*Micah 5:5-6*)
43. What is meant by "the remnant shall be as dew in a summer morning"?
44. Messiah's people are to be as bold as _____.
45. *Micah 5:15* must be almost unbelievable to _____.
46. The prophet sees in the age of _____ God executing "vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations which hearken not."

CHAPTER X

JEHOVAH'S CONTROVERSY
WITH HIS PEOPLE

Chapters six and seven are composed of a series of lamentations, threatenings and denunciations. These are directed against all classes of people in Israel and Judah, whereas those which introduce each of the three earlier cycles (chapters 1-3) are directed against the upper classes only. The themes struck there are extended here.

We are pressed to conclude that, just as the sins of society's leaders filter down through all classes so the judgements of God upon those sins are also applied to all classes of people. This is a lesson which is much needed today among revolutionaries who are critical of those in authority. Too many times protests against "the system" are merely "the pot calling the kettle black."

FORGOTTEN ACTS OF SALVATION . . . Micah 6:1-8

RV . . . Hear ye now what Jehovah saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear, O ye mountains, Jehovah's controversy, and ye enduring foundations of the earth; for Jehovah hath a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Ballaam the son of Beor answered him; remember from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteous acts of Jehovah. Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee but, to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?

LXX . . . Hear now a word; the Lord God has said; Arise, plead with the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and ye valleys even the foundations of the earth: for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done to thee? or wherein have

I troubled thee? or wherein have I grieved thee? answer me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage, and sent before thee Moses, and Aaron, and Mariam. O my people, remember now, what counsel Balac king of Moab took against thee, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from the reeds to Galgal; that the righteousness of the Lord might be known. Wherewithal shall I reach the Lord, and lay hold of my God most high? shall I reach him by whole-burnt-offerings, by calves of a year old? Will the Lord accept thousands of rams, or ten thousands of fat goats? should I give my first-born for ungodliness, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Has it not been told thee, O man, what is good? or what does the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and love mercy, and be ready to walk with the Lord thy God?

COMMENTS

The first controversy of Jehovah against His people is occasioned by their having forgotten His saving activities on their behalf in times past. Centuries later, Stephen would level the same charge against them. To him this was the story of their national life. (Cf. *Acts, chapter 7*) *Arise . . . contend . . . (plead your case) before the mountains . . . vs. 1-2*

The judgments pronounced against both the northern and southern kingdoms in the three cycles which compose chapters 1-3 of Micah are harsh. The denunciation of the nation, the casting off of the race *per se* which is evidenced in the promised blessings to the remnant (chapters 4-5) are sure to be decried as unfair by those who are to be cast off. To prove His fairness in these things, God calls the prophet to set the sins of the people before them.

Because the fulfillment of the covenant will issue in God's blessing all the nations of the earth, this controversy is to be before the whole of creation. Thus the prophet comes full circle, connecting this final section of his prophecy to the first (see comment on 1:2-ff). As the justice of God's judgments against the leaders of the nation was established before all people and nations in the opening cycle, so the fairness of His complaints against the people will now be openly seen of all. The equity of God's cause will be pleaded and sinners themselves forced to confess that God's ways and judgments are fair.

O MY PEOPLE WHAT HAVE I DONE . . . vs. 3-5

In these verses the complaint of God is made. In 6:9-7:6, the case will be judged.

(Verse 3) The cry of verses 3-5 is not the stern judicial pronouncement of chapters 1-3 against broken law. Here we have rather the plea of a broken heart. "What have I done unto thee?" "Wherein have I wearied thee?" They have sinned against His love as well as His law.

(Verse 4) "I brought thee up . . ." The nation of Israel did not exist until the mercies of God brought an enslaved race out of a foreign land because of the covenant of blessing made with their father! (Cp. *Exodus* 2:24) It was the law, given them through Moses and the priesthood instituted in Aaron that turned the race into a nation . . . the very law whose flaunting now occasioned the heart-break of their God at the necessity of judging His people.

O MY PEOPLE, REMEMBER NOW WHAT BALAK KING OF
MOAB DEvised AND WHAT BALAAM THE SON OF
BEOR ANSWERED HIM . . . v. 5(a)

Micah's allusion here is to *Numbers, chapters* 22-24. The prophet places himself in the position of Balaam and asks those to whom he speaks to see the parallel.

Israel, drawing near the promised land had encamped on the plains of Moab opposite Jericho on the east bank of the Jordan. Balak, king of Moab, seeing what Israel had done to the Amorites, was terrified and sent to Pethor near the Euphrates to the prophet Balaam with the request that he come and curse Israel.

When Balaam went before God for direction, he was directed not to return with Balak's messengers, the elders of Moab.

Balak, assuming that Balaam could be bribed, sent ambassadors of higher rank with greater gifts. Again Balaam went to God in prayer and this time was instructed to go with the princes of Moab but to say only what God gave him to say.

Next morning Balaam went with the princes toward Moab. And God was angry, apparently because Balaam had been tempted enough by the bribe to question His first instruction.

As Balaam rode toward Moab, an angel appeared to his ass, but not to him. The animal, seeing the angel block her way, turned aside into a field, whereupon Balaam beat her.

Again the ass saw the angel and, instead of obeying Balaam, crushed his foot against a wall, and Balaam beat her a second time.

A third time the animal saw God's angel blocking the way, and this time she balked, for which Balaam struck her with his rod.

Then the Lord opened the ass's mouth and she asked her master

what she had done to be beaten. When Balaam answered it was because she had provoked and ridiculed him and wished for a sword to kill her, the animal reminded him that she had served him well all her life and asked if this had ever happened before.

Then Balaam's eyes were allowed to see the angel standing in the way with drawn sword. He fell on his face before the angel and was asked why he had beaten his ass when the angel had come to stand against him.

The prophet then confessed he had sinned in attempting to force his way past the angel of the Lord.

Understanding that he had done wrong in asking again and again for permission to curse Israel, Balaam asked for instructions and was told to go on to Moab but to say only what the Lord would instruct him to say.

Seeing Balaam coming, Balak rushed to meet the prophet assuming he was going to curse Israel.

Balaam ignored the king's rebuke for not having come at once and warned him he would say only what the Lord gave him to say.

Balak took Balaam to Kireath-huzoth, overlooking the outskirts of Israel's encampment. There the Moabite offered sacrifices and sent portions of the sacrifice to Balaam.

Next day Balak took Balaam to the high places of Bamoth-Baal from which he could see the Israelites.

The prophet required the king to again build altars and sacrifice. When this was done, he instructed Balak to wait by the sacrifices while he inquired of God.

God met Balaam and gave him a message, *"How can I curse those God has not cursed. How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced?"*

Hearing this, Balak took Balaam to yet another high place, to the top of Mount Pisgah, hoping he would be permitted to curse Israel from this vantage point. Again Balaam waited on the message of God.

This time the message was, *"God is not a man that He should tell or act a lie nor feel compunction for what He has promised, I have received His command to bless Israel."*

Then follows Balaam's discourse to Balak concerning God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. (Numbers 23:22-26)

Seeing Balaam would not curse Israel, Balak requests that he neither curse nor bless her, to which Balaam answered, *"All the Lord speaks I must do."*

Again Balak took Balaam to another high place in a last effort to

have his way against Israel. But Balaam no longer looked for signs of God's permission to curse His people. Instead he looked the other way.

Then God's Spirit came upon Balaam and the prophet blessed Israel in Balak's presence. Upon this, the king of Moab became angry. In answering Balak's anger, Balaam said, "*I cannot go beyond the command of the Lord to do either good or bad of my own will, but what the Lord says, that I will speak.*" (Numbers 24:13, Emphasized Bible)

It is Balaam's progressive willingness and final determination to speak only what the Lord gave him to say that Micah here appropriates to himself. He too has said what his listeners do not want to hear. His reply is, "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him . . ."

Micah is also determined to say, good or bad, only what the Lord gives him to say.

" . . . REMEMBER FROM SHITTIM TO GILGAL, THAT YE MAY KNOW THE RIGHTEOUS ACT OF JEHOVAH . . ." v. 5(b)

After God had steadfastly forbidden Balaam from cursing Israel and had actually brought this alien prophet to bless Jehovah's people, the people themselves turned to idols! (Numbers 25:1-ff)

Having settled down in Shittim the people "began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab . . . (and) so Israel joined himself to Baal of Peor." (Numbers 25:1-3, Emphasized Bible)

As a result, God's anger had been kindled against Israel so that He had instructed Moses to hang their leaders and 24,000 Israelites were smitten.

Micah again asks that those to whom he speaks remember God's past dealing with Israel. He has formerly punished her for unfaithfulness. If they will recall this truth, they will see the validity of Micah's warning of the same wrath. Again Micah's message is timely in our day.

WHEREWITH SHALL I COME BEFORE JEHOVAH . . . v. 6-7

Micah's question is simply whether he, as Balak, shall continually, with animal sacrifices, attempt to alter the will of God. Having placed himself in the way of Balaam's determination to do God's will, whether good or bad, he now implies that his hearers are in the same position as Balak, king of Moab!

... SHALL I GIVE MY FIRST-BORN FOR MY TRANSGRESSION
... v. 7(b)

Micah pursues the issue further, insinuating they would have him turn to Baal in their behalf. It was one of the abominable practices of Baal worship that the first born son of the worshipper be tossed into the fiery bowels of the idol to atone for the parent's sin . . . would they have him resort to this despicable practice to atone for having pronounced the judgment of God against them? The sarcasm is scathing!

HE HATH SHOWED THEE, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD; AND
WHAT DOETH JEHOVAH REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO DO JUST-
LY, AND TO LOVE KINDNESS, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH
THY GOD . . . v. 8

Here is one of the classic questions of Scripture. It ranks with that of the Lord, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own life?" (*Matthew 26:16*) And the Hebrew writer's "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?" (*Hebrews 2:1-4*)

For such questions there is no answer.

God's insistence upon faithfulness is not unreasonable, particularly when His past blessings and present promises are remembered. Nor is His punishment for unfaithfulness unreasonable when one remembers that it is His purpose through such faithfulness to benefit not only the faithful but all man-kind.

"*What doth Jehovah require of thee?*" The Law set down innumerable requirements. From the direct catalogue of eternal mortality in the decalogue to the detailed requirements of Sabbaths and sacrifices, the sum and substance of such requirements is that God's worshippers shall "do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God." Failure to keep the commandments and precepts expressed in outward forms inevitably leads to failure to do these simple yet profound elementals: do justly, love kindness, walk humbly.

The Septuagint text contains three terms whose meanings shed much light on this verse: literally "the to be doing the justice;" "love mercy;" and "to be ready, in reference to the go (as on a journey) with your Lord, God."

What is described here is the "life style" required by God. To be doing justice is to have just actions as the habit or style of one's life.

But what is justice? It has to do with the keeping of God's law . . . His commandments and ordinance. Far from removing the necessity for keeping God's commandments, this passage states in simple, yet forceful, terms the necessity to do so.

But to obey the commandments formally—to go through the motions of conformity to God's law without any corresponding effect on one's life makes such obedience a hollow mockery and an affront to God. The second requirement is to love mercy.

Again the Greek of the Septuagint is clear. (And since the Septuagint is the Bible quoted by Jesus and His apostles, it behooves us to understand.) The phrase, "rendered mercy," means—literally, to have pity, to have compassion.

This latter is mentioned as an attribute of God. (*Exodus 33:19* cp. *Romans 9:15*) To have compassion is to place ones' self in the sufferer's situation . . . to suffer with him. This God does.

Micah is not claiming this is required of God's people. Obviously, it is an ideal to be sought, but what is *required* is pity, a feeling sorry for, objectively.

We are to love such mercy! Here is one of those rare pre-Christian uses of the word love—the love of the will, not the emotions. The love that is deliberate self-giving. God requires deliberate giving of self to pity, the objective concern for others. Without this all formal religious obedience is hollow.

Jesus said as much, "These (the keeping of specific commandments) ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other (justice, mercy, trust) undone." (*Matthew 23:23*)

The church member today who is meticulously correct in "doctrinal matters" and unconcerned for mercy where there is human suffering has missed the mark as far as those to whom Micah promised God's wrath missed it.

The third requirement of God is that His people live constantly in an attitude of readiness to go with God as Lord. The phrase "to walk", means literally, proceed or go one's way.

God requires His people to be alert to His authority. As we go our way, we are to do so in the awareness that God is our Lord. This attitude is imperative to the accomplishment of the first two requirements listed by Micah.

The Psalmist tells us that "God trieth the minds and hearts." (*Psalm* 7:9) *Proverbs* 20:27 describes the lamp of Jehovah "searching all His innermost parts." In *Psalm* 139:23 the Psalmist prays, "search me, O God, and know my heart." In *I Chronicles* 28:9 David informs Solomon, ". . . Jehovah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts."

God does not require by simply issuing commands and edicts. The heart of God's ordinances is His intimate knowledge of the hearts and minds of men. It is for this reason that outward form must always express inner reality, and both must proceed from a constant alertness to the Lordship of Him with Whom we have to do.

GOD'S JUSTICE DEMANDS THE WICKED BE PUNISHED . . .

Micah 6:9-16

RV . . . The voice of Jehovah crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom will see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. Are there yet treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and a scant measure that is abominable? Shall I be pure with wicked balances, and with a bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies; and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore I also have smitten thee with a grievous wound; I have made thee desolate because of thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy humiliation shall be in the midst of thee: and thou shalt put away, but shalt not save; and that which thou savest will I give up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but shalt not anoint thee with oil; and the vintage, but shalt not drink the wine. For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I may make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof a hissing; and ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

LXX . . . The Lord's voice shall be proclaimed in the city, and he shall save those that fear his name: hear, O tribe; and who shall order the city? Is there not fire, and the house of the wicked heaping up wicked treasures, and that with the pride of unrighteousness? Shall the wicked be justified by the balance, or deceitful weights in the bag, whereby they have accumulated their ungodly wealth, and they that dwell in the city have uttered falsehoods, and their tongue has been exalted in their mouth? Therefore will I begin to smite thee; I will

destroy thee in thy sins. Thou shalt eat, and shalt not be satisfied; and there shall be darkness upon thee; and he shall depart from thee, and thou shalt not escape; and all that shall escape shall be delivered over to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt press the olive, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with oil; and shalt make wine, but ye shall drink no wine: and the ordinances of my people shall be utterly abolished. For thou hast kept the statutes of Zambri, and done all the works of the house of Achaab; and ye have walked in their ways, that I might deliver thee to utter destruction, and those that inhabit the city to hissing: and ye shall bear the reproach of nations.

COMMENTS

Verses 9-12 . . .

The prophet, speaking with the voice of the Lord, calls upon the city, Jerusalem, to see the reason why He must punish her wickedness.

"WISDOM SHALL SEE THY NAME . . ." v. 9

The Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac texts all have "fear" rather than "see." *Proverbs 9:10* tells us "the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom."

The course of wisdom is to seriously heed God's warnings. He is God and is therefore perfectly capable of doing what He says He will do.

"HEAR THE ROD . . ." v. 9(b)

The warning has been given. Micah entreats the people to hear the rod before it falls, before they feel it. They are also entreated to hear Him Who has appointed this punishment for His children.

God's messengers are ever required to explain God's providences and to quicken and direct men to learn the lessons taught by them.

" . . . SHALL I BE PURE?" vs. 10-12

Those who had wealth and power abused it. Those who did not have such advantages found other means of defrauding those with whom they dealt. If they could not use force and violence they used fraud and deceit. False weights and measures and deliberate lies were common devices for making a "good bargain." They even spoke falsely concerning God. (Cp. *Ezekiel 8:12*)

How can God remain pure and yet withhold righteous judgment

from such people? Can He be pure and "go along" with such ethics? This is ever the dilemma of God's justice and mercy.

It is very popular today to believe a God of mercy is not capable of stern judgment. There have been other times (eg. the Puritan era) when it seems to have been believed that a just God could not possibly be merciful.

To the informed Christian, or for that matter the informed Jew, the answer has always been God's Messiah. This is the message of *Romans* 3:21-26. It is also the message of Micah as he alternately warns of judgements and promises Messiah's coming.

Verses 13-16 . . .

THEREFORE I ALSO HAVE SMITTEN THEE . . . v. 13

The persistent fact of sin is a prime factor in Micah's message. He did not see it as mere maladjustment or even failure to attain to some objective religious standard. Sin is against the person of God. It is unfaithfulness to His covenant, it is disloyalty to His purpose, it is disobedience to His authority. Exploitation of the poor, bribery, drunkenness, harlotry, idolatry are evil because they are an affront to a moral, ethical God!

The God Who cannot give countenance to sin will not save from destruction those who persist in it.

He will not abandon His mercy. The remnant will be redeemed and received by the Messiah.

But aside from the Messiah, and until He comes, God's rebellious people can expect to reap the consequences of their own evil ways.

. . . EAT . . . NOT BE SATISFIED

As they have swallowed down the riches of ill-gotten gain, so they shall vomit them up again. (Cp. *Job* 20:15) Their unethical affluence will not bring them satisfaction.

Such affluence never does. We are experiencing unparalleled social dissatisfaction in the midst of plenty in our time, largely because those who have have been unconcerned for those who have not . . . and because much of our affluence has been gotten at the expense of the poor.

THY HUMILIATION SHALL BE IN THE MIDST OF THEE . . .

v. 14(b)

Their country will not harbor and protect them. God can cast a nation down by what is in the midst of them. They shall not be

able to preserve what they have by force nor recover what they will lose. Their tainted wealth shall be removed by a foreign sword.

THOU SHALT SOW . . . BUT SHALL NOT DRINK WINE . . .

v. 15

Either their crops will be blasted and withered until there is nothing to reap, or an enemy shall come and reap what they have sown. When they are carried away captive they will not return to harvest what they have tilled.

THE STATUTES OF OMRI ARE KEPT . . . THE WORKS OF
AHAB . . . v. 16(a)

Here Micah alludes to the idolatrous reign of Omri (*1 Kings 16:21-f*) as symbolic of the current unfaithfulness of the people. Omri had become king in the north, in the dynastic line of Jeroboam. He consolidated his power by defeating Tibni.

Omri reigned six years in Tirzah, after which he bought and fortified the hill of Samaria as his capital city.

It is said he did more evil than all his predecessors, beginning with Baal worship, "that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah."

After a six year reign in Samaria, Omri died and was succeeded by his son, Ahab. Micah here refers to the "works of the house of Ahab." What Bible student could be unfamiliar with "the works of Ahab?" It was he who married the infamous Jezebel whose missionary zeal for her god, Baal, puts the Israelites to shame in their apathetic neglect of Jehovah.

Micah here accuses Jerusalem of following the same idolatrous course as Omri and Ahab. In so doing, he presents us with another evidence that the chief concern of the prophet is to call the people away from idolatry and back to the covenant. There was all sorts of evil rampant in both kingdoms, but the root of it all—the fundamental reason for God's wrath against them—was their going off after Baal and in so doing breaking their covenant with Jehovah.

The Law which made Israel a nation was primarily designed to preserve the covenant and to move it forward toward the time when God, in the fullness of time, would bless all the nations of the earth in Abraham's seed. The gross violations of the law which brought about the preaching of the pre-exilic prophets were simply symptoms of the much deeper and more significant unfaithfulness to the covenant.

DESOLATION . . . HISSING . . . REPROACH

The desolation mentioned here is described vividly in *Micah 3:12*.

The proud city of Jerusalem will lay in ruins for the seventy years of Babylonian captivity, and never again regain the splendor of her former glory.

The term "hissing" is reminiscent of *Lamentations* 2:15-f. There the prophet depicts the sad wonder of those who pass by Jerusalem in her desolation. They clap their hands and suck their breath through closed teeth in expression of their amazement of the sad state of the city once called "the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth."

Because of their haughty claim to be God's only people, while failing in their covenant relationship to Him, the Jews will bear the reproach which comes from such a claim. Because of their disgraceful use of the Law of Jehovah, that which should have been a great honor, *ie.* their "chosen people" status, shall become the occasion of their being despised by the peoples of the earth.

Here, it would seem, is at least a partial key to the historic phenomena mistakenly called "anti-semitism."

MICAH LONGS FOR GODLINESS . . . Micah 7:1-6

RV . . . Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat; my soul desireth the first-ripe fig. The godly man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently; the prince asketh, and the judge is ready for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together. The best of them is as a brier; the most upright is worse than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen, even thy visitation, is come; now shall be their perplexity. Trust ye not in a neighbor; put ye not confidence in a friend; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoreth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

LXX . . . Alas for me! for I am become as one gathering straw in harvest, and as one gathering grape-gleanings in the vintage, when there is no cluster for me to eat the first-ripe fruit: alas my soul! For the godly is perished from the earth; and there is none among men that orders his way aright: they all quarrel even to blood: they grievously afflict every one his neighbour: they prepare their hands for mischief, the prince asks a reward, and the judge speaks flattering words; it is the desire of their soul: therefore I will take away their goods as a

visitation. Woe, woe, thy times of vengeance are come; now shall be their lamentations. Trust not in friends, and confide not in guides; beware of thy wife, so as not to commit anything to her. For the son dishonours his father, the daughter will rise up against her mother, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: those in his house shall be all a man's enemies.

COMMENTS

WOE IS ME . . . THE GODLY MAN IS PERISHED . . . v. 1-2(a)

Chapter seven begins with a cry of despair from the lips of the prophet. His soul is hungry for the fellowship of godly men. In this he is disappointed as a man physically hungry who comes first to the vineyard and then the orchard and finds nothing to relieve his hunger.

Micah sees beyond the confines of the little kingdoms of Israel and Judah. If there are no godly men among the covenant people, then godliness has perished from the earth! Turning to idolatry, as the world worshipped idolatry, the chosen people had brought about a moral situation similar to that which would prevail if there were no God at all!

The statement, "there is none upright . . ." reminds us of David's affirmation concerning those fools who say there is no God. In *Psalms* 14:1, David wrote "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works . . ." This is repeated in *Psalms* 53:1 with the additional statement "*there is none that doeth good.*" The fifth and one hundred fortieth *Psalms* echo this thought and expand it.

In the case of the Psalmist it was the professed atheist who is described in vivid terms as grossly immoral. Micah says that because of the idolatry of the children of Israel the same is now true of the whole world!

In *Romans* 3:9-18, Paul establishes this ungodliness as the universal state of man outside of Christ. There the apostle uses a catena, or chain of references, to prove that the Jews are in no better fix than Gentiles, for all are under sin.

Micah and Paul seem ready to say as Elijah in his time, "I, even I only, am left." (*I Kings* 19:10) *Their hands are upon that which is evil . . . v. 2(b)—4(a)*

There are, says Micah, not only none who do good, but multitudes that do positive hurt. "They all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every

man his brother . . . " They have a thousand cursed arts of ensnaring men to their ruin.

The magistrates, office patrons and protectors of right are the practicers and promoters of wrong. The prince and judge may be hired for bribes to exert all their power to carry out wicked purposes. The great man who has wealth and the power to do good but who desires to do evil does not utter the evil desire of his soul lest his conspiring with the prince and judge become evident.

"The best of them is a brier; the most upright is worse than a thorn hedge . . ." They prick and injure all with whom they come in contact. (Cp. *II Samuel* 23:6-7, *Isaiah* 55:13, *Ezekiel* 2:6)

THE DAY OF THE WATCHMAN . . . v. 4(b)

This is the day of the watchman. Just as a policeman comes upon a criminal to arrest him, so the true prophet, God's watchman, comes upon the false prophet and his corrupt followers. The party is over, the piper must be paid. God's wrath is at hand.

TRUST YE NOT . . . vs. 5-6

Here follows a list of those whom honest men (if indeed there were any) could not trust. The list includes "a neighbor," "a friend," "her that lieth in thy bosom," *ie.* one's own wife, "the son," "the daughter," "the daughter-in-law." Such a society is indeed corrupt . . . ready for the wrath of God.

Jesus quotes verse 6(b) in connection with those He expected to persecute the new covenant people. (*Matthew* 10:35-36 cp. *Luke* 12:53)

THE PROPHET LOOKS TO GOD . . . Micah 7:7-13

RV . . . But as for me, I will look unto Jehovah; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, Jehovah will be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of Jehovah, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgement for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then mine enemy shall see it and shame shall cover her who said unto me, Where is Jehovah thy God? Mine eyes shall see my desire upon her; now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. A day for building thy walls! in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day shall they come unto thee from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt even to the River, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. Yet shall

the land be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

LXX . . . But I will look to the Lord; I will wait upon God my Saviour: my God will hearken to me. Rejoice not against me, mine enemy; for I have fallen yet shall arise; for though I should sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he make good my cause: he also shall maintain my right, and shall bring me out to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. And she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shall clothe herself with shame, who says Where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall look upon her: now shall she be for trampling as mire in the ways. It is the day of making of brick; that day shall be thine utter destruction, and that day shall utterly abolish thine ordinances. And thy cities shall be levelled, and parted among the Assyrians; and thy strong cities shall be parted from Tyre to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. And the land shall be utterly desolate together with them that inhabit it, because of the fruit of their doings.

COMMENTS

(Verse 7) From the stench of social injustice and personal immorality brought on by false worship, Micah lifts his eyes to God. Like Joshua, when he was confronted with the people's attraction to false gods, (*Joshua 24:14-15*) so the prophet in the face of popular apostasy takes his stand on the side of the Lord.

Not only will he look to the Lord, he will wait "*for the God of my salvation.*"

Here is a timely lesson for anyone who would serve God. Whether it be Elijah, despairing in loneliness because of the unfaithfulness of God's people, or Joshua standing like an oak, alone if necessary but steadfast, or Micah declaring his trust to a faithless generation, he who would serve God faithfully must be able to differentiate between God Who is faithful and His people who too often are not. Micah is unshaken in his conviction that "my God will hear me!"

REJOICE NOT AGAINST ME . . . vs. 8-10

Truth is ever in the minority. Error is ever on the throne . . . and with this unnatural imbalance the wicked always boast and scoff and rejoice in the discomfort of God's people. But their joy is as hollow as it is destined to be short-lived.

Though enemies triumph and insult, they shall be silenced and put to shame.

Here is another eternal truth, spoken first in the Old Testament and re-affirmed in the New. *Romans 8:31-39* asks and answers the same question. "*If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!*"

The enemies of God's faithful may rejoice for a season in God's chastening of His people, but their joy is to be brief. Micah sees his own plight, as does every true worshipper see such circumstances as a result of sin. Micah confesses himself a sinner (v. 9) and stands ready to bear the indignation of Jehovah. This is a common attitude among spiritual giants. David, in his great guilt, felt abandoned by God, yet he knew God had heard and would deliver him. (*Psalms 22 compare vs. 1 and 24.*)

Paul cried out in recognition of his own sin, "wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death" and immediately rejoiced in the answer "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (*Romans 7:24-8:1*)

A DAY FOR BUILDING THY WALLS . . . vs. 11-13

Having stated his trust in God, accepted his discomfiture as the just result of his own sin, and rejoiced in the sure hope of deliverance, Micah now transfers this entire process to the people. Beyond the anticipated exile the prophet sees the decree for deliverance and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. (Cp. *Amos 9:11* and *Zechariah 12:6*)

. . . FROM ASSYRIA . . . EGYPT . . . TO THE RIVER

. . . SEA TO SEA . . . v. 12

In the day of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, following the fall of Babylon, the Jews now to be scattered shall return from throughout the surrounding nations.

THE LAND . . . DESOLATE . . . v. 13

The returning exiles will not find, as did their forefathers, "a land flowing with milk and honey." Rather the land will be desolate, the temple, the walls of the cities in ruins. They must recognize this as "the fruit of their doings." The history of the rebuilding of their lands by the returned remnant is one of the most thrilling chapters in the history of this stiff-necked people. (It is recommended that the reader

interrupt the study of Micah here long enough to re-read Ezra and Nehemiah.)

THE PROPHET PRAYS FOR HIS PEOPLE . . . Micah 7:14-17

RV . . . Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thy heritage, which dwell solitarily, in the forest in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto them marvellous things. The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall lay their hand upon their mouth; their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent; like crawling things of the earth they shall come trembling out of their close places; they shall come with fear unto Jehovah our God, and shall be afraid because of thee. LXX . . . Tend thy people with thy rod, the sheep of thine inheritance, those that inhabit by themselves the thicket in the midst of Carmel: they shall feed in the land of Basan, and in the land of Galaad, as in the days of old. And according to the days of thy departure out of Egypt shall ye see marvellous things. The nations shall see and be ashamed; and at all their might they shall lay their hands upon their mouth; their ears shall be deafened. They shall lick the dust as serpents crawling on the earth, they shall be confounded in their holes; they shall be amazed at the Lord our God, and will be afraid of thee.

COMMENTS

If one requires proof of Micah's highest motives in writing the scathing denunciations against his people which make up the greater part of this book, his prayer for the returning remnant certainly provides it amply.

CARMEL . . . BASHAN . . . GILEAD . . . THE DAYS OF THEIR COMING FORTH OUT OF EGYPT . . . vs. 14-15

When Joshua and Caleb returned to Moses after having spied out the promised land, they reported it was a land flowing with milk and honey. Micah's prayer is it shall be that way again when the people return.

One can stand today among the lush forests in the plain of Megiddo at the foot of Mount Carmel and marvel at the beauty of the land as it has recently been reclaimed by today's returnees from exile. They found the region a miserable swamp and turned it into a garden. So does the prophet pray that God's people after Babylon shall reclaim their land.

Bashan was famous for its cattle, Gilead for its healing balm. Micah asks God on behalf of the remnant that it may be so again.

THE NATIONS SHALL SEE AND BE ASHAMED . . . v. 16-17

This prediction concerning the neighbors of Israel is easily seen demonstrated both in ancient and modern times. Just as those who returned from Babylon set about to rebuild, so the modern Israeli loves his land. Hillsides once eroded through neglect and poor husbandry are covered with verdant vegetation. What was formerly barren wilderness now is home for the unique farming communes of Israel.

The nations who mistreated this land, both in ancient and modern times have ample reason to be ashamed. (v. 16)

PRAYER OF PROPHETIC PRAISE . . . Micah 7:18-20

RV . . . Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in lovingkindness. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the lovingkindness to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

LXX . . . Who is a God like thee, cancelling iniquities, and passing over the sins of the remnant of his inheritance? and he has not kept his anger for a testimony, for he delights in mercy. He will return and have mercy upon us; he will sink our iniquities, and they shall be cast into the depths of the sea, even all our sins. He shall give blessings truly to Jacob, and mercy to Abraham, as thou swarest to our fathers, according to the former days.

COMMENTS

Micah is overwhelmed by the knowledge that, though He must now punish His people for their utter faithlessness, He will not only deliver a remnant, but will bless their lands and humiliate their enemies.

Jehovah is praised for His great glory, His readiness to forgive and His faithfulness to the ancient promises of the covenant.

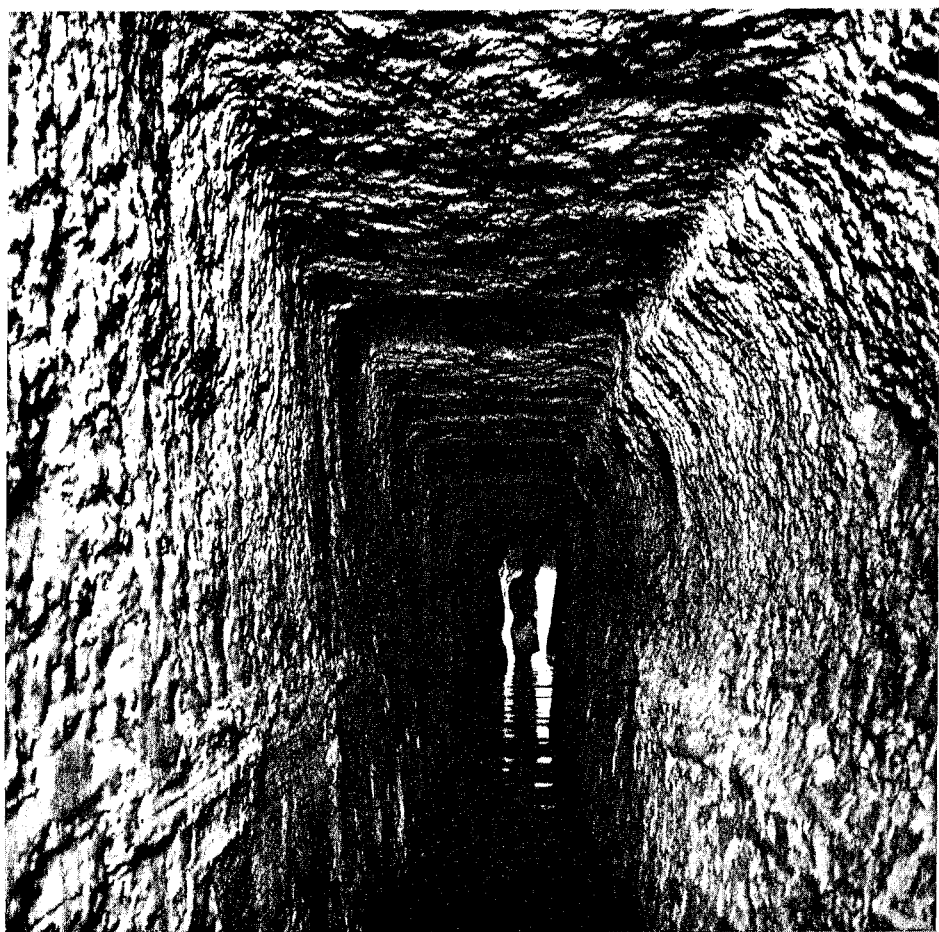
Although He is just and does punish, He "delighteth in lovingkindness." No one who knows Micah's God can possibly see any contrast between Him and the God of Love revealed in the New Testament.

Chapter X—Questions

Jehovah's Controversy With His People

1. Micah chapters six and seven are composed of a series of _____.
2. Just as the sins of society's leaders filter down through all classes so _____ are applied to all people.
3. Jehovah's first controversy with His people is occasioned by their having forgotten _____.
4. God's controversy with His people is before all creation because _____.
5. How does Micah connect the final section of his book to the first section?
6. In *Micah* 6:3-5 the _____ is made.
In 6:9—7:6, the case will be _____.
7. The cry of *Micah* 6:3-5 is the plea of a _____.
8. Explain Micah's reference to Balaam. (*Micah* 6:5)
9. Why "remember from Shittim to Gilgal"? (*Micah* 6:5(b))
10. Show how *Micah* 6:1-5 is timely in our day.
11. What is alluded to by "shall I give my first-born for my transgression"? (*Micah* 6:7(b))
12. Discuss *Micah* 6:8 in connection with *Matthew* 26:16 and *Hebrews* 2:1-4.
13. God's insistence upon faithfulness is not unreasonable when we remember _____ His _____ and _____.
14. How does Micah answer the question, "what doth Jehovah require of thee?" (*Micah* 6:8)
15. The _____ is the Bible quoted by Jesus and the apostles.
16. *Micah* 6:8 does not claim that _____ an attribute of God's character is required of God's people.
17. Rather than compassion, Micah insists that we are required to _____.
18. Discuss *Micah* 6:8 in connection with *Matthew* 23:23.
19. Why must the outward forms of obedience always be expressive of inner reality?
20. Compare *Micah* 6:9 and *Proverbs* 9:10.
21. What is the significance of "shall I be pure?" *Micah* 6:10-12
22. The persistent fact of _____ is a prime factor in Micah's message.
23. Compare *Micah* 6:14 and *Job* 20:15.
24. What is meant by *Micah* 6:15?

25. What are "the statutes of Omri"? *Micah* 6:15(a)
26. Compare *Micah* 6:16(b) and *Micah* 3:12.
27. Discuss the historic phenomena known as "anti-semitism" in light of *Micah* 6:16.
28. Compare *Micah* 7:1-2(a) and *Psalms* 14:1-2.
29. Discuss *Micah* 7:1-2 in light of *Romans* 3:9-18.
30. *Micah* 7:2(b)—4(a) refers to _____.
31. Compare *Micah* 7:2(b)—4(a) with *II Samuel* 23:6-7, *Isaiah* 55:13, and *Ezekiel* 2:6.
32. Who are listed as those whom honest men cannot trust? (*Micah* 7:5-6)
33. Discuss *Micah* 7:5-6 in connection with *Matthew* 10:35-36 and *Luke* 12:53.
34. Discuss *Micah* 7:7 in connection with *Joshua* 24:14-15.
35. Despite the wickedness of his time, Micah is unshaken in the conviction that _____.
36. Discuss *Micah* 7:8-10 in light of *Romans* 8:31-39.
37. Compare *Micah* 7:9 to *Psalms* 22:1-24 and *Romans* 7:24-8:1.
38. What is meant by "a day for rebuilding thy walls"? (*Micah* 7:11-13)
39. If one requires proof of Micah's highest motives in writing his prophecies, his prayer for _____ provides it amply.
40. The nations shall see *what* and be ashamed?



"This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works . . . and . . . he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city . . ."
(II Chronicles 32:30; II Kings 20:20).

View of the tunnel, accidentally discovered in 1880, which King Hezekiah built in 701 B. C. in anticipation of a long siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, King of Assyria. The tunnel runs for about 1700 feet through the rock on which the city is built and carries the water of the Gihon spring into the pool of Siloam, inside the old city walls.

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
By Werner Keller - Wm. Morrow Co.

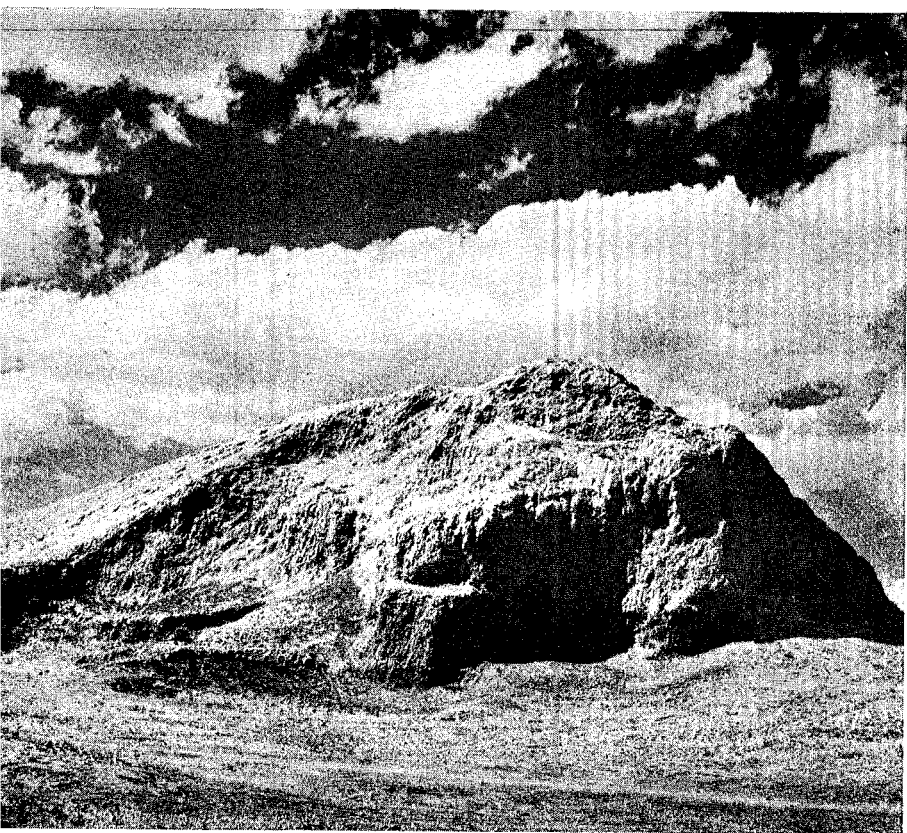


"The boring through is completed."

So begins the inscription, written in ancient Hebrew characters, which was found in the famous tunnel which King Hezekiah built.

"And this was the story of the boring through. While the workmen were hacking their way from opposite ends, and while there were still three cubits to be bored through, they heard voices calling from each side, for there was a crevice in the rock. And on the day when the boring was completed the stone-cutters hacked their way towards each other until they met. Then the water flowed from the spring to the pool twelve hundred cubits, and the height of the rock above the heads of the stone-cutters was a hundred cubits."

PART III
NAHUM



"And (he) will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her . . . desolation shall be in the thresholds . . ." (Zephaniah 2:13-14).

On the east bank of the Tigris massive mounds of ruins are now the sole indication of what was once the great capital city of the Assyrians. Here stood the splendid palaces of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon and the imposing library of Ashurbanipal, surrounded by spacious parklands and game preserves, with stables for the royal livery, with warehouses and government buildings. This mighty city of Nineveh met the fate that Zephaniah and Nahum had predicted when it was destroyed by the Chaldeans and the Medes in 612 B. C.

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
By Werner Keller - Wm. Morrow Co.



"An oracle concerning Nineveh . . . The shatterer has come up against you . . . The shield of his mighty men is red, his soldiers are clothed in scarlet. The chariots flash like flame when mustered in array . . ."

(Nahum 1:1; 2:1-3-R.S.V.).

Red was the favourite colour of the Medes and Chaldeans, whose combined forces attacked Nineveh, conquered it and destroyed it. The head of a Mede wearing a round cap (left) and of a Chaldean wearing a headband. "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful" (Habakkuk 1:6-7).

OUTLINE OF NAHUM

I. The coming of the Lord in judgement . . . 1:2—1:15

II. Details of Niniveh's downfall . . . 2:1—3:17

Epitaph of Niniveh . . . 3:18-19

CHAPTER XI

PREFACE

NAHUM, THE PROPHET

Little is known about the prophet, Nahum. His name means *comforter*. He was contemporary with Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Jeremiah. The opening verse of the book which bears his name identifies him as a native of Elkoshite. Unfortunately, modern archeology has thus far been unable to locate Elkoshite. However, strong Jewish tradition places it at Alkosh about thirty miles north of Mosul.

The Galilean city of Capernaum, center of activity during the Roman period and headquarters of Jesus' ministry, has been suggested as Nahum's home. Capernaum means, literally, "village of Nahum." However, there is no proof it is so-called for the prophet Nahum rather than some other with the same name.

The date of Nahum's prophecy is not too difficult to estimate. The capture of Niniveh by Babylon, which Nahum vividly predicts, took place c. 612 B.C. In *Nahum* 3:8-10 is the description of the fall of Karnak, or Thebes, (No-Amon) as a *fiat accompli*. Karnak fell in 633 B.C. Nahum's prophecy, then, must have been written between 633 and 612 B.C.

To be a bit more exact, Nahum probably prophesied between the beginning of Josiah's reform, c. 621, and the fall of Nineveh, c. 612. An educated guess places the date at about 614 B.C. Some have dated this work as early as 650 B.C., but this seems unlikely in view of recent information concerning the date of Ashurbanipal's capture of Karnak, as well as the even more recent discovery of a portion of the annals of Nabopolassar, King of Persia at the time Nineveh fell.

According to these annals, Nabopolassar, formerly a vassal of Assyria, and Cyaxares, king of the Medes, were in an allied warfare against Assyria as early as 616 B.C. These allies brought Nineveh

PREFACE TO NAHUM

down in 612 B.C. Egypt was involved in this struggle on the side of Assyria. Following the fall of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital was moved to Haran, which subsequently fell to the Medo-Persian alliance in 610.

From other sources we learn that the war ended in the final defeat of Pharaoh Necho and the remnant of the Assyrian army in the battle of Carchemish by Nebuchadnezzar.

HISTORIC SITUATION

With this secular record of history at hand, and in light of *I Kings 23:29* and *II Chronicles 35:20-24*, we arrive at the following historic situation as prevailing in Nahum's time. By 616 B.C. the Medes and Babylonians on the one hand and the Assyrian-Egyptian alliance on the other had divided the mid-eastern world into two power blocks. The struggle was for the absolute rule of the entire area.

In Judah there were two parties. With the little kingdom caught in the squeeze between the super powers, one party favored the rise of Babylon, hoping thereby to see the demise of Assyria and the guarantee of Judean independence. This party was led by king Josiah and his court.

The other party preached that a pro-Babylonian stance by Judah would only lead to a Babylonian takeover of Judah once the major power struggle was settled. This latter seems to be the position of Jeremiah (cf. *Jeremiah 13:21*), while Nahum, an avowed Assyrophobe, favored an alliance with Babylon lest Judah suffer the same fate as Israel at the hands of Assyria.

This apparent difference of political views on the part of Nahum and Jeremiah does not prevent their agreement concerning the judgments of God against Godless nations.

Nahum is not quoted in the New Testament, but it was included in the specific body of writings which Jesus and the New Testament writers called "Scriptures," or "the oracles of God." It deals exclusively with the downfall of Nineveh and makes no Messianic predictions. Recent archeology has vindicated Nahum's description of Nineveh's downfall.

THE NATURE OF NAHUM

It is to be remembered that Nahum's prophecy, in the original, was in the form of an incomplete poetic accrostic. As such, it does not easily lend itself to exegetical commentary. To so dissect any poem is to lose much of its esthetic value and, in the case of prophecy, some of its overall impact.

The theme of Nahum is revenge. History has borne testimony to the accuracy of the preview of destruction, but there is little to explain Nahum's attitude. Rejoicing at the bloody destruction of a people who had no opportunity to know God seems out of harmony with God's loving concern for all men.

Perhaps we need to separate the facts of the prophecy from the attitude of the prophet. As in the case of Jonah, God may have not been pleased with Nahum's revelling in Nineveh's destruction.

We cannot but recall Jonah's prejudiced refusal to preach to Nineveh at the outset, and his petulant pouting under a gourd vine when it became evident, upon Nineveh's repentance, that God would rather forgive than destroy. (Cp. *Jonah, chapter four*)

Nahum's prophecy will be appreciated more if two things are kept in mind: (1) the poetic nature of the book and (2) its sequel relationship to Jonah which precedes it by something more than a century.

NINEVEH

Nineveh, as capital of Assyria, was the leader of an empire whose chief aim was aggressive warfare against her neighbors. Asshur, some fifty miles south of Nineveh, had been the original Assyrian capital, but about the time of Sennacherib, (c. 710 B.C.), and for roughly a century thereafter, Nineveh gained the ascendancy and served as capital.

It was about the time Nineveh became capital of Assyria that Jonah was sent to preach repentance to the city. Then Nineveh heeded Jonah's warning but their repentance was apparently short-lived.

Sennacherib built Nineveh's fortifications, aggrandized her temples and installed a remarkably sophisticated water system. It is estimated that as many as 10,000 slaves worked for twelve years just to build the 15,000,000 ton earthen platform upon which the royal palace was set. Exiles from Israel may have formed part of that work force. (Cp. *II Kings 18:13-16*)

Diodorus describes a defensive wall about Nineveh forming a sixty mile circumference. This inner defense wall, whose twin may be viewed today among the remains of Nineveh, formed a 7½ mile circuit broken by fifteen gates.

The present ruins of Nineveh seem to be somewhat farther (some 1500 yards) from the Tigris River than was the city in Nahum's day. A growing Arab village is today slowly covering the site of the ancient city.

The city and the empire she ruled were as cruel as her founder, Nimrod (cf. *Genesis 10:11*). Her kings, in their official records, made

no attempt, as do modern despots, to hide the fact of their fierce atrocities.

However, Nineveh's ability to rule the world did not match her ability to conquer it. No effective administration governed Assyria's conquered territories. Rather, defeated enemies were considered simply the means of gratifying Nineveh's drive for conquest and the spoils of war. Mankind has inherited no positive legacy from the Assyrian empire.

Israel became a vassal of Assyria c. 854 B.C. and was finally destroyed by her in 722 B.C.

Under Ahaz, Judah became vassal to Assyria c. 735 B.C. Jerusalem was threatened by the armies of Assyria under Sargon c. 711 B.C. (cf. *Isaiah* 20) and Judah was severely punished by her c. 701 B.C. The complete submission of Judah to Nineveh was thwarted by the remarkable destruction of Sennacherib's army. (Cf. *II Kings* 18:13—19:36)

After the city of Nineveh was destroyed by the Medo-Persian alliance in 612 B.C., the Assyrian capital moved to Haran where it stayed until destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. at the battle of Carchemish.

Nineveh reached its peak, as did the Assyrian empire of which it was capital, under the reign of Ashurbanipal. When he died c. 626 B.C., the downfall began. There are no Assyrian records of the last twenty-five years of her own existence. The final obliteration of Nineveh was total! Two hundred years later the Greek army passed by the site and gave no indication of knowing it had ever existed!

Chapter XI—Questions

Preface

1. The name Nahum means _____.
2. The name Capernaum means _____.
3. Was Capernaum the home of the prophet Nahum?
4. List and discuss the date of Nahum.
5. Nineveh was brought down in 612 B.C. by an alliance of _____.
6. The war in which Nineveh was destroyed ended with the defeat of Pharaoh Necho at _____ by _____.
7. By 616 B.C. the _____ and _____ on the one hand and _____ and _____ on the other hand had divided the middle east into two power blocks.
8. In Judah at this time were two parties, one favored the rise of _____ while the other was afraid of this.

9. Nahum favored an alliance with _____ for Judah.
10. In his political views, Nahum seems to differ with _____.
11. Nahum's prophecy, in the original language, formed an incomplete _____.
12. The theme of Nahum is _____.
13. It is helpful in studying Nahum to separate the facts of the prophecy from the _____ of Nahum himself.
14. Nahum's prophecy is reminiscent of that of _____.
15. The chief aim of the Assyrian empire, of which Nineveh was the capital was _____.
16. Describe the walls of Nineveh.
17. Nineveh's ability to rule the world did not match _____.
18. Israel became a vassal of Assyria in _____ and was destroyed by her in _____.
19. _____ was king of Israel at this time and so became her last king.

CHAPTER XII

INTRODUCTION

NAHUM 1:1 . . .

RV . . . The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

LXX . . . The burden of Nineve: the book of the vision of Naum the Elkesite.

COMMENTS

When Jonah, about 100 years previous to Nahum, foretold the overthrow of Nineveh the great royal seat of Assyrian monarchy, the city repented and was spared. Now, having fallen from their repentance, possibly deceived by their rise to world domination, Nineveh receives a written warning of irreversible doom. The repentance has not been continued, neither will the reprieve from judgement.

As we saw above in the introductory preface (Chapter XI), Elko-shite has not been identified by modern archeology, although Jewish tradition situates it at the site of Alkosh, some thirty miles north of the present town of Mosul. The tomb of Nahum (traditional) is venerated there by present day Judaism.

Jerome located Elkoshite at the site of Helkesei in Galilee, in his commentary on Nahum. This Helkesei is probably present day El-Kauzeh between Rameh and Biut Jebeih.

The *De Viris Prophetarum*, of the Pseudo-Epiphanius, locates Elkoshite east of the Jordan river near Begabor and connects it with the tribe of Simeon. Nestle concluded that Begabor is to be identified with present day *Beit Jibrim* in southern Israel.

The important words in this verse are *burden of Nineveh* and *vision of Nahum*. They constitute a claim to direct inspiration and a positive identification of the author.

The word *massa* (burden) was most frequently used to denote a threatening prophecy. (eg. *Isaiah* 30 and *Zechariah* 9:12)

The idea seems to be that of a burden laid by God upon Nineveh.

The word may also mean to "utter forth" or "call," eg. *Psalms* 15:3 and *II Kings* 9:27.

Paul speaks of the beauty of the feet of those who bring God's good news (*Romans* 10:15). There is a certain inherent ugliness about a bearer of the message of doom. There are few if any passages in the Bible to match Nahum for sheer hopelessness.

"*The book of the vision*" indicates that Nahum *saw* the destruction of Nineveh before it actually took place. The terror of God's wrath cannot be aptly described, it must be experienced for its full deadliness to be grasped.

THE COMING OF THE LORD OF JUDGEMENT . . . Nahum 1:2-8

RV . . . Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. Jehovah is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty: Jehovah hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers; Bashan languisheth, and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him. Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that take refuge in him. But with an over-running flood he will make a full end of her place, and will pursue his enemies into darkness. LXX . . . God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; the Lord avenges with wrath; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries, and he cuts off his

enemies. The Lord is longsuffering, and his power is great, and the Lord will not hold any guiltless: his way is in destruction and in the whirlwind, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He threatens the sea, and dries it up, and exhausts all the rivers: the land of Basan, and Carmel are brought low, and the flourishing trees of Libanus have come to nought. The mountains quake at him, and the hills are shaken, and the earth recoils at his presence, even the world, and all that dwell in it. Who shall stand before his anger? and who shall withstand in the anger of his wrath? his wrath brings to nought kingdoms, and the rocks are burst asunder by him. The Lord is good to them that wait on him in the day of affliction; and he knows them that reverence him. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end: darkness shall pursue those that rise up against him and his enemies.

COMMENTS

JEHOVAH, GOD OF WRATH . . .

The wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against His enemies at the same time His favor and mercy are assured to His faithful, loyal people. His almighty power in both make His wrath exceedingly terrible and His grace very much to be desired.

JEHOVAH IS JEALOUS . . .

The Assyrian empire had desolated Israel and harrassed Judah repeatedly. It seemed their idols had overcome the people of Jehovah. The poetic prophet warns that God is jealous. He will not allow the seeming power of false gods to go unchallenged.

Here is an echo of Jehovah's own evaluation of Himself in *Exodus* 20:5, 34:14, *Deuteronomy* 4:24, 5:9, 6:15.

There is a certain affection expressed here. Jealousy is of those we love. It is His wounded heart that brings about Nineveh's destruction. God's wrath is always God's love reacting to unfaithfulness.

JEHOVAH AVENGETH . . .

Only God is qualified to avenge. He does so in complete justice. In the case of Nineveh, He had gone to great lengths (cf. *Jonah*) to warn them of the consequence of their sin.

JEHOVAH IS FULL OF WRATH . . .

Paul, in *Romans* 1:18-ff, speaks of God's wrath being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. *Romans* 2:5-ff

pictures God's wrath as being stored up against the day of wrath when it will be released in a burst of pent-up power. John the Baptist spoke of fleeing from the wrath to come (*Matthew 3:7, Luke 3:7*). John, the apostle of love, indicates that the wrath of God remains on those who do not believe and obey the Gospel. Jesus spoke of God's wrath in His foretelling of the destruction of Jerusalem. (*Luke 21:22*)

In light of these, and many more New Testament passages, we must conclude that Jehovah as a God of wrath was not, as some have taught, a primitive notion limited to the Old Testament. The loving God of the New Testament is the same God and wrath is yet one of the facets of His nature.

Verses 2-3(a) indicate that while Jehovah is a jealous God, avenging and full of wrath, His wrath is never impetuous or petulant. His wrath is reserved for His enemies: those who have set themselves against His purposes and His people. He is slow to anger, as indeed a God of love Who demands patience of His people must be. Nevertheless, His patience and slow anger must never be misunderstood as weakness or tolerance of enmity toward Himself.

Verses 3(b)-7 . . . Jehovah is great in power, as witness His control over the forces of nature, the whirlwind, the storm, the clouds, the sea. Even the weather is in His power. The rivers run dry and the most verdant areas of the land, Bashan and Carmel and Lebanon languish and do not produce at His command.

The immovable mountains quake before Him, the hills melt, and the very earth itself is upheaved in His presence . . . even the whole world and all who inhabit it. Rocks break asunder at the outpouring of His wrath.

In the day of God's wrath, they are kept safe who are in Him, but those who attempt to flee will find their hiding places swept away as in a flood.

This entire passage of Nahum is a poetic picture of the wrath of God. Such vividness could scarcely be achieved by the more literal language of prose. It is reminiscent of the apocalyptic description in *Revelation 6:12-17* of the opening of the sixth seal.

(*Verse 8*) The image of an over-running flood is possibly an allusion to Nineveh's capture by the Medo-Persian armies through a flood in the river which destroyed her walls. More likely it is a poetic reference to the overwhelming armies. The figure is also used quite normally to simply suggest calamity. (cp. *Psalms 32:6, 42:7, 90:5*)
her place . . . (RV)

This phrase is a direct reference to Nineveh. The city is figured as a queen. Her place (of dwelling) is to be utterly demolished.

THE UTTER ANNIHILATION OF NINEVEH . . . Nahum 1:9-13

RV . . . What do ye devise against Jehovah? he will make a full end; affliction shall not rise up the second time. For entangled like thorns, and drunken as with their drink, they are consumed utterly as dry stubble. There is one gone forth out of thee that deviseth evil against Jehovah, that counseleth wickedness. Thus saith Jehovah: and likewise many, even so shall they be cut down, and he shall pass away. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. And now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

LXX . . . What do ye devise against the Lord? he will make a complete end: he will not take vengeance by affliction twice at the same time. For the enemy shall be laid bare even to the foundation, and shall be devoured as twisted yew, and as stubble fully dry. Out of thee shall proceed a device against the Lord, counselling evil things hostile to him. Thus saith the Lord who rules over many waters, Even thus shall they be sent away, and the report of thee shall not be heard any more. And now will I break his rod from off thee, and will burst thy bonds.

COMMENTS

Durant records that two hundred years after the fall of Nineveh, Xenophon's Ten Thousand marched across the site of the city "and never suspected that these (mounds) were the site of the ancient metropolis that had ruled half the world." This utter annihilation is here foresworn by Nahum, as his poetic prophecy moves on.

WHAT DO YE DEVISE? . . . v. 9

There is no defense against Jehovah's wrath, once it has been incurred. The armies of Assyria, led by the great king-general Sennacherib, fell like ten-pins before the walls of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. (Cf. *II Kings* 18:13—19:36, *II Chronicles* 32:1—32:22) Nahum envisions Nineveh doing likewise a century later. In both cases the defeat of the Assyrians is attributed to divine intervention.

The destruction would be so final that Nineveh, "the affliction," shall not rise up the second time.

. . . DRUNKEN WITH THEIR DRINK . . . v. 10

As Babylon would later fall (c. 539 B.C.) with her playboy king in a drunken stupor, so Nineveh fell before Babylon (c. 612 B.C.) with her leaders drunk and "entangled like thorns." They could no more resist the conquering army than can dry stubble resist the spread of a prairie fire.

ONE GONE FORTH OUT OF THEE . . . v. 11

Nahum sees Sennacherib's attempts against Judah as the beginning of her own ruin. He is the "one gone forth . . . that deviseth evil against Jehovah." It was Sennacherib who implemented the designs of Nineveh against God and His people. (cf. *II Kings* 19:22-23)

Sennacherib and his spokesman, Rabshakeh, framed an evil letter and an evil speech, not only against Hezekiah, but against God Himself. He insinuated God was level with the idols of Assyria and unable to protect His people. In this way, the Assyrian sought to dissuade Jehovah's people from confidence in Him, and urged them rather to cast their lot for protection with the great king of Assyria, namely himself.

No one has ever more daringly and blasphemously affronted the Lord than Sennacherib. Nahum therefore counts him a wicked counsellor who has outwitted himself. The great destruction which God will bring against Nineveh because of this wickedness was deferred for a time, but it was the beginning of the end.

(Verse 12-13) In one fatal stroke, when the measure of Nineveh's iniquity was full, the Assyrian empire will be "*cut down and he shall pass away.*"

The contrast here between "they" and "his" on the one hand and "thee" on the other delineates between "they," the Assyrians, and "thee," Judah. *Their* punishment was final and utter destruction. Judah's was the chastizing by the Lord of His people. It would therefore be temporary. (cp. *Isaiah* 40:1-2, 52:1-2)

God had used the Assyrians as a yoke on His people, chastening them in the attempt (futile as it proved to be) to call them back to His covenant. But the yoke had been exceedingly wicked and must now be burst asunder. Assyria would burden God's people no more, after the destruction of Nineveh.

DESTRUCTION OF FALSE GODS AND VILE MEN . . .

Nahum 1:14-15

RV . . . And Jehovah hath given commandment concerning thee, that

no more of thy name be sown; out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image; I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows; for the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

LXX . . . And the Lord shall give a command concerning thee; there shall no more of thy name be scattered: I will utterly destroy the graven images out of the house of thy god, and molten images: I will make thy grave; for they are swift. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings glad tidings, and publishes peace! O Juda, keep thy feasts, pay thy vows: for they shall no more pass through thee to thy decay.

COMMENTS

JEHOVAH HATH GIVEN COMMANDMENT . . . v. 14

The decree has gone forth . . . even memory of the Assyrian kings will dim. Their fame will no more be spread abroad. The name *ie.* the house and lineage of Sennacherib, will be sown no more.

Actually, Sennacherib's son succeeded him to the throne in Nineveh. It seems Nahum's poetic prophecy here personifies the empire in the king. It was only shortly after Sennacherib that Nineveh, the capital, was destroyed.

. . . OUT OF THE HOUSE OF THY GODS . . . v. 14

Not only will the king and his country be cut off, the gods he worshipped will also perish. In the ancient near-east, as in the contemporary city states of Greece, the defeat of an empire was not just the disgrace of a people, it was the overthrow of a god.

In the case of Assyria, both the dynasty and the deity fell together. The two sons of Sennacherib were killed in the temple while worshipping their chief god, Nisroch. No doubt the desecration of the temple occurred at the same time. Nahum's prophecy that the graven and molten images would be cut off was fulfilled very literally.

Not only in the temple, but throughout the land, the conquerers, unlike the later Greeks and Romans who absorbed local gods, smashed the deities of Assyria wherever they were found.

I WILL MAKE THY GRAVE . . .

Some take the latter part of verse 14 to mean that Sennacherib's

grave was actually to be made in the temple of Nisroch. In view of the fact that the temple remained in use some time following his death this seems unlikely.

It is more likely Nahum intends here to foretell the ignominious fall of the Assyrian dynasty itself. When Babylon was later building on the ruins of Assyria much was said about the grave of that once formidable empire.

Just how despicable were the sins of Nineveh is described in *Ezekiel* 31:3, 11, 15, 16. Her downfall was commensurate with the heinousness of her sin. Nahum says simply "thou art vile" and in this vileness sees the reason for her destruction.

BEHOLD UPON THE MOUNTAIN . . . v. 15

With these words so familiar to the Christian, Nahum introduces the contrasting comfort of God's people in comparison to the utter ruin of her enemies. We find these same words in *Isaiah* 52:7 and again in *Romans* 10:15. In each case they are words of deliverance.

The destruction of Nineveh, brought on the marching feet of the Babylonian army, burst asunder the bonds of vassalage and set Jerusalem free, albeit her freedom was short-lived, for her sins, as we saw in Micah, were becoming as great as those of Nineveh.

It is no strange thing that three writers inspired by the same Spirit, should use the same words. By so doing they simply give their *consent to wholesome truths* (1 Timothy 6:3) and concur in the *same forms of sound words*. (II Timothy 1:13)

KEEP THY FEASTS . . . PERFORM THY VOWS . . .

Along with Nahum's assurance that they will have no more trouble with Assyria is the subtle warning to remain faithful to God's covenant. He could not but be aware, as were the other prophets, that Judah herself stood in the way of God's wrath unless she stood firm in her faith.

During the troublesome days of Assyria's invasion, the feasts had been interrupted. They had made vows to God, that if He would deliver them out of their distress, they would do Him extraordinary service. Now the poet reminds them to perform that which they have promised.

We may also learn a valuable lesson here from Nahum. We are prone, in times of trouble to plead prayerfully for succor and promise service only to forget when the burden has been lifted.

Chapter XII—Questions

Introduction

1. Jonah prophesied to Nineveh about _____ years before Nahum.
2. How do you explain God's destruction of Nineveh in view of her repentance at Jonah's preaching?
3. What two phrases in Nahum 1:1 establish the work as inspired Scripture?
4. God assures His faithful and loyal people of His _____ and at the same time He pronounces His wrath against Nineveh.
5. What had been Nineveh's past dealing with Israel?
6. Comment on the idea that God is a jealous God.
7. Explain "*Jehovah is full of wrath.*"
8. In light of Nahum 1:3(b)-7 discuss the power of God.
9. What is meant by the overrunning flood in *Nahum 1:8*?
10. Show how Nineveh's attempts at self-defense were to prove futile.
11. What sort of person was Sennacherib?
12. What was to become of the gods Nineveh worshipped?
13. Discuss (1:15) "Behold upon the mountain."
14. Discuss (1:15) "keep thy feasts . . . perform thy vows."

CHAPTER XIII

DETAILS OF NINEVEH'S DOWNFALL

WARNING OF WAR . . . Nahum 2:1-7

RV . . . He that dasheth in pieces is come up against thee; keep the fortress, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. For Jehovah restoreth the excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel; for the emptiers have emptied them out, and destroyed their vine-branches. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots flash with steel in the day of his preparation, and the cypress spears are brandished. The chariots rage in the streets; they rush to and fro in the broad ways: the appearance of them is like torches; they run like the lightnings. He remembereth his nobles: they stumble in their march; they make haste to the wall thereof, and the mantelet is prepared. The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved. And it is decreed: she is uncovered, she is carried away; and her handmaids moan as with the voice of doves, beating upon their breasts.

LXX . . . It is all over with him, he has been removed, one who has been delivered from affliction has come up panting into thy presence, watch the way, strengthen thy loins, be very valiant in thy strength. For the Lord has turned aside the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel: for they have utterly rejected them, and have destroyed their branches. They have destroyed the arms of their power from among men, their mighty men sporting with fire: the reins of their chariots shall be destroyed in the day of his preparation, and the horsemen shall be thrown into confusion in the ways, and the chariots shall clash together, and shall be entangled in each other in the broad ways: their appearance is as lamps of fire, and as gleaming lightnings. And their mighty men shall bethink themselves and flee by day; and they shall be weak as they go; and they shall hasten to her walls, and shall prepare their defences. The gates of the cities have been opened, and the palaces have fallen into ruin, and the foundation has been exposed; and she has gone up, and her maid-servants were led away as doves moaning in their hearts.

COMMENTS

HE THAT DASHETH IN PIECES . . . v. 1

The destroyer is at the gates! In his prophetic vision, Nahum shouts the alarm to Nineveh as he sees the soldiers of Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar, allied with those of the Median Cyaxares (or Ahasuerus) approach the very gates of the city.

Destruction is neither distant nor doubtful. Nebuchadnezzar well deserved his common title: he who dashes nations in pieces. *Jeremiah 50:23* calls Babylon the *hammer of the whole earth*.

There is to be no subtlety. The smasher has "come before thy face" in a straight forward attack. Nineveh is therefore called upon to man the towers and magazines and guard the avenues of the city, to encourage her troops and animate herself. There is no way to forestall the stroke of God's judgement. Just as Assyria was used of God to chastise His people, so the Medo-Babylonian alliance will now punish Nineveh.

Will Durant, in his epic *Story of Civilization*, says, ". . . Assyrian history is largely a picture of cities sacked and villages or fields laid waste . . . the weakness of Oriental monarchies was bound up with this addiction to violence." Nineveh's conquerers were simply repaying her in kind.

(Verse two) This verse is something of an enigma. Assyria had

been used of God to chasten His people. Now that very activity is published as the manifesto showing the causes of her downfall. We can only understand this by bearing the covenant in mind.

All God has done in human history He has done for the sake of His covenant purpose to ultimately bless all people. The Jews erred in considering national prosperity to be excellence before God. It was never so. God is concerned that His people be faithful. He restores their real excellence by punishing their unfaithfulness. Assyria, who had been used of God to so correct Israel, *ie.* restore the excellency, is now being destroyed by those who will later punish Judah.

The Assyrian policy of "scorched earth" against her enemies had earned her the title "the emptiers."

THE SHIELDS . . . MADE RED . . . v. 3

Here we begin the prophet's poetic account of the terrors of the invading enemy. Their shields are red with Assyrian blood. The men themselves are drenched scarlet with the gore of battle.

As the chariots approached the city, their charge was swift as lightning and their wheels struck sparks upon the stones.

The spears of the Medes and Babylonians are like a shaking forest of fir trees. As a mighty tree overtops a shrub, so the attackers overwhelm the defenders of Nineveh.

CHARIOTS RAGE IN THE STREETS . . . v. 4

The walls are breached . . . the gates are opened and the vehicles of war charge through the defenseless city streets. They are so numerous and driven with such fury that the red tunics of their drivers seem to be the flames of torches and the burning of the city begins.

Much of Nahum's poetic vividness borrows from the literal appearance of the attackers. The dashing in pieces previously alluded to no doubt figures the instruments used to break down the stone and brick walls of the besieged city. The hammer-headed battle-axes of the Medo-Babylonian troops could crush a man's head with even a glancing blow.

The red and scarlet of the bloody attackers was partly due to their uniforms of the same color. This color also would add to the fiery appearance of the chariots.

HE REMEMBERETH HIS NOBLES . . . v. 5

Nebuchadnezzar's commanders, here called nobles, are mustered and commanded to take the field immediately. So swiftly do they obey that they stumble over the bloody stone streets. They hasten to secure the walls that are now approached by their troops.

The mantelet was a portable shield under which the invader was protected from the besieged defenders on the walls above.

THE GATES OF THE RIVER ARE OPENED . . . v. 6-7

At length the gates of the rivers would be opened. The western defense of Nineveh was the wall along the Tigris river. It was 4,530 yards long and connected to moats on the east, north and south sides of the city.

The Medo-Babylonian army engineers re-routed the river channel and the moats became a dry bed of march into the city. Cyrus would later turn the same trick against its Babylonian originators and so defeat Belshazzar.

Finally the defense of the palace itself dissolves and the Assyrian capital is no more. There remains only the moans of the captives and the doves, like the larks bravely singing over Flanders Field, flap their wings over desolation and death.

THE RUINS OF WAR . . . Nahum 2:8-13

RV . . . But Nineveh hath been from old like a pool of water: yet they flee away. Stand, stand, they cry; but none looketh back. Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; for there is no end of the store, the glory of all goodly furniture. She is empty, and void, and waste; and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and anguish is in all loins, and the faces of them all are waxed pale. Where is the den of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion and the lioness walked, the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid? The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his caves with prey, and his dens with ravin. Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions; and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

LXX . . . And as for Nineve, her waters shall be as a pool of water: and they fled, and staid not, and there was none to look back. They plundered the silver, they plundered the gold, and there was no end of their adorning; they were loaded with it upon all their pleasant vessels. There is thrusting forth, and shaking, and tumult, and heart-breaking, and loosing of knees, and pangs on all loins; and the faces of all are as the blackening of a pot. Where is the dwelling-place of the lions, and the pasture that belonged to the whelps? where did the lion go,

that the lion's whelp should enter in there, and there was none to scare him away? The lion seized enough prey for his whelps, and strangled for his young lions, and filled his lair with prey, and his dwelling-place with spoil. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord Almighty, and I will burn up thy multitude in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy lions; and I will utterly destroy thy prey from off the land, and thy deeds shall no more at all be heard of.

COMMENTS

... BUT NONE SHALL LOOK BACK ... v. 8

As with modern, so with ancient warfare, a stream of refugees poured from the fallen city of Nineveh with no idea where to go. The call to them to stay is in vain. Hollow-eyed, they stumble away from all that has ever been home.

Nineveh has always been populace . . . as stated by Nahum's picturesque description of her as a pool, the figure of water to symbolize a multitude is a common one. (Cp. *Revelation* 17:5)

A century earlier, in Jonah's time, the population of the Assyrian capital was estimated as including 120,000 small children. (*Jonah* 4:11)

Now, in defeat, the multitude flee. The commanders cry for them to return, but they will not so much as look back. Their one thought is escape.

TAKE THE SPOIL ... v. 9-12

Andrew Jackson is quoted in American history as saying "to the victors belong the spoils." The Medes and Babylonians, and every other invading army to march through the pages of history, agree.

The wealth of the city becomes the prey of its conquerors. The officers stir up their troops to make a thorough job of looting. Nineveh was rich, and the chief source of income to the ancient man of war was such loot.

The Assyrian lion will no longer ravage the world in search of prey for his lioness and her whelps. The poetic symbolism is obvious. The destruction of Nineveh with her armies and chariots will forever prevent her from preying as a wild animal upon the victims of her greed for empire.

BEHOLD I AM AGAINST THEE ... v. 13

The prophet is careful to point out that the sack of Nineveh is carried out at the will of Jehovah. It must be pointed out here that

this is a strange idea to the people of the prophet's time. Each nation had its own gods and they were credited with that nation's victories over her enemies. It is not, however, the gods of the Medes and Babylonians to whom Nahum credits the fall of Nineveh. It is Jehovah of Israel!

Perhaps Nahum saw, as did Micah, Isaiah and the others that Jehovah is not only the one true God, but that He is Lord of *all* nations.

Chapter XII—Questions

Details of Nineveh's Downfall

1. In a prophetic vision, Nahum saw Babylon's _____ and the armies of the Median _____ at the very gates of Nineveh.
2. Nebuchadnezzar's common title _____ was well-deserved.
3. What sort of attack did the Medo-Babylonian alliance launch against Nineveh?
4. We can only understand God's punishing of Assyria for destroying Israel, the purpose for which He had raised up Assyria, by remembering _____.
5. In warfare Assyria had practiced a _____ policy.
6. How does Nahum describe the chariot charge against Nineveh?
7. Much of Nahum's poetic vividness is borrowed from _____.
8. What is meant by "The gates of the rivers are opened"?
9. Compare the refugee situation of Nineveh with that of modern war.
10. Discuss "take the spoil." Is this practice still followed in modern warfare?
11. What is implied in *Nahum* 2:13 by the statement "I am against thee"?

CHAPTER XIV

THE EPITAPH OF NINEVEH

WOE TO THE BLOODY CITY . . . Nahum 3:1-3

RV . . . Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and rapine; the prey departeth not. The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels, and prancing horses, and bounding chariots, the horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering spear, and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of corpses, and there is no end of the bodies; they stumble upon their bodies;

LXX . . . O city of blood, wholly false, full of unrighteousness, the prey shall not be handled. The noise of whips, and the noise of the rumbling of wheels, and of the pursuing horse, and of the bounding chariot, and of the mounting rider, and of the glittering sword, and of the gleaming arms, and of a multitude of slain, and of heavy falling: and there was no end to her nations, but they shall be weak in their bodies

COMMENTS

Nineveh, for years, had neither been taken nor put in fear. Now she lay, in the prophet's vision, as she would soon really lie, in blood and ashes. Nahum's reaction to her ruin is far from mourning. He rather lists her past glory and rejoices in her destruction. Reading this passage, one can almost hear Jonah joining Nahum in his rejoicing. What Jonah longed to see, Nahum saw. (cf. *Jonah* 4:1-5)

IT IS ALL FULL OF LIES . . . v. 1

Nineveh had aspired to be the capital of the world, by whatever means were at her disposal, whether intrigue in the courts of other nations or by sheer force of arms and the carrying away of conquered peoples. For this Nahum sees her now in ruins.

The God who *made of one blood all the nations of men* never designed any nation to be tyrants and hold others as her slaves. It is He Who will be universal monarch and none other! Yet the chapters of both ancient and modern history are delineated by the records of kings and nations who have tried to rule the world. None have long succeeded.

THE NOISE . . . THE NOISE . . . v. 2-3

The city lies dead. The silence of death is broken only by the sound of enemy arms moving about the streets. There is no regard for the dead . . . the invaders stumble over the fallen corpses.

The carnage seems endless. No attempt is made to count the bodies. They are simply a multitude.

CAUSE OF THE CARNAGE . . . Nahum 3:4-7

RV . . . because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will uncover thy skirts upon thy face; and

I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

LXX . . . because of the abundance of fornication: she is a fair harlot, and well-favoured, skilled in sorcery, that sells the nations by her fornication and peoples by her sorceries. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord God Almighty, and I will uncover thy skirts in thy presence, and I will shew thy nations thy shame, and the kingdoms thy disgrace. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee according to thine unclean ways, and will make thee a public example. And it shall be that every one that sees thee shall go down from thee, and shall say, Wretched Nineveh! who shall lament for her? whence shall I seek comfort for her?

COMMENTS

The cry of the modern social revolutionist is "if there is a god, why does he not halt or prevent war?" The paragraph before us deserves serious study in answer to this questioning. The God Who declares Himself against Nineveh has not changed in His righteous wrath upon wicked nations.

BECAUSE OF THE MULTITUDE OF WHOREDOMS . . . v. 4

Here is a listing, brief and to the point, of the sins of Nineveh. No doubt the term "whoredoms of the well-favored harlot" could be a literal description of the immorality of the Assyrian capital. Such corruption always preceeds the downfall of an empire, just as it now eats the fibre out of the strength of the United States.

However, it is more likely Nahum intends here the more profound harlotry that brought on war. Nineveh had courted neighboring nations with the design to ruin their liberties and property.

Nor must we omit from the "multitude of her whoredoms" her mystery redigion. (See chapter on Baal worship.) In her heyday, Assyria was one of the most brutal empires ever to cross the pages of history. Will Durant points out that her religion did nothing to molify this tendency to violence. Ashur was the name of the national version of the sun god. He was warlike, merciless and was believed to take a divine satisfaction in the sacrifice of captured enemies before his shrine.

The worship of Ashur was largely one of omens and exorcism.

These Nahum calls witchcrafts. The world was pictured as full of a host of demons to be warded off by charms and long incantations.

I WILL UNCOVER . . . v. 5

The foreign policy of Assyria, as we have seen, was one of ambitious deceit. This stood first in the list of her harlotries. Now her proud pretensions are to be baffled by Jehovah. Her shame is discovered to her neighbor nations. Her vain hope of universal domination is first revealed and then dashed to pieces.

I WILL . . . SET THEE AS A GAZING STOCK . . . v. 6-7

That great city to which all nations had made court, with which they had coveted alliances, is made a laughing stock.

Abominable filth and vileness is always the aftermath of war. I can still smell the stench of death in the blasted rubble of European cities during World War II. The disease which rises from such putridity causes many to flee . . . and to marvel at the destruction of Nineveh.

No one is left to mourn the passing of Nineveh. Nahum takes delight in it and taunts her with an offer to hire mourners. One cannot but wonder if the Spirit Who inspired Nahum's prophecy approved of the poet's almost sadistic delight in the calamity that befell his enemies. I personally doubt it. More likely God's attitude toward Jonah, when that prophet pouted because Nineveh had been spared, was the same toward Nahum. (*Jonah 4:9-ff*) We do not know.

NINEVEH IS NO BETTER . . . Nahum 3:8-19

RV . . . Art thou better than No-amon, that was situated among the rivers, that had the waters round about her; whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was of the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed in pieces at the head of all the streets; and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. Thou also shalt be drunken; thou shalt be hid; thou also shalt seek a stronghold because of the enemy. All thy fortresses shall be like fig-trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women; the gates of thy land are set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire hath devoured thy bars. Draw thee water for the siege; strengthen thy fortresses; go into the clay, and tread the mortar; make strong the brickkiln. There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off; it shall devour

thee like the cankerworm; make thyself many as the canker-worm; make thyself many as the locust. Thou has multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven; the canker-worm ravageth, and fleeth away. Thy princes are as the locusts, and thy marshals as the swarms of grasshoppers, which encamp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known they are. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; thy nobles are at rest; thy people are scattered upon the mountains, and there is none to gather them. There is no assuaging of thy hurt; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the report of thee clap their hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

LXX . . . Prepare thee a portion, tune the chord, prepare a portion for Ammon: she that dwells among the rivers, water is round about her, whose dominion is the sea, and whose walls are water. And Ethiopia is her strength, and Egypt; and there was no limit of the flight of her enemies; and the Libyans became her helpers. Yet she shall go as a prisoner into captivity, and they shall dash her infants against the ground at the top of all her ways: and they shall cast lots upon all her glorious possessions, and all her nobles shall be bound in chains. And thou shalt be drunken, and shalt be overlooked; and thou shalt seek for thyself strength because of thine enemies. All thy strong-holds are as fig-trees, having watchers: if they be shaken, they shall fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy people within thee are as women: the gates of thy land shall surely be opened to thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. Draw thee water for a siege, and well secure thy strong-holds: enter into the clay, and be thou trodden in the chaff, make the fortifications stronger than brick. There the fire shall devour thee; the sword shall utterly destroy thee, it shall devour thee as the locust, and thou shalt be pressed down as a palmerworm. Thou hast multiplied thy merchandise beyond the stars of heaven: the palmerworm has attacked it, and has flown away. Thy mixed multitude has suddenly departed as the grasshopper, as the locust perched on a hedge in a frosty day; the sun arises, and it flies off, and knows not its place: woe to them! Thy shepherds have slumbered, the Assyrian king has laid low thy mighty men: thy people departed to the mountains, and there was none to receive them. There is no healing for thy bruise; thy wound has rankled: all that hear the report of thee shall clap their hands against thee; for upon whom has not thy wickedness passed continually?

COMMENTS

ART THOU BETTER? . . . v. 8-10

No-Amon, Karnak, Thebes . . . all names of one of the proudest cities ever built by man. Capital of the middle kingdom of Egypt, she stood majestically on the Nile and guarded the largest temple complex ever built . . . anywhere. Every Pharaoh, from the 12th to the 19th dynasty except the heretic, Ikhnaton, added to her glory. Her civilization, in some instances, advanced beyond that of our own day. Even today the visitor stands in silent awe before her columns and obelisks. One cannot but marvel at the sacred lake at Karnak, where the sprinkling of exorcism and the immersion of Christian baptism first became confused in the fourth century A.D.

But No-Amon, Karnak fell! And it was the Assyrians themselves who in 674 B.C. swept down from the north and subjected the proud Egyptians to tribute . . . and the taunt of the prophet to Nineveh who herself is now to be destroyed is "Art thou better than No-Amon?"

Art thou better? It is a question that sends chills along the spine of any thinking American who is fortunate enough to stand amidst the ruins of fallen civilizations. Are we better than they, that our international harlotries, our internal immoralities, our worship of false gods should not one day bring down upon our heads the wrath of Jehovah? Is it a strange idea, reserved for crackpots and prophets of doom, that God may one day use a heathen nation to fill the streets of Washington, D.C. and New York and Chicago and our other proud cities with corpses even as He used the Medes and Babylonians to lay Nineveh in the dust for her sins?

THOU ALSO . . . v. 11

The words fall like the knell of doom on the proud capital of Assyria. The leaders literally were drunken when the Medes and Babylonians came, but they had been in a stupor of a different kind long before. They were "made drunken with the wine of Nineveh's fornication." (Cp. *Revelation* 17:1-2 and *Jeremiah* 25:17-27)

ALL THY FORTRESSES . . . v. 12-15

All those things in which Nineveh trusted would fail her. Did they trust in bravery and daring? Their hearts would sink and fail them, so that they should abscond for shame, being in disgrace. For fear they will not be able to face invaders because of whose strength they shall sneak to their neighbors to beg assistance.

Did they depend on the garrisons and strongholds? These shall prove to be paper walls. Like the first-ripe figs, if you give the tree a little shake, they will fall in your mouth.

Having seen the vanity of the efforts to defend the doomed city, Nahum nevertheless taunts them to make ready to stand off the invader. They are admonished to lay in quantities of water against a siege. New bricks are to be made to strengthen the fortifications.

THEN SHALL A FIRE DEVOUR THEE . . . v. 15

By fire set to buildings and death sown by hand weapons are cities conquered. It is still the same . . . from Nineveh to My Lai.

Though the defenders of Nineveh are as numerous as canker-worms and as locusts . . . yet they shall be over-run.

There is a scathing irony in Nahum's choice of vermin to illustrate the multitudes of Nineveh's defenders. Both the cankerworm and the locust leave devastation wherever they go. So had Assyria spread destruction throughout the world. Now—to use a cliché "the worm has turned."

The Assyrian merchants who once fleeced the populace of surrounding nations will be seen no more, they are like the canker-worm who "ravageth and fleeth away."

The princes also, and the marshalls, those who enforced the Assyrian sway over conquered peoples will be seen no more. Like swarms of grasshoppers which destroy while they are present, but fly away to be seen no more, the Assyrian authorities will, like the merchants, not be seen anymore in lands once ruled as defeated people.

THY WOUND IS GREIVIOUS . . . v. 18-19

The destruction of Nineveh will prove the mortal wound of the entire empire. It is all in Nahum's future, but he has seen it in a present vision. History has verified his prophetic pronouncement.

In 612 B.C. the alliance between the Medes and Babylonians did indeed march into the city and that which Nahum foresaw became reality. The alliance was short lived and the victors shortly began to war among themselves. But the fatal blow had been struck.

Never again would Nineveh, or Assyria, play an important role in world affairs. Today the location of the city itself is scarcely discernable, rising as two tells on the valley of the Tigris.

God's prophetic word once more is vindicated by history.

Chapter XIV—Questions

The Epitaph of Nineveh

1. Why does Nahum say Nineveh is "full of lies?"
2. In Nahum's vision of fallen Nineveh, the silence is broken only by_____.
3. Discuss *Nahum* 3:4-7 in light of the modern question, "If there is a God, why does He not halt or prevent war?"
4. What are the "sins of Nineveh" as listed in this paragraph?
5. What is indicated by Nahum's term "witchcrafts?"
6. How does God intend to make Nineveh a "gazing stock?"
7. Who are No-Amon, Karnak, Thebes?
8. Where did the sprinkling of exorcism first become confused with the immersion of Christian baptism? When did this occur?
9. Compare the fate of No-Amon with that of Nineveh.
10. Who defeated No-Amon in 674 B.C.?
11. Discuss Nahum's question "art thou better?" as applied to modern America.
12. In what physical condition were the leaders of Nineveh when the Medes and Babylonians fell upon them?
13. What were "all thy fortresses" in *Nahum* 3:12-15?
14. What is the irony of Nahum's choice of vermin to illustrate the multitudes of Nineveh's defenders?
15. The destruction of the city of Nineveh was the mortal wound of_____.
16. How is God's word in Nahum vindicated by history in the destruction of the Assyrian Empire?

PART IV

HABAKKUK

OUTLINE OF HABAKKUK

Introduction . . . 1:1

- I. (1:2-11) Habakkuk questions God . . .
 "How long can God allow lawlessness to go unchecked?"
- II. (1:12-2:20) A second question . . .
 "How can God use cruel power to punish people less wicked than the punisher?"
 (Answer is five woes)
- III. Poetic prayer . . . Chapter 3
 - A. v. 1-16 . . . vision of God in judgement
 - B. v. 17-19 . . . hymn of faith

CHAPTER XV

PREFACE TO HABAKKUK

HABAKKUK THE PROPHET

We know nothing of Habakkuk, the man. He prophesied just before the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire. The complaints he makes in the early part of his message seem to date him as contemporary with Jehoiachem (608-597 B.C.) although this is by no means conclusive. (cp. *Jeremiah* 22:13-19) He may have been a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah. If so, he prophesied shortly after Nahum.

This last seems most likely, since both Nahum and Habakkuk speak of the Neo-Babylonian power as in the imminent future.

Habakkuk is mentioned nowhere in the Scriptures outside the book which bears his name. The Rabbis taught that he was the son of the Shunamite woman mentioned in *II Kings* 4:16-f. This is supported only by tradition, not by historic evidence.

Jewish tradition further says of Habakkuk that he fled to Egypt at the capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., which seem plausible. The same tradition says he was carried from Egypt to Babylon to wait upon Daniel in the lions' den. This seems highly fictitious.

HABAKKUK'S QUESTION

Brief as Habakkuk's writing is, it contains some valuable insights regarding two questions very much alive in our day. How can God allow, or rather how long will God allow social evil and violence to go unchecked? And how can a just God use the warfare of wicked men to punish those apparently less wicked than the punisher?

HOW CAN GOD ALLOW INJUSTICE TO GO UNPUNISHED? 1:1

These questions are being asked repeatedly today, and the church's failure to answer them has turned many, especially many of the young, to practical atheism.

As we approach the text, perhaps we should ask ourselves these questions in today's language;

1. How, if there is a Christian God, can He allow economic iniquity and social injustice. Why doesn't He put a stop to such things?
2. How, if there is a Christian God, can He allow war to punish and cripple and deprive "innocent" people?

God gave Habakkuk the answers for which men have long sought. Job discusses the first of these questions as it pertains to the individual. The Psalmist raised it again and again (cf. *Psalms* 37, 49, 73). Jeremiah also addresses it briefly. (*Jeremiah* 12:1)

The apocraphal book of *IV Ezra* 3:29-36 concludes there is no answer to the problem posed by these questions. *II Baruch* 11:1-7 (also apocraphal) prefers death over God's answer to Israel's dilemma.

How does one explain the seeming inactivity of God in the presence of the cruel historical fact of social injustices and war? Habakkuk received our answer from God. Do we have the faith and the courage to accept God's answer?

Chapter XV—Questions

Preface to Habakkuk

1. Habakkuk is contemporary with what king of Judah?
2. This dates Habakkuk about when?
3. Babylon captured Jerusalem in _____ B.C.
4. Habakkuk demands from God the answer to two questions:
_____ and

5. Restate these questions in your own words.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW CAN GOD ALLOW INJUSTICE TO GO UNPUNISHED?

INTRODUCTION . . . Habakkuk 1:1

RV . . . The burden which Habakkuk a prophet did see.

LXX . . . The burden which the prophet Ambacum saw.

COMMENTS

Habakkuk introduces his written prophecy in words calculated to establish it as authentically from God. Translated "oracle" as often as burden, the introductory noun of verse one is a technical term to describe prophecy. * Cp. *Isaiah* 13:1, *Jeremiah* 23:33-40, *Zechariah* 9:1, *Malachi* 1:1) The prophet saw what he was about to write as a vision. (Cp. *Amos* 1:1, *Micah* 1:1)

One must either accept the prophecy as God's written word or reject it as the hallucination of a madman. Since history has long since proven its accuracy, the former seems more likely!

THE FIRST QUESTION . . . Habakkuk 1:2-4

RV . . . O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save. Why dost thou show me iniquity, and look upon perverseness? for descrution and violence are before me; and there is strife, and contention riseth up. Therefore the law is slacked, and justice doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore justice goeth forth perverted.

LXX . . . Hoy long, O Lord, shall I cry out, and thou wilt not hearken? how long shall I cry out to thee being injured, and thou wilt not save? Wherefore hast thou shewn me troubles and griefs to look upon, misery and ungodliness? judgment is before me, and the judge receives a reward. Therefore the law is frustrated, and judgement proceeds not effectually, for the ungodly man prevails over the just; therefore perverse judgement will proceed.

COMMENTS

The prophet addresses God, significantly by the name "Jehovah," revealed at the beginning of Israel's national existence. During the days of the patriarchs it was unknown. (cf. *Exodus* 6:3) At that time He was called El Shaddai. (cf. *Genesis* 17:1) Habakkuk's use of Yaweh, or Jehovah, here seems calculated to imply that God is neglecting a nation to whom He owes special concern.

HOW CAN GOD ALLOW INJUSTICE TO GO UNPUNISHED? 1:2-11

HOW LONG SHALL I CRY . . . v. 2

We usually phrase the question differently, "How can God allow . . . etc." Habakkuk says "How long." How long will God allow . . . etc. The thought is the same. If God is God, and we are His people . . . how, or how long can He allow us to suffer at the hands of unrighteous men or an unrighteous governmental system such as ruled Judah in the days of the prophet?

For a detailed discussion of the specific conditions that caused the prophet to so cry to God, read Amos or Micah. These wrote earlier, but the situation in Judah has not changed since they wrote, excepting perhaps to get progressively worse. Those who sought evil gain for themselves at the expense of their neighbors did not desist at Micah's warning of destruction.

Those who built the luxury of their metropolitan affluence upon the blood of the downtrodden had not repented at the preaching of the earlier prophets.

The drunkenness and excesses of the wealthy and powerful had not diminished since the Shepherd of Tekoah expressed his shock and predicted God's punishment.

Habakkuk's question is simply "why doesn't God do something about the situation?" He has more courage than we moderns. He addresses his questions directly to God Himself. He accuses God of not hearing when he prays. His prayers have lifted the specific sins of violence before God. In return he sees more and more of that about which he has prayed.

JEHOVAH'S ANSWER . . . Habakkuk 1:5-11

RV . . . Behold ye among the nations, and look, and wonder marvelously; for I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwellingplaces that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful; their judgement and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves; and their horsemen press proudly on: yea, their horsemen come from far; they fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour. They come all of them for violence; the set of their faces is forwards; and they gather captives as the sand. Yea, he scoffeth at kings, and princes are a derision unto him; he derideth every stronghold; for he heapeth up dust, and taketh it. Then shall he sweep by as a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty, even he whose might is his god.

LXX . . . Behold, ye despisers, and look, and wonder marvellously, and vanish: for I work a work in your days, which ye will in no wise believe, though a man declare it to you. Wherefore, behold, I stir up the Chaldeans, the bitter and hasty nation, that walks upon the breadth of the earth, to inherit tabernacles not his own. He is terrible and famous; his judgement shall proceed of himself, and his dignity shall come out of himself. And his horses shall bound more swiftly than leopards, and they are fiercer than the wolves of Arabia: and his horsemen shall ride forth, and shall rush from far; and they shall fly as an eagle hasting to eat. Destruction shall come upon ungodly men, resisting with their adverse front, and he shall gather the captivity as the sand. And he shall be at his ease with kings, and princes are his toys, and he shall mock at every strong-hold, and shall cast a mound, and take possession of it. Then shall he change his spirit, and he shall pass through, and make an atonement, saying, This strength belongs to my god.

COMMENTS

. . . IO, I RAISE UP THE CHALDEANS . . . v. 5

Jehovah's answer is not what the prophet expected. The answer to such prayers seldom is! Rather than magically producing Utopia for the nation by miraculously wiping out all the sin and injustice, God challenges Habakkuk to take a good look at the world situation . . . to consider the nations that lay beyond the border of Judah. The answer to the prophet's question lies beyond his narrow horizons. Just as the question is larger than one man or a single nation, so is the answer.

It is easy to overlook a very basic principle which is apparent again and again in Scripture. The principle is simply that God is the God of the whole world. He is not an absentee creator who has gone away and left us after having set certain forces and laws in operation. Nor is He the local God of Judah alone. Centuries after Habakkuk, Paul will tell the wisest men of his day, ". . . He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons (times) and the bond (boundaries) of their habitation . . ." (*Acts 17:26*)

This Jehovah of Judah is the God of all nations. He is Lord, not just of a single nation, but of all human history. Therefore, the answer to questions that plague all men are to be found in the larger arena of international and world activity, rather than in the confines of local

self-concerns. If we believed this, we would have missionaries in every corner of the globe.

So wide in scope and so universal in application is God's answer to injustice and social exploitation, that He tells the prophet, "*I am working a work in your days, which you will not believe though it be told you For lo, I raise up the Chaldeans . . .*"

The Chaldeans were a Semitic tribe from the south of Babylonia. Galling under the yoke of Assyria, they revolted in 625 B.C. against seemingly insuperable odds, and freed themselves from Assyrian domination. In alliance with the Medes and Scythians, they demolished the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612 B.C. (See Nahum) As rulers of the Neo-Babylonian empire, the Chaldeans soon broke off the alliance with the Medes.

In 609 B.C. the Babylonian army defeated Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo and broke the back of the Assyrian-Egyptian alliance. King Josiah died in this battle in a vain attempt to aid the delinquent Assyrian empire. (Cf. *II Kings* 23:29-30) Three years later the final defeat of Assyria came at Carchemish when Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians in a decisive encounter with Assyria and Egypt. (Cf. *Jeremiah* 46:2)

Having cast her lot with the Assyrian-Egyptian alliance, Judah soon fell prey to Babylonian domination. In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar dismembered Judah. He destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C.

It is this that Jehovah foretells in answer to Habakkuk's first question. Significantly, the Chaldean dominated Neo-Babylonian empire virtually began with the subjugation of Judah and ended when Cyrus, the Persian, in 539 B.C. overthrew the capital and decreed freedom for the Jews. God had prepared the Chaldeans (whose empire Babylon was) to redress His grievances with His people. This done, God raised up Cyrus to wipe out Babylon. We shall see later how this came about in answer to Habakkuk's second question.

THEY ARE TERRIBLE AND DREADFUL . . . v. 7

Here begins Jehovah's description to Habakkuk of the empire He is raising up to punish Judah. We need to read these verses not so much for the details, although they are vividly accurate, but for the overall impression the description made upon Habakkuk. Keeping the prophet's question in mind, we must agree with Jehovah's statement that He is working a work Habakkuk will not believe. (v. 5) Modern man also refuses to believe a just God of love will do such things!

The Chaldeans are described as irresistible in power and military methods. Wherever they went there was havoc. They were famous for

swift cavalry. Their bent for conquest would become the scourge of the earth. Kings and castles, to whom others looked for defense, were to them a laughing stock. They captured cities as easily as throwing up a mound of earth and advancing over it. Ominously, one of their chief characteristics was the taking of numberless slaves.

The Neo-Babylonians were essentially a commercial people, and one of their chief commodities was human chattel. Prices ranged from \$20 to \$65 for a woman and from \$5 to \$100 for a man, and the traffic was strictly controlled by law.

Babylonian slavery is of particular interest to us, for it was into this that Nebuchadnezzar led Judah. Female slaves belonged to their masters completely and most of them bore many children for their masters.

All of a slave's belongings were his master's. He could himself be sold at any moment or pledged for a debt. He could be put to death if it seemed good business to his owner. A reward for his capture was set by law, should he try to escape. He was subject to military conscription and for forced labor on roads. Most of the exquisite cities, especially Babylon herself, were erected by slave labor.

A slave might marry a free woman, and their children's freedom was guaranteed by law. He might be set up in business by his master, as indeed many of the Jews did, and liberated as a reward for faithful service.

The religion of Babylon has already been described in the introductory chapter on Baal worship. This despicable idolatry which earned for Babylon the name "Mother of Harlots," finds its roots in the earliest history of the "land of Nimrod." It flourished in the age of Babylon's great lawyer, Hammurabi (2123-2081 B.C.) and spread like a cancer round the fertile crescent, to Asia Minor, Greece and finally Rome. It seeped into northern Europe, and after the fall of Rome, when the Roman Catholic religio-political monolith ruled over the European dark ages . . . the saints and idols and even the lord to whom Europe prayed was not the covenant God of the Bible or His Son, but the reincarnation of Babylonian deities. As Will Durant so clearly states in his *Story of Civilization*, "Ishtar (the mother of Babylon's gods) interests us not only as analogue of the Egyptian Isis and prototype of the Grecian Aphrodite and the Roman Venus, but as formal beneficiary of one of the strongest Babylonian customs . . . and though her worshippers repeatedly addressed her as "The Virgin," "The Holy Virgin" and "The Virgin Mother," this merely meant that her amours were free from all taint of wedlock. *Note with what fervor the Babylonians could lift up to her throne*

litanies of laudation only less splendid than those which a tender piety once raised to the Mother of God." (Italics mine)

Such was the religion and such were its worshippers whom God raised up to punish His people for their failure to keep His covenant and for the social immorality which existed among them because they because they turned to the same gods.

Habakkuk's first question is answered! Jehovah will not long tolerate the evils that repel the prophet. He will raise up one of the most wicked nations in history to punish them.

Chapter XVI—Questions

How Can God Allow Injustice to Go Unpunished?

1. Habakkuk's opening words are calculated to establish what?
2. What is the significance of Habakkuk's use of the name "Jehovah?"
3. What caused Habakkuk to ask the first of his two questions?
4. What is God's answer? Summarize.
5. Who were the Chaldeans?
6. Why were the Chaldeans named here when it was Babylon who would chastise Judah?
7. What king of Judah died in the vain attempt to preserve Assyria against Babylon?
8. How does Jehovah describe the Chaldeans? (vs. 7-11)
9. What do you know of the religion of the Babylonian empire of Habakkuk's concern?

CHAPTER XVII

THE SECOND QUESTION

HABAKKUK 1:12-17

RV . . . Art thou not from everlasting, O Jehovah my God, my Holy One? we shall not die. O Jehovah, thou hast ordained him for judgment; and thou, O Rock, has established him for correction. Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he; and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? He taketh up all of

them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag: therefore he rejoiceth and is glad. Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his food plenteous. Shall he therefore empty his net, and spare not to slay the nations continually?

LXX . . . Art thou not from the beginning, O Lord God, my Holy One? and surely we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast established it for judgement, and he has formed me to chasten with his correction. His eye is too pure to behold evil doings, and to look upon grievous afflictions: wherefore dost thou look upon despisers? wilt thou be silent when the ungodly swallows up the just? And wilt thou make men as the fishes of the sea, and as the reptiles which have no guide? He has brought up destruction with a hook, and drawn one with a casting net, and caught another in his drags: therefore shall his heart rejoice and be glad. Therefore will he sacrifice to his drag, and burn incense to his casting-net, because by them he has made his portion fat, and his meats choice. Therefore will he cast his net, and will not spare to slay the nations continually.

COMMENTS

O JEHOVAH, MY GOD, MY HOLY ONE . . . v. 12(a)

God had warned Habakkuk he would not believe the answer to his question. (1:5) The prophet, upon hearing Jehovah's description of the Chaldeans whom He is raising up to punish the sins of Judah, recoils in shocked horror and incredulity.

The first half of verse twelve is, to the prophet, a rhetorical question. It answers itself in the asking of it. Jehovah *is* from everlasting! He *is* the God of Israel's prophets! He *is* Holy! Therefore, His people shall not die.

Here is the most succinct statement in all the Bible of the gross misconception the Jews had of their relationship to God. Their major premise, *ie.* the everlasting holy nature of God is correct, but their false conclusion, *ie.* that *they*, as a people, could not, therefore, die was based on a minor premise of their own devising!

In *The Story of the Jew Briefly Told*, published by Bloch Publishing Company with Jewish confirmation manual, Dr. Maurice H. Harris says, "It took centuries to grasp the concepts that God is wholly spirit and without material form, that He is the sole ruler of the universe, not sharing this power with other divinities; that He is omniscient,

Omnipresent, and eternal; that He is absolutely righteous and just in dealing with His children—not favoring Israel more than other people, though they were the first to recognize Him." (Italics mine)

Dr. Harris here places his finger on the problems of both the nation of Judah and the prophet Habakkuk. The first question asked by the prophet grew out of circumstances fostered by the failure of the people to understand that ". . . God is wholly spirit and without material form, that He is the sole Ruler of the universe . . ." This failure allowed the Jews again and again to fall into the worship of Baal. (See the discussion of Micah.)

The second question posed by the prophet (v. 12) resulted from their failure to understand that God ". . . is absolutely righteous and just in dealing with His children—not favoring Israel more than other people . . ."

Nahum's question to Nineveh on the eve of her doom was "*Art thou better than No-Amon . . . ?*" (Nahum 3:8) As we saw in our study of Nahum, No-Amon, the capital of Egypt, had been devastated by the Assyrians. Nahum would have the Ninevites know they are no better and hence no more assured of national survival than No-Amon. Had someone asked this same question of Judah on the eve of the Babylonian captivity, or of Habakkuk when he entered into his debate with God concerning God's use of the Chaldeans to punish Judah, both the nation and the prophet would have answered a resounding, "Yes!" They believed they *were* better.

If their superiority over other people was not evidenced in their unfaithfulness or their moral corruption, they believed that God's past dealings with their father's proved it.

They were mistaken. John the Baptist, centuries later, challenged the same attitude. (Cf. Luke 3:7-9)

The fundamental Jewish error is a misunderstanding, not only of the nature of God, but as well a misunderstanding of a doctrine which runs through both the Old and New Testaments. It is often called the "doctrine of Election." (We suggest just here that the reader review the chapters on the covenant in the introductory section and also my book, *Thus It Is Written*, College Press.)

This doctrine, that God is calling out of every kindred and race of man a people for His own possession, is inherent in the unfolding inspired interpretation of the work of God in history and makes up the bulk of the Old Testament Scripture. It is the entire burden of the Luke-Acts narrative and comes in for a detailed analysis in the writings of Paul, especially Ephesians, Romans, and Galatians. The Jews "were

made a heritage of God, having been foreordained according to the plan of Him who effects all things according to the council of His will." (*Ephesians* 1:11) This plan of God, which is the mystery hidden in times past to be revealed in Christ through the church, (*Ephesians* 3:1-16), never included the Jews or the nation of Israel simply for their own sakes or as an end in themselves.

God chooses whom He will *eg.* Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, *et al.* His choice is made not primarily from the standpoint of its advantage to the chosen.

Nor is His choice, even in the Old Testament, limited only to the physical descendants of Abraham. Paul illustrates this truth in *Romans* 9:14 by referring to *Exodus* 9:16. There God says to the Egyptian Pharaoh (who was anything but a Jew), "For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in the earth." In a similar vein, Jehovah might well have made a similar statement to the Chaldeans. (*Habakkuk* 1:6)

The perversion of the Biblical doctrine of election reaches its climax in those who commit themselves to a "dispensationalism" which makes the Jew *per se* the center of God's concern, both in the Bible and in the age to come. Such people believe about the Jew exactly what the Jew came to believe about himself. This belief blinds men to the revealed purpose of God's intervention in human history.

The point is, of course, that the *elect* or more accurately the *called* of God, whether individuals or nations, are never chosen for their own sakes merely, but that they are rather called to participate in God's eternal plan to offer the blessings of Abraham to all mankind.

O JEHOVAH . . . O ROCK . . . v. 12(B)

Habakkuk does not doubt God for a moment. Difficult as it is for him to accept the idea that God should raise up such as the Chaldeans to judge His people, the prophet immediately concedes: "Thou hast ordained him (the Chaldeans, particularly Nebuchadnezzar) and thou . . . hast established him for correction."

We must also not fail to recognize Habakkuk's conviction that God's people could not be wiped out is related to his understanding, quite correctly, that God is Himself eternal. His error was in identifying that people with a race and a nation, and in objecting to God's use of another nation and race to bring about His purposes.

The term "O Rock" applied to Jehovah is reminiscent of *Deuteronomy* 32:4 His use of it reflects Habakkuk's conviction that God's

work is perfect . . . His ways are just, even though they are beyond the prophet's own understanding.

Indeed, it is precisely because of what he knows about God, coupled with his Jewish nationalism that has caused him to so question Jehovah.

THOU THAT ART OF PURER EYES . . v. 13

Habakkuk knows God to be a pure God who cannot tolerate the presence of evil in His sight. Whatever else the Word teaches about God, it certainly affirms this truth, from Eden to Calvary.

How, then, the prophet asks, can such a God look on such perversiveness as is present among the Chaldeans? Why will He look on Babylon's destruction of Judah and hold His peace? His bias shows through when he asserts that the Jews of his day are more righteous than the Babylonians.

Two fallacies should be recognized at this point. First, Jehovah, in revealing His intention to raise up the Chaldeans against Judah, did not say He would overlook Babylon's evil. Divinely recorded history proves He did, in fact, no such thing.

Secondly, the insistence that Judah is more righteous than the Babylonians raises a moot question. They had adopted the Baal worship which originated in the Chaldeas. They had been unfaithful to Jehovah when they were the only people on earth who had His written word. Their behavior had consequently become so corrupt that it was the very reason God chose to raise up a pagan people to smite them.

. . . HE MAKEST MEN AS FISHES . . v. 14-17

The prophet reinforces his argument by changing his emphasis from the holy nature of God to the unholy nature of the Chaldeans' treatment of people. He first says that the incursion of the Chaldeans causes confusion. Like a school of fish or a swarm of insects, those struck by Babylon are left purposeless and leaderless. Then, in the confusion, the Chaldeans capture slaves like catching fish with various nets and devices.

It was indeed the practice of Nebuchadnezzar to lead away to slavery those who were the leaders of a conquered people. As we say, Micah promised that exactly this would happen. The practice, according to Micah, was *God's* device to punish those whose leadership had corrupted the nation.

In verse sixteen, Habakkuk adds that the success of the Chaldeans is the force of their own skill and power (rather than dependance upon God). They idolize themselves because of this (Cf. *Deuteronomy* 6:17,

cp. *Isaiah* 10:13, 37:24-25). To Habakkuk this is further evidence that Jehovah cannot use such a nation against his own people.

(Verse 17) Furthermore, asks the prophet, will there ever be an end to it, if God allows such a people as the Chaldeans to succeed against His chosen ones? This argument sounds extremely familiar to us today as we are asked to believe that God cannot control the evil forces of communism if these forces are allowed to prevail against us. Perhaps we, as Habakkuk, need to give serious attention to God's answer.

JEHOVAH'S ANSWER . . . Habakkuk 2:1-20

RV . . . I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint. And Jehovah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the righteous shall live by his faith, Yea, moreover, wine is treacherous, a haughty man, that keepeth not at home; who enlargeth his desire as Sheol, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges! Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booty unto them? Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein. Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil! Thou hast devised shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and has sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of Jehovah of hosts that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art

filled with shame, and not glory: drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised; the cup of Jehovah's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory. For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee, and the destruction of the beasts, which made them afraid; because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein. What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, even the teacher of lies, that he that fashioneth its form trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise! Shall this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But Jehovah is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

LXX . . . I will stand upon my watch, and mount upon the rock, and watch to see what he will say by me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision, and that plainly on a tablet, that he that reads it may run. For the vision is yet for a time, and it shall shoot forth at the end, and not in vain: though he should tarry, wait for him; for he will surely come, and will not tarry. If he should draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him: but the just shall live by my faith. But the arrogant man and the scorner, the boastful man, shall not finish anything; who has enlarged his desire as the grave, and like death he is never satisfied, and he will gather to himself all the peoples. Shall not all these take up a parable against him? and a proverb to tell against him? and they shall say, Woe to him that multiplies to himself the possessions which are not his! how long? and who heavily loads his yoke. For suddenly there shall arise up those that bite him, and they that plot against thee shall awake, and thou shalt be a plunder to them. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the nations that are left shall spoil thee, because of the blood of men, and the sins of the land and city, and of all that dwell in it. Woe to him that covets an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evils. Thou hast devised shame to thy house, thou hast utterly destroyed many nations, and thy soul has sinned. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beetle out of the timber shall speak. Woe to him that builds a city with blood, and establishes a city by unrighteousness. Are not these things of the Lord Almighty? surely many people have been exhausted in the fire, and many nations have fainted. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the

glory of the Lord; it shall cover them as water. Woe to him that gives his neighbour to drink the thick lees of wine, and intoxicates him, that he may look upon their secret parts. Drink thou also thy fill of disgrace instead of glory: shake, O heart, and quake, the cup of the right hand of the Lord has come round upon thee, and dishonour has gathered upon thy glory. For the ungodliness of Libanus shall cover thee, and distress because of wild beasts shall dismay thee, because of the blood of men, and the sins of the land and city, and of all that dwell in it. What profits it the graven image, that they have graven it? one has made it a molten work, a false image; for the maker has trusted in his work, to make dumb idols. Woe to him that says to the wood, Awake, arise; and to the stone, Be thou exalted! whereas it is an image, and this is a casting of gold and silver, and there is no breath in it. But the Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth fear before him.

COMMENTS

Having presented what sounds to himself like a conclusive argument against God's use of the Chaldeans to punish Judah, Habakkuk now declares he will simply stand and wait for Jehovah's answer. We do not know what answer he expected. Perhaps he thought Jehovah would acquiesce, as He did when Moses interceded following the unfaithfulness of the people shortly after the exodus. (*Exodus 39:9-ff*) In any event, the answer was not long in coming. The prophet is to write the vision (which is how the book of Habakkuk came into being). He is to make it plain upon tables.

National dealings were engraved upon wooden tables covered with wax. The engraving was made with a hot iron writing instrument and the plaque—or tablet thus engraved was hung in public in the temple. (cp. *Luke 1:63*) It is to be written so plainly that one running past could read it without stopping.

The idea seems to be that whoever reads the tablet engraved with God's answer to Habakkuk's complaint will run to whomever he can with the news. "Run" is used elsewhere for the urgent announcing of God's revealed truth. (cp. *Jeremiah 23:21, Revelation 22:17*)

In view of modern insistence upon the same complaints against God, it would seem that we too should adopt a sense of urgency. God's answer is still valid. Men need to know it now as in the day of the prophet.

(Verse 3) The message is to be committed to writing because the fulfillment of what is said lies in the future, from the point of view of those who first read it. "Write it down just as you receive it," says God, in effect, "then see if it doesn't happen just this way."

In this verse is stated a point which needs to be imprinted indelibly on the mind of anyone who ever doubted the divine inspiration of Scripture. What God said and the prophets wrote about the cataclysmic events of history was written well in advance of the events themselves. That these predictions were fulfilled to the letter years, sometimes centuries, later is conclusive proof to any honest scholar that they were not of human origin.

The predictive element of prophecy was one of the strongest evidences offered by the apostles of the truth of the Gospel. (eg. *Acts* 2:22-ff)

A generation ago it was the fad among the critics of the Bible to say that the predictive prophecies of the Bible were actually written after the fact, but recent scholarship, even of the most liberal persuasion, tends to accept the traditional dates of Scriptural writings. These dates place all predictive prophecies well before its fulfillment.

What God answers here, in reply to Habakkuk's second question, is a case in point. Having answered the first question with a prediction of Judah's punishment at the hands of the Chaldeans, He answers the second by predicting the destruction of the Chaldeans themselves by the Persians!

The years of Babylonian captivity will make the fulfillment of this vision seem to tarry. Nevertheless, those who read are to wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay.

(Verse 4-5) Jehovah begins His answer by setting forth a general principle. Whoever is puffed up in his own soul (whether Jew or Chaldean) will be punished. "The righteous," whether Jew or Chaldean (Paul will later say "to the Jew first but also to the Greek," *Romans* 1: 16117) "shall live by faith."

The contrast of the Bible between the godly and the ungodly is set forth in verse four in bold relief. It is not a contrast between "good" and "bad" *per se* but between the haughty soul who sets his will against that of God on the one hand and the one who lives by faith on the other. The New Testament will make this contrast even more sharply in terms of the carnal as opposed to the Spirit-directed. (eg. *Galatians* 5:16-25)

A word needs to be said here concerning the statement "the righteous shall live by his faith." As indicated above, Paul alludes to this

statement in *Romans 1:17*. In so doing, he quotes the Septuagint. There the text reads literally "but the righteous, out of my faith shall be living." The Greek of the New Testament in *Romans 1:17* reads literally "but the righteous out of faith shall be living."

There is a minor textual problem here. The Hebrew text, as represented in our American Standard Version has "his" faith in *Habakkuk 2:4*. The Septuagint in the same place has "my" faith. Paul's Greek omits both possessive pronouns and says simply "by (not my or his) faith."

The apostle has captured the essential truth of Habakkuk. In contrast to the overwhelming military might in which the Chaldeans trusted (*Habakkuk 1:13(b)-16*) and the Assyrian-Egyptian alliance upon which Judah had based her national security, the righteous shall stake his life upon his trust in God.

The Chaldeans would lay waste to Judah who trusted in Assyrian and Egyptian arms. Cyrus would one day bring the Chaldean empire of Babylon to her knees. Through it all, God would preserve His real people . . . the true Israel. (cf. discussion of Micah's prophecy concerning the remnant.)

Here is an eternal truth, and one God's people in the closing decades of the twentieth century would do well to learn. God deals with people on the basis of obedient faith not on the basis of misplaced national loyalty and military power, whether Chaldean, Jewish or American!

(Verse 6) There is an intriguing reference to wine here. The haughty, who depend on military might and alliances are pointed out as deceived by the treachery of it. When Babylon attacked Nineveh, the leaders of that city were indulging in a drunken revelry. When Babylon herself was taken, it was during Belshazzar's feast when he dared drink wine from the golden vessels of the temple of Jehovah. (cf. *Daniel 5:2-4*, 30 cp. *Proverbs 20:1*, 30:9)

The United States may one day fail in her own defense while our leaders are enjoying themselves in the endless round of Washington cocktail parties.

Of course one who objects to such things in our day is looked upon as being somewhat strange and fanatic . . . as were the prophets who tried in vain to warn Israel and Judah of the consequences of the same thing.

In verse five there begins a general description of those things characteristic of the Neo-Babylonian empire which carried in them the

seed of the destruction that awaited her. Cocktail party diplomacy was only one of those characteristics. The empire is presented as a haughty man. Just as Judah's pride went before her fall so would Babylon's contribute to the downfall of the empire.

Every ancient nation shared this weakness of pride. Each imagined itself to be the select or chosen people of a god who was superior to all other gods. This national deity would preserve his people and subordinate all other peoples to them. The Jews' flirtation with Baal, along with certain other influences, made them mistake Jehovah for such a nationalistic god. This is why Habakkuk asked his second question (1:12-f). Such haughtiness blinds any nation to the realities of international life.

The second characteristic of Babylon which contributed to his (the haughty man's) downfall was the inability to stay home. As Habakkuk pointed out (1:14-ff), the Chaldeans swept all people into their sphere of dominance as a fisherman snares a school of fish.

Here Jehovah agrees with the prophet's evaluation. The haughty man "enlarges his desire as Sheol." Sheol is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek Hades; the abode of the dead. It is never full but always seems eager to receive more and more people. Babylon is like this. Just as death is never satisfied, so Babylon is never satisfied . . . always seeking more victims.

This is a fatal obsession for any nation. Every world conqueror, from Alexander (or those who divided his kingdom following his untimely death) to Hitler has learned too late that he cannot encompass the earth and successfully control it.

A classic example is the British Empire. There was a time when Britannia could boast that the "sun never set on the Union Jack." But it did not last. Today England is at best a second rate power.

Even our own attempt to build a world wide economic empire has brought to us problems that seem insolvable and that threaten our national vitality beyond endurance.

The lust for power, as any other lust, carries in it the elements of its own death. (cf. *James 1:15*) It was indeed an attack upon Babylon by those who had once been her ally that brought the empire to destruction in the end.

So Jehovah predicts that those whom the Chaldeans conquer will one day take up a parable (or taunt) against them. This taunt forms the first of a series of woes through which Jehovah answers Habakkuk's second question.

THE FIRST WOE . . . v. 6(b)-8

As God's providential guidance of history will bring about Judah's chastisement at the hands of the Chaldeans, so it will bring about, in turn, the destruction of the Chaldeans. Just how this is to come about is described in the woes which Jehovah now pronounces against them.

The first woe is "to him that increaseth that which is not his." To see this principle in operation against the Babylonians, we must bear in mind that Judah was not the only nation to fall prey to the Chaldean's military expansionism. The Medes and Persians also came under the influence of Babylonian greed. And the time was not long in coming when they would together find the strength to do something very final about it.

This uprising reached its climax c. 532 B.C. when Cyrus and his Persians in collusion with certain Babylonian clerics made Babylon subject to the enlightened domination of Persia. For two subsequent centuries Babylon was ruled by the Persians.

God's promise to Habakkuk, in answer to the prophet's second question, is (v. 8) that this downfall of Babylon will be in punishment for her plundering and violence done not only to Judah but to other people as well.

THE SECOND WOE . . . v. 9-11

The second in the series of woes pronounced against Babylon in answer to Habakkuk's questioning is stated in verses 9, 10, and 11. It emphasizes the covetousness of Babylon in her aggressions against other peoples. The covetousness is beyond the "normal" greed of an aggressor nation. It is so extreme as to be fatal not only to the invaded nations, but to the invader.

Not content with national aggrandizement and the enriching of his own coffers, the ruler of Babylon steals enough from conquered peoples to enrich his whole nation or family.

This is precisely the sin of Jehoiachem for which God raised up Babylon in punishment (cf. *Jeremiah* 22:31). It will also destroy Babylon in turn.

The "nest on high" is figurative of the eagle (Job 39:27). Here it refers to the royal citadel. Babylon was famous for its towered zig-gurats.

To Babylon Jehovah says (v. 10) "Thou . . . hast sinned against thy soul." The empire raised up by God thus becomes guilty of her own destruction.

The very towers of Babylon, built by the blood of conquered peoples and supported by stolen loot, will cry out against her (v. 11). Her splendor is her downfall. Her glory is in her shame!

THE THIRD WOE . . . v. 12-14

The third woe, pronounced in verses twelve through fourteen, is brought about by the extreme cruelty of Babylon. Like her covetousness, her mercilessness against conquered people also contains the fatal poison of the empire.

This blood-thirstiness of Babylon was infamous throughout the ancient world. John uses it, as a familiar fact, in the symbolism of Revelation. (*Revelation 17:6*)

Those who are now laboring to build Babylon are laboring for the fire. (v. 11) That is, they are simply erecting those things which will be burned in the destruction of the city.

The significant truth here, for the sake of the prophet's question, is that it is of *Jehovah of hosts*. The moral principles which bring about the rise and fall of people and nations in the flow of history are not accidental. Neither are they the product of any process of social evolution. These principles are fixed by God. They are the same from age to age in all of man's international relationships. The nation which fails to recognize them and govern itself accordingly may expect to join all previous empires on the rubble heap of dead civilizations!

There is a purpose to God's rigid insistence that nations as well as men recognize and submit to His moral judgements. (v. 14) "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah . . ."

A word about "glory" may be helpful here. The term itself means literally "the essential nature" of a person. God's glory is His essential character *ie.* that which causes Him to be held in high repute among those who know Him.

By dealing with men and nations on the basis of fixed moral laws, Jehovah is revealing Himself to them. That nations are more often than not blind to this truth is to their detriment, not His!

Just as surely as God was preparing for the coming Christ by revealing Himself to Israel through the prophets and His written word, so He was preparing the nations for Christ through His dealings in history. That both Israel and the Gentile nations failed to learn what Jehovah taught simply underscores man's universal need for salvation. It certainly is not, as Habakkuk's questions would imply, and as modern agnostics insist, an indictment against God as unfair or unjust.

THE FOURTH WOE . . . v. 15-17

The fourth woe, with which Jehovah answers the prophet's second question, has to do with the drunkenness of the Babylonians. We have already remarked briefly on this. (see above on 2:5)

Against the practice of excessive drinking in Babylon, God sets in figurative speech the downfall of the empire. Babylon is pictured here as a drunken man. He is not only drunken himself, but like most drunkards, he influences others to share in his revelings.

The accusation is that the drinker shares the drink in order to look on his neighbor's nakedness. There is no genuineness of friendship here. Babylon only pretends to share "the good life" so as to lure his neighbors into alliances which will ultimately expose them to loss and shame.

Proud Babylon, the drunk, is himself not filled with glory as he supposes. His own nakedness is exposed and it is revealed to all the world that he is uncircumcised. He is not God's covenant people!

God will do to Babylon what Babylon has done to others. He will allow the empire to become corrupt to the extent that "foul shame" (literally vomit) will cover its glory.

Ironically, Babylon's final collapse came in the midst of a drunken revel. (*Daniel 5*) The imagery here is very appropriate! ..

In verse 17 the figure changes. From describing Babylon as a shameful drunk, Jehovah turns to describing him as a beast caught in a net trap.

"The violence done to Lebanon" reminds us that Lebanon was the gateway to Judah for the armies of Babylon. Also that the temple destroyed by the Babylonians was built of the cedars of Lebanon.

Just as men threatened repeatedly by the incursion of wild beasts become driven by fear to destroy the beasts, so Babylon's neighbors, subjected repeatedly to the brutalities of Babylon will one day be driven to destroy him.

THE FIFTH WOE . . . v. 18-20

The fifth woe against Babylon is introduced by a question (v. 18). "What," Jehovah asks, "is the profit of a graven image even to the one who makes it?"

As with all nations of ancient time, Babylon created gods in their own image and then relied upon these gods of their own making to lead, empower and preserve them. It is the futility of this practice that God points to in this woe.

Not only the covetousness and bloody violence of Babylon will contribute to the overthrow of the empire. The trust in man-made gods also will conspire to bring it about. The god in which they trust is dead, "*There is no breath in all the midst of it.*" Because they serve a dead god; they too shall die!

"Christian America" woke one day a few years ago to hear on television and read in major publications that "God Is Dead!" Perhaps there was more truth to the pronouncement than we realized. The gods of Roman and Protestant institutionalism . . . the god of economic materialism . . . the god of permissiveness and pleasure . . . the whole American pantheon is dead. Perhaps as we need to learn from the first four woes, so we need to learn from the fifth. The nation is doomed who worships a dead god!

In contrast (v. 20) to the dead god of Babylon, Jehovah is in His holy temple. Strange words, since the temple would, when the vision of Habakkuk came to pass, be in ruins. The obvious intent is that God does indeed not dwell in temples made with hands, whether those hands be Jewish or Babylonian.

A brief listing of the five woes may be helpful:

1. (v. 6) Woe to him who increases his possession of that which is not his.
2. (v. 9) Woe to him who gets evil gain in order to set himself above others.
3. (v. 12) Woe to him who builds his great cities on the suffering of downtrodden people.
4. (v. 14) Woe to him who involves others in his sin in order to exploit them.
5. (v. 19) Woe to those who worship dead gods.

These woes reveal eternal truth which explains in varying degrees the downfall of every collapsed civilization.

Chapter XVII—Questions

The Second Question

1. Show how God's answer to Habakkuk's first question gave rise to the second question.
2. State the prophet's second question in your own words.
3. Show how the Jews' misconception of themselves as God's people is reflected in Habakkuk's second question.

4. What two concepts did the Jews find hard to grasp? (As stated by Dr. Maurice Harris)
5. Show how Nahum's question to Nineveh (*Nahum* 3:8) could be asked here of Judah.
6. What do you understand is the Biblical doctrine of "election?"
7. How does dispensationalism pervert the doctrine of election?
8. What word more accurately states the idea of election?
9. What is implied by Habakkuk's use of the term "O Rock" in reference to Jehovah?
10. What two falacies combine to confuse Habakkuk in reference to God's purity and Babylon's impurity?
11. Describe the activity of the Babylonians toward neighboring nations.
12. In a sentence, what is Jehovah's answer to Habakkuk's second question?
13. List the five woes with which God gives His answer.
14. Show how these woes describe eternal principles in God's dealing with nations in history.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PROPHET'S POETIC PRAYER

VISION OF GOD IN JUDGEMENT . . . Habakkuk 3:1-15

RV . . . A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, set to Shigionoth. O Jehovah, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid: O Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years; In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, And the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; He had rays coming forth from his hand; And there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence. And fiery bolts went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth; He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; And the eternal mountains were scattered; The everlasting hills did bow; His goings were as of old. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was Jehovah displeased with the rivers? Was thine anger against the rivers, Or thy wrath against the sea, That thou didst ride upon thy horses, Upon thy chariots of salvation? Thy bow was made quite bare; The oaths to the tribes were a sure word. Thou didst

cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains saw thee, and were afraid; The tempest of waters passed by; The deep uttered its voice, And lifted up its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation. At the light of thine arrows as they went, At the shining of thy glittering spear. Thou didst march through the land in indignation; Thou didst thresh the nations in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, For the salvation of thine anointed; Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked man, Laying bare the foundation even unto the neck. Thou didst pierce with his own staves the head of his warriors: They came as a whirlwind to scatter me; Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. Thou didst tread the sea with thy horses, The heap of mighty waters.

LXX . . . A PRAYER OF THE PROPHET AMBACUM, WITH A SONG. O Lord, I have heard thy report, and was afraid; I considered thy works, and was amazed: thou shalt be known between the two living creatures, thou shalt be acknowledged when the years draw nigh; thou shalt be manifested when the time is come; when my soul is troubled, thou wilt in wrath remember mercy. God shall come from Thaeman, and the Holy One from the dark shady mount Pharan. His excellence covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness shall be as light; there were horns in his hands, and he caused a mighty love of his strength. Before his face shall go a report, and it shall go forth into the plains, the earth stood at his feet and trembled: he beheld, and the nations melted away: the mountains were violently burst through, the everlasting hills melted at his everlasting going forth. Because of troubles I looked upon the tents of the Ethiopians: the tabernacles also of the land of Madiam shall be dismayed. Wast thou angry, O Lord, with the rivers? or was thy wrath against the rivers, or thine anger against the sea? for thou wilt mount on thine horses, and thy chariots are salvation. Surely thou didst bend thy bow at sceptres, saith the Lord, The land of rivers shall be torn asunder. The nations shall see thee and be in pain, as thou dost divide the moving waters: and deep uttered her voice, and raised her form on high. The sun was exalted, and the moon stood still in her course: thy darts shall go forth at the light, at the brightness of the gleaming of thine arms. Thou wilt bring low the land with threatening, and in wrath thou wilt break down the nations. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, to save thine anointed: thou shalt bring death on the heads of transgressors; thou hast brought bands upon their neck. Thou didst cut asunder the heads of princes with amazement, they shall

tremble in it; they shall burst their bridles, they shall be as a poor man devouring in secret. And thou dost cause thine horses to enter the sea, disturbing much water.

COMMENTS

Having been answered in no uncertain terms by God Himself, Habakkuk bows in prayer. There are no further questions, only the recognition of God's sovereign authority over nations and peoples and a hymn of faith.

The prayer of recognition comprises verses 1-15 of chapter three. The hymn of faith comprises the remainder of the book. This chapter will become well used by the Jews in intercession and meditation during the years of Babylonian captivity.

(Verse 1-2) Habakkuk owns the receipt of God's answer to his questions and the impression made upon him by the answers. He confirms having heard Jehovah's speech. (*v. 2*)

In 2:1 he had set himself to see how God would answer his unanswerable logic. Now he knows. He is struck with consternation by Jehovah's response. His concern now turns to Judah during the impending captivity. He is concerned lest they be utterly rooted out from being kept so long. He prays that, as God has manifest Himself in this vision, so He will strengthen the people "in the midst of the years."

The prophet prays earnestly that *for the elects'* sake these days of trouble may be shortened or the trouble of those days mitigated and the people supported and comforted.

Interestingly, this intercessory prayer is couched in terms of concern for "thine own work" rather than in the terms of national pride as was used in challenging God with the second question. (1:12-ff) Apparently Habakkuk has become convinced that the people were for God's sake rather than their own.

Rather than praying for national or racial glory, he now entreats God to act for His own honor and praise.

Even those who are under God's wrath must not despair of His mercy! The prophet has learned the ultimate lesson. Men must *trust* God rather than instructing Him.

(Verse 3-15) It has been the usual practice of God's people, when in distress and ready to fall in despair, to help themselves by recollecting their experiences, and reviving them, (*cp. Psalm 77:5*) and pleading

them with God in prayer, as He seems sometimes to plead with Himself. (cp. *Isaiah* 63:11)

So the prophet here looks back to God's first forming of His people, when He brought them miraculously out of Egypt into Canaan, which was then possessed by mighty nations. These words and wonders done in time past are magnificently described here to encourage greater faith on the part of the people during captivity.

1. God appeared in His glory, as never before nor since (v. 3,4). The visible display on Mount Sinai (*Deuteronomy* 33:2) is meant. Then "the Lord came down . . ." in a cloud (*Exodus* 19:20). He appeared as a devouring fire. His glory covered the heavens which glowed with the reflection of His appearance. "The earth was full of His praise" (or splendor) as people at a distance saw the cloud and fire on Mount Sinai and marvelled at Israel's God.

His brightness outshone the sun. Even Moses' face glowed when he came down from the Mount. The rays shone not directly from the face of God but around the side of His hand as He hid His face. There was a hiding of His power.

2. The prophet's prayer turns (v. 5) to the plagues by which God had delivered the people from Pharaoh. The pestilence which slew the first-born, the burning coals when the plague of hail mingled with fire, the diseases which blasted Egypt . . . these were "at His feet" . . . at His coming . . . at His command.

3. He divided Canaan to His people Israel, and expelled the nations before them. (v. 6) (cp. *Deuteronomy* 32:8-9) He exerted such power that the nations which stood in Israel's way crumbled and fell as the walls of Jericho. The mountain shook, even Sinai. (*Psalms* 68:7-8)

And "His ways are everlasting." He has lost none of His terrible power. All the nations still rise and fall at His command. (Habakkuk has learned his lesson well.)

Jehovah's covenants are unchangeable, despite outward appearances. His mercy endures forever.

All the inhabitants of the neighboring nations are called to note the lesson the prophet has learned. Cushan and the Midianites are especially to take warning.

In the days of Othniel, God delivered Cushan into his hand. (*Judges* 3:8) In the days of Gideon, a barley cake, in a dream, overthrew the tent of Midian. (*Judges* 7:18) Habakkuk sees in these historic events the same principles Jehovah has set forth in the five woes.

4. He divided the Red Sea and the Jordan when they stood between Israel and God's purpose in the people. (v. 8) One might have thought God was displeased with the rivers and that His wrath was against the sea; had one been unaware of God's purpose in this activity.

As a general at the head of an army, so God rode at the head of Israel in His chariots of salvation. Habakkuk returns to this in v. 15. When they came to enter Canaan, the Jordan, which at that time of year overflows its banks, was divided. (*Joshua 3:15*) When the difficulties in the way of Israel's salvation seem insuperable as an overflowing river, then God in His might breaks them as He divided the waters.

"*The deep uttered his voice*" (v. 10), *ie.* the Red Sea and the Jordan were divided, the waters roared and made noise as though sensible to Jehovah's restraint. "*They lifted up their hands (or sides) on high,*" for the waters "*stood upon a heap.*" (*Joshua 3:16*) The Lord was mightier than they. (*Psalms 90:3-4*)

With the dividing of the Jordan and the sea, notice is again given to the "*trembling of the mountain*" as if the stopping of the waters gave a shock to the adjacent hills. (*Psalms 114:3-4*) The whole creation is yielded to God.

5. He arrested the sun and the moon to bring about Israel's victories (v. 11). (Cp. *Joshua 10:12-ff*) Attempts have been made by defenders of the Bible to explain this phenomena on scientific terms. Some such attempts have smacked of dishonesty. We will do better to take God at His word in such matters. Once we have accepted the principle of direct divine intervention in human history, such "miracles" are no problem.

6. He carried on and completed Israel's victories over the nations of Canaan. (*Psalms 136:17-18*) This is largely insisted upon here as a proper plea with God to enforce the present petition, that He will restore them again to the land of which they were put in possession at the cost of so many lives and miracles.

Many expressions are used here to describe the conquest of Canaan. God's *bow was made naked*, *ie.* drawn from its case. He *marched through the land in indignation*, as scorning to let the Canaanites any longer possess it. He *threshed through the nations*, despising their confederacies. He *wounded the head . . . of the house of wicked men*, *ie.* he destroyed the families of the Canaanites.

Some question how a loving God could do what He did to the Canaanites. God answered that question to Habakkuk's satisfaction in chapters one and two.