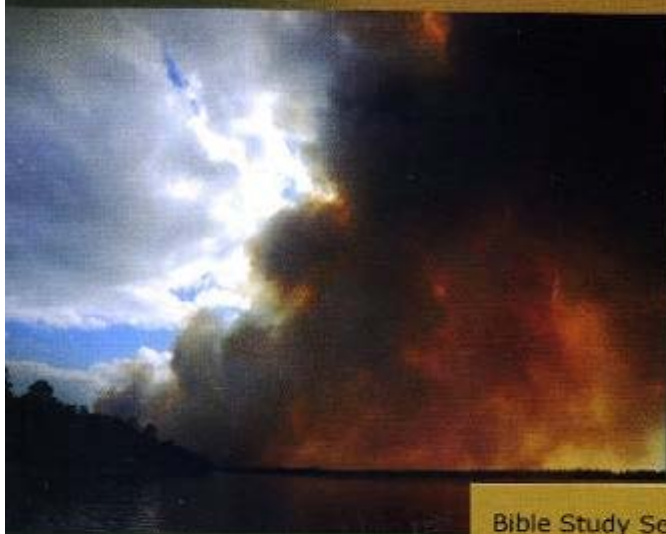


Messengers of Judgment and Glory

Studies in the Minor Prophets



Bible Study Series

A.E. Horton

Messengers of Judgment and Glory

The Minor Prophets

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Introduction

Prophets were men who spoke for God. God spoke to them, and they told His words to the people. We can see how God spoke through prophets even in the times of the New Testament. Indeed, all the words of Scripture, the words inspired by God in the Bible, are words which were written by prophets. They are God's words which He caused men to write down.

Now when God spoke through the prophets, He often spoke about things which were going to happen in the future. Therefore many people, when they think about prophecy, only think of God's telling about things which are still going to happen. So they think that the books of the prophets are the books from Isaiah to Malachi. All those men spoke God's words, warning people, telling them of things which were going to happen, and telling them about coming judgment and blessing.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel are called "The Major Prophets," that is, the greater prophets, partly because their books are larger than some of the others. The prophets from Hosea to Malachi are called "The Minor Prophets." That is partly because their books are smaller and because they do not speak of as many things as some of the others do. But their words are God's words and are very important. In this book we want to read about the books of the minor prophets and to think about their words.

Do not read this book by itself. Read first the whole book of the prophet you want to study. If you can, read it many times. Then read these words, looking again at the words of the prophet you are reading about. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read.

Hosea

Hosea prophesied during the time when Isaiah and Amos and Micah spoke. See Hosea 1:1, Isaiah 1:1, Amos 1:1, and Micah 1:1. Read the stories of the kings mentioned in Hosea 1:1 and in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. When Hosea spoke, the kingdom was divided into two parts. There was the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. See 1 Kings chapter 12. If you read the books of the Kings, you will see that many of the kings of Judah kept God's laws. But there were not any of the kings of Israel who knew God or obeyed Him. From the time of the first Jeroboam, the kings of Israel had been idolaters and had worshiped calves made of gold (read 1 Kings 12:25-33). Hosea refers to these calves several times, 8:5,6; 10:5; 13:2.

Although four kings of Judah are spoken of and only one king of Israel in 1:1, Hosea's prophecy covered the time of several kings of Israel too. Hosea continued prophesying until about the time that Israel was finally carried into captivity, 2 Kings 18:9-12. His prophecy was a warning to Israel that God was going to judge them for their sins. God always tried to warn His people, but they would not listen. That is what he meant in 4:4. See also Jeremiah 35:15. Although Hosea warned Israel, he also told Judah not to do as Israel had done, 4:15. But he warned Judah that they also will some day be punished for their sins, 5:5,10.

Note that Hosea referred often to Israel and also to Ephraim, 5:1-3. Both names refer to the northern kingdom, that of Israel. The first Jeroboam rebelled against King Rehoboam and became the first king of Israel, 1 Kings 12:12-20. Jeroboam was of the tribe of Ephraim, 1 Kings 11:26. Probably that is why the northern kingdom is so often called Ephraim as well as Israel.

The prophecy of Hosea may be divided into three parts:

- (1) The prophet as a sign, chapters 1 to 3.
- (2) The prophet as a spokesman, chapters 4 to 13.
- (3) The final appeal and promise, chapter 14.

If we outline the messages in the first part, we can describe Hosea's prophecy like this:

1. The prophet as a sign, chapters 1 - 3

- a. His marriage, 1:2,3
- b. His children, 1:4 - 2:1
 - Jezreel, 1:4,5
 - Lo-Ruhamah, 1:6,7
 - Lo-Ammi, 1:8,9
 - Promise of blessing, taken from the three names, 1:10 - 2:1
- c. The unfaithful wife, 2:2-23
- d. His going after his wife, 3:1-5

2. The prophet as a spokesman, chapters 4 - 13

3. Final appeal and promise, chapter 14

1. The prophet as a sign, chapters 1 – 3

God told Hosea to do some things which would be like signs to Israel.

God told Hosea to marry a woman who was an adulteress, 1:2,3. This was to be a sign of how God loved Israel who had gone astray from Him. God often spoke of Israel as married to Him like a wife to her husband. So when Israel began to worship false gods, God often said that this was like a wife going to other men besides her husband. Israel should have worshiped God alone, just as a woman should be faithful to her true husband. So God often calls idolatry adultery, 4:12-14; 5:3. Other prophets were also told to do things which would be like signs. See Isaiah 20:2-4, for example.

Then Hosea's children were called names which were like signs, 1:4 - 2:1.

The first son was called Jezreel, 1:4,5. This name was a sign of several things. First, it referred to Jehu's great sin at Jezreel, for which God was going to judge Jehu's family. See 2 Kings 10:1-14. God allowed only four of Jehu's sons to reign, 2 Kings 10:30. The fourth was Zechariah, who was killed, as we read in 2 Kings 15:10, after Hosea had spoken about it here. Second, the punishment of Israel was to come on them in a valley called Jezreel, 1:5. Finally, the name was a sign of God's future blessing on His people, 1:11; 2:22.

Then Hosea had a daughter called "Lo-Ruhamah", 1:6,7. That means "not pitied" in Hebrew. God was not going to have pity on Israel any longer. He had warned the people of Israel, and they had not listened. Now He was going to punish them without mercy. Compare 5:9,10,14; 13:7,8. But He would have pity on the people of Judah and save them. We see in 2 Kings 18:13 - 19:37 how that was fulfilled.

Finally, Hosea had another son called "Lo-Ammi", 1:8,9. That means "not My people" in Hebrew. God had called Israel His people. But they had chosen sin and idols instead of God, and so He was going to cast them off.

But He would not cast them off forever. The time would come when He would again bless Israel and multiply them, 1:10 - 2:1. In that time, those whom He had called "not My people" ("Lo-Ammi", 1:9) He would again call "My people" ("Ammi", 2:1). Those whom He had called "not pitied" ("Lo-Ruhamah", 1:6) would be "pitied" ("Ruhamah", 2:1) again. In Romans 9:25,26 these words are applied to all people whom God is saving now through Christ. But it refers first to the coming time when God shall again gather Israel and Judah together in their own land. Then they will not be two kingdoms again, but one, 1:11. This will be after the Lord Jesus comes back to be King. The name "Jezreel" means "sowing of God". God will some day sow Israel like seed in their own land.

Chapter 2 tells us about the unfaithful wife. It has both warning and promise. It would seem that Hosea's wife was not faithful to

him, just as Israel was not faithful to God. And God speaks through Hosea to Israel. Some of the words have a double meaning, both to Hosea's wife and to Israel. "Your mother" in verse 2 refers both to Hosea's wife and to the city of Samaria, which was the capital of Israel. The "children" are both Hosea's wife's children and the people of Israel. The "adulteries" are both the adulteries of Hosea's wife and the idolatries of Samaria and Israel. Israel thought that the false gods had made them prosperous, so Israel followed them, 2:5. The Israelites did not realize that it was God who gave them the things which they enjoyed, 2:8. Because of their unfaithfulness to Him, God was going to punish them if they did not repent, 2:2-13. But in the last days He would again bring Israel back to Himself, and He would bless them, 2:14-23. ("Ishi" in verse 16 means "my husband"; "Baali" means "my master".) Then again He would call Israel "My people" as at the first, 2:23. See also 6:1-3; 11:10,11; 12:9; 13:14.

In chapter 3, Hosea is told to go and to get his wife back. So he buys her back to himself. This is a picture of how God will bring Israel back to Himself in the last days.

2. The prophet as a spokesman, chapters 4 – 13

The prophet's messages to Israel and Judah are found in chapters 4 to 13. It is not easy to give an outline of these messages. We may notice the sins for which God condemned Israel. He saw that there was no faithfulness, no goodness, and that there was no one who really knew God, 4:1. There was swearing of oaths, but no one kept their promises. There was much murder, stealing, and adultery, 4:2; 7:1. There was much drinking and drunkenness, 4:11; 7:5. Note how he says in 4:11 that drinking and adultery take away sound judgment from people. That is a good thing to remember. He condemns them especially for worshiping idols, 4:12-14,15-17; 5:3; 8:4-6,11-14; 9:1; 10:2,5; 11:2; 12:11; 13:1,2. Evidently they had these idols in many places besides Bethel and Dan, for God mentioned Gilgal, 4:15; 9:15; 12:11, Beth Aven, 4:15; 5:8; 10:5-8, and

spoke of Israel's many altars, 8:11. For the references to Gibeah in 9:9 and 10:9, see Judges 19. For the reference to Baal Peor in 9:10, see Numbers 25:1-3.

Evidently when Israel was in trouble, they sought help from Assyria and from Egypt but not from God, 12:1. This is what is meant in 7:8 by "mixing himself among the peoples". See also 7:11. In the time of judgment some of them would flee into Egypt, but they would be punished even there, 9:6. Most of the people would be taken to Assyria, 11:5. This is what really happened, 2 Kings 18:9-12.

Although God spoke of judgment, His love is seen in His pleading with His people, in His sorrow that He must punish them, 11:8,9, and in His promise that He will eventually have pity on them again.

3. Final appeal and promise, chapter 14

Hosea's prophecy closes with a final appeal to Israel to repent, 14:1-3, with the promise of future blessing, 14:4-8, and with a call to wise men to consider God's ways, which are always right, 14:9.

MESSENGERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 1 Hosea

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. Hosea prophesied during the time of
 - a) Abraham and Isaac.
 - b) Isaiah and Amos.
 - c) Paul and Barnabas.

2. God told Hosea to marry a woman who had been an adulteress. This was a sign of
 - a) how God loved Israel.
 - b) how the law was being changed.
 - c) how God can overlook sin.

3. Hosea had three children whose names had special meanings. They were
 - a) Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
 - b) Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ami.
 - c) Baali, Ishi, and Ammi.

4. God was displeased with Israel because of their
 - a) unfaithfulness and immorality.
 - b) dealings with the prophets.
 - c) influence on the pagan people.

5. During Hosea's time when Israel was in trouble they
 - a) fasted and prayed to God.
 - b) called for the prophets.
 - c) sought for help from Assyria and from Egypt.

Enter TRUE or FALSE for the following-

6. During the time of Hosea's prophecy the kingdom was still divided into two parts.
7. Hosea's prophecy was a warning to Israel that God was going to judge them for their sin.
8. Even though Hosea's wife was an adulteress, she was faithful to him.
9. Hosea's wife came back to him when he bought her for himself.
10. Hosea's wife was a picture of Israel. They needed to return to God from serving idols.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Hosea reveals a number of sins on which God's judgement falls. Which do you find the most challenging for today?

Joel

We do not know for certain when Joel prophesied. The first verse of his book does not tell us anything about him but the name of his father. People think that probably Joel prophesied in Judah before it was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar's armies, 2 Kings 25. Some think that possibly Joel was the first prophet whose words we have today in writing, but we can not be sure about that.

Joel's prophecy speaks first of an invasion of the land of the Jews by a terrible plague of locusts. But while he was speaking about the locusts, he was thinking also of something else. He was thinking of a great army of men which is going to destroy the land. So you will see that many of his sayings have a double meaning. Sometimes he spoke of the locusts, sometimes of the armies of men, and sometimes of both together. You will often find this double meaning in prophecy. We have seen it already in Hosea 2, where the prophet spoke of his wife and Israel together with the same words.

You will see another thing in Joel which is common in prophecy. When he speaks of things to come, we will see how his words have already been fulfilled, but also how they will be fulfilled in the future. This we may call "double fulfillment".

We may outline Joel like this:

1. The plague of locusts, 1:2-20

- a. The destruction of the land, 1:2-12
- b. Call to seek mercy from God, 1:13,14
- c. No food for man or animal, 1:15-20

2. The invading armies (locusts and men), 2:1-32

- a. The invasion itself, 2:1-11
- b. Call to seek mercy from God, 2:12-17
- c. The invaders destroyed, 2:18-20

- d. Blessing in the land, 2:21-32
 - Plenty, 2:21-27
 - The Holy Spirit, 2:28-32

3. The judgment of the nations, 3:1-21

- a. Predicted, 3:1-8
- b. Preparation, 3:9-13
- c. Performance, 3:14-17
- d. Permanence, 3:18-21

1. The plague of locusts, 1:2-20

Chapter 1 speaks of the invasion of locusts. The locusts had come into the land in great numbers. The plague was worse than the old men had ever seen, 1:2. It was so terrible that people would talk about it for many years to come, 1:3. Verse 4 tells how the locusts came in bands, probably at different times of their growing, and ate up everything. The land was made bare. Vines, fruit trees, and fields were all destroyed, 1:5-12. There is a double meaning in verse 7. "My vine" and "my fig tree" probably mean the prophet's own vine and fig tree. But the vine and the fig tree are both pictures of Israel in Scripture. Not only the land was destroyed. It was the people who really suffered.

The prophet told them to gather together and to seek mercy from God, 1:13,14. *Sackcloth*, v.13, was a very coarse kind of cloth made from goats' hair. It was worn to show sorrow and repentance.

No food was left in the land, either for men or for animals, 1:15-20. Evidently there was a great lack of rain as well, 1:20. "The day of the Lord" is a phrase often used in prophecy. It refers to the day when the Lord shows His power in judgment, and also His glory. Sometimes it is used of a judgment which is going to come. Here it is used of God's judgment in the plague of locusts. Often it is used (as in 2:31) for the judgment of the nations when the Lord comes back again. God allows men to do as they wish for a time. He warns them, but He does not stop them if they wish to do wrong. That time

is like "man's day". Men then think that God is not important because He does not punish them right away. But finally *the day of the Lord* comes in judgment, and then men find that it does not pay to disobey Him.

2. The invading armies, 2:1-32

Chapter 2 tells of the invading armies. Here we find double meaning, both locusts and men being in view.

Joel described the invasion itself in 2:1-11. It is *the day of the Lord*, a day of darkness. Here is a double meaning. The locusts would come in clouds and darken the sun. But "darkness" also means trouble and sorrow. In verse 2 he refers to the armies of people. Just as there never before had been such a plague of locusts, and never would be again, so the coming invasion of the land would be the worst thing that had ever happened to it. We will see shortly what Joel was thinking of. Verse 3 speaks of the destruction caused by the locusts, and by the coming armies. Everything was destroyed, as if a fire had passed over the land. In verses 4 to 11 he spoke of the activity of the invaders as they covered the land. It is a picture of the steady advance of the locusts, and also of the coming armies. Some people have thought that there is a reference to modern war machines. It may be so, but we would not say for certain. In verse 11 we see that the invasion is like God's judgment on the people.

There is a call to repent in 2:12-17. The people even yet should turn to the Lord with all their hearts, 2:12. *Rend your hearts and not your garments*, 2:13, means that they should really be sorry and not just pretend to be. Tearing their garments was a sign of sorrow. But one could make the sign of sorrow without really being sorry for his sins. God hates all such pretending and is not deceived by it. The people should earnestly pray to the Lord for mercy, 2:15-17.

In 2:18-20 he spoke of the destruction of the invaders when the people sought the Lord's help. Let us see how this prophecy was to be fulfilled. (1) In the first place, it was probably fulfilled when the people repented and prayed to God, and He caused the locusts to be

blown back into the sea and destroyed. The *northern army*, 2:20, would mean that they had come in from the north. (2) It was at least partly fulfilled when the king of Assyria invaded the land and when his army was destroyed by the Lord, 2 Kings chapters 18 and 19. (3) Its final fulfillment is to be in the time when the Lord returns in glory. The nation of Israel will then be back in its own land (as it is today), but not knowing the Lord Jesus. Then the armies of the nations will come in from the north, and they will destroy the land. They will come against Jerusalem and conquer it. The Jews will suffer terribly. Those who are left will cry to the Lord for help. Then the Lord Jesus will appear in glory. He will drive the armies back toward the north, will destroy them, and will save the Jews from being destroyed. See Micah 4:12,13; Zechariah 14:1-5; Revelation 19:19-21.

In 2:21-32 Joel speaks of the blessing on the land which would follow. This is a double blessing, and each part of it has a double fulfillment.

First, the land would bring forth plenty of food, 2:21-27. This probably had a first fulfillment after the locusts were destroyed. But it tells us especially of the blessings of plenty which will come on the earth when the Lord comes to be King. Then there will be no lack of food for men or for animals. Then Israel will praise the Lord who has delivered them from their enemies and has blessed them, 2:26. Then the Lord Himself will be seen in the midst of His people Israel, and they will never again be conquered or destroyed, 2:27. See again Hosea 2:21-23; 14:4-8, and also Amos 9:14,15.

Second, the Holy Spirit will come upon all the Lord's people, 2:28-32. This also has a double fulfillment. The first fulfillment we find in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit came on all the disciples on the day of Pentecost. See Peter's word in Acts 2:17-21. But its final fulfillment will be after the Lord comes. Then the Holy Spirit will be greatly active and will be constantly speaking to men, 2:28. Verses 30 and 31 refer especially to the signs which will be seen before the Lord comes in glory. See 3:15 and Matthew 24:29,30, where the "tribulation" is that time of great trouble yet to

come on the Jews just before the Lord Jesus comes again. Here in Joel 2:31 we see that "the day of the Lord" refers to the day when He will punish His enemies in great anger. Verse 32 has a double fulfillment. All who call on the Name of the Lord now are saved, Romans 10:13. And all who will call on the Name of the Lord in that day will be saved from the enemy.

3. The judgment of the nations, 3:1-21

Chapter 3 tells of the same things as chapter 2 in speaking of the armies coming into the land. But there is a difference. In chapter 2, Joel speaks of the trouble of Israel, from which the Lord will deliver them. In chapter 3, he speaks of the invasion of the land as God's way of bringing punishment on the nations. Here we see that the invasion has a double purpose. It is to purify God's people and to bring them to repentance, and it is to punish their enemies as well.

We have the judgment predicted (that is, told about before it happens) in 3:1-8. God is going to judge the nations for the way they have treated the Jews. God allowed them to trouble the Jews: that is, He has not saved the Jews from their trouble, because the Jews rejected their Savior, Christ. But He does not forget how cruelly the nations have treated the Jews, and in that big invasion He will punish them. *Jehoshaphat* in verses 2 and 12 means *Jehovah judges*. The invaders say that they are gathering in order to destroy the Jews. But God says that He is gathering them in order to destroy them.

In 3:9-13 there is a description of the nations preparing for the battle. This gathering together is spoken of in Revelation 16:13-16. For verse 13, see Revelation 14:14-20, which refers to the great destruction of the multitudes in that day. In order to understand the reference to the *press* and to the *treading* in Revelation 14, you should know that in the east, wine is made by putting the grapes into a wine-press (which is a hole or hollow place in stone) and treading on them with the feet to press out the juice. The juice comes out red in color. It is called the *blood of the grape* in the Bible, Deuteronomy 32:14. (That is one reason why wine is used as a picture of the blood of the Lord Jesus in the Lord's Supper.) So the

destruction of the armies is spoken of here like grapes being thrown into the wine-press and trodden to squeeze out the blood or juice. *The press is full*, 3:13, is like saying that the armies are all gathered and are ready to be destroyed.

Verses 14 to 17 tell of the performance of the judgment. The signs of 2:31 and Matthew 24:29,30 are seen. Then the Lord Jesus comes forth with a great shout; there is a terrible earthquake (see Haggai 2:6), and the armies are beaten back and destroyed. See again Zechariah 14:1-5. But the Lord's people will be protected by Him and will come to know Him. They will then realize that Christ, whom they have rejected all these years, is really "Jehovah the Savior" (that is what His Name "Jesus" really means), and they shall be saved. See Zechariah 12:10-14.

In verses 18 to 21 we read of the permanent blessing which is to come afterwards upon Israel. There is to be great plenty of everything. For the *fountain* of verse 18, see Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Zechariah 14:8. This may have a double meaning. It may be a real stream of water, and it may also picture a great stream of life and blessing. Israel's enemies shall be desolate forever, 3:19, but the Jews shall never again suffer loss, 3:20, see 2:27.

MESSENGERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 2 Joel

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. Joel speaks of an invasion. This invasion consisted of
 - a) frogs and flies.
 - b) armies of men who came by ship.
 - c) locusts.
2. God promised that He would pour out His Spirit,
 - a) but this has never been fulfilled.
 - b) and this was first fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.
 - c) and it will be fulfilled just before Christ comes.
3. Which phrase is often used in prophecy to indicate the Lord's power in judgment and glory?
 - a) "the Day of the Lord"
 - b) "God is love"
 - c) "and it came to pass"
4. After Joel warned the people about the coming invasion, God expected them to
 - a) prepare for a great battle.
 - b) repent in their hearts of their great sins.
 - c) continue as they were.
5. God said that the enemies of Israel would be
 - a) punished.
 - b) victorious.
 - c) friendly with the Jews.

Enter TRUE of FALSE for the following-

6. The time of Joel's prophecy is well known.
7. Joel's prophecies often had a "double meaning".
8. In a future day God is going to judge the nations for the way they have treated the Jews.
9. Joel prophesied that Israel will have permanent blessings after God has judged them.
10. "The press is full" refers to the armies of enemies that will be gathered and destroyed.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Joel 2:13 - What do we learn from this verse relevant for today, which we can apply personally?

Amos

Amos prophesied during the time of Hosea, but he did not prophesy for such a long time, 1:1; Hosea 1:1. His prophecy is a number of warnings of the judgment of God coming on the nation of Israel because of their sins. He was a herdsman in the land of Judah, 1:1, when God told him to go and to preach His Word to Israel, 7:14,15. So he went to Bethel where the king of Israel had made a place for the worship of idols, 7:10-13, see 1 Kings 12:31-33. There he spoke the Word or Message of God. For *the earthquake* in 1:1, see Zechariah 14:5.

We may outline the book of Amos like this:

1. Judgments on the nations, 1:2 - 2:16

- a. Introduction, 1:2
- b. Against Damascus, 1:3-5
- c. Against the Philistines, 1:6-8
- d. Against Tyre, 1:9,10
- e. Against Edom, 1:11,12
- f. Against Ammon, 1:13-15
- g. Against Moab, 2:1-3
- h. Against Judah, 2:4,5
- i. Against Israel, 2:6-16

2. Messages of warning to Israel, 3:1 - 6:14

3. Visions, 7:1 - 9:10

- a. Locusts, 7:1-3
- b. Fire, 7:4-6
- c. The plumb line, 7:7-9
- d. Amaziah opposes Amos, 7:10-17
- e. Summer fruit, 8:1-14
- f. The Lord calling for judgment, 9:1-10

4. Final bringing back and blessing, 9:11-15

1. Judgments on the nations, 1:2 - 2:16

Amos begins by telling of judgment on the nations around Israel, 1:2 - 2:16. Most of them were to be judged for their cruel acts to Israel. See 1:3,6,9,11,13. In verse 11, "his brother" is Esau's (that is, Edom's) brother Jacob (Israel). See Genesis 25:24-26. Some of these cruel acts may already have happened when Amos spoke. Others may have been still future. His hearers in Israel would have listened to him with pleasure while he spoke like that against the nations. Possibly they would have listened with pleasure while he spoke against Judah, too, 2:4,5. But the judgment on Judah was to be for sins which Israel also had done. These were rejecting (that is, refusing to obey) God's law, and following "lies" (that is, false gods), 2:4, see also Jeremiah 9:14. Amos' hearers would have a surprise when he suddenly turned to pronounce the same judgment on them, 2:6-16. They were guilty of unjust judging of cases, 2:6, where "selling the righteous...and needy" means taking bribes to give wrong judgments. They were guilty of greed, which led them to be unjust, 2:7, where "turning aside the way of the meek" means condemning the meek in an unjust way. They were also committing disgusting adultery, 2:7. They troubled the poor, 2:8, see Exodus 23:6, and they used the fines they made people pay, to buy wine to drink in worshipping their idols.

They had done all these things in spite of God's goodness to them, 2:9-12. He had delivered them out of Egypt, Exodus 20:2. He had led them through the wilderness, Deuteronomy 2:7. And He had given them the land which used to belong to the Amorites, 2:9,10. He had spoken to them through prophets and had chosen some men to be separated to Himself, 2:11. But the people had tried to spoil the separation of the Nazirites (see Numbers 6:2,3) and had told the prophets that they did not want to listen to them, 2:12.

Therefore God had made up His mind to punish them, and no one would be able to escape the punishment which was coming, 2:13-16. Read verse 13 in the Revised Version.

2. Messages of warning to Israel, 3:1 - 6:14

Then there are several messages of threat and warning, 3:1 - 6:14. In these messages Amos speaks again of the sins which were bringing God's anger upon them. He speaks of greed for possessions, of violence and robbery, of troubling the poor, and of unjust judging. See 3:9,10; 4:1; 5:10-12; 6:12; 8:4-6. For 5:10, "they hate him that reproveth in the gate," you should know that the courts were held in the gates of the city walls. This phrase means that people did not like a righteous judge who would rebuke those who did wrong. Everyone wanted to get things against others in order to take them to law and to take their possessions away from them. Amos speaks also of their worshiping idols, 3:14; 4:4,5; 5:5,6; 6:13. With all of this wickedness and oppression there was much wealth, and the rich people lived like kings, drinking and feasting, 3:15; 6:1-6.

In spite of all their wickedness, the people went through a form of worshiping God, 4:5; 5:21-23. But God hates the worship of people who do evil. That is a good thing for us to remember. There are many people today who think that they can live bad lives but that God will still be pleased if they just say that they worship Him! God was going to have the Israelites taken away as captives and slaves because they did that, 6:7. (Note that in 5:18 they "wanted the day of the Lord!" In spite of their wickedness, they still thought that when God showed His power He would bless them! They said that He would be with them because they were His people, as we see in verse 14. How many wicked people flatter themselves that they belong to God! Amos says that "the day of the Lord" would bring them *trouble*, not blessing.)

God's judgment was going to come especially on Israel because of His special blessing on them which they had despised, 3:1,2. He had chosen them from among the nations to be His people and had blessed them ("knowing" them in 3:2 means His choosing them). His choosing them like that was a great blessing. But it made them responsible to obey Him. And when they insisted on sinning, they were rebelling against God and against His Word. When those who

are called God's people in a special way sin against Him, they deserve a specially hard punishment.

God had already warned them by small punishments, 4:6-11. He had sent them hunger, 4:6; lack of rain, 4:7,8; disease and locusts on their fields, 4:9; and war and death in their land, 4:10,11. They had not taken warning at all. Note how He says five times, "Yet have you not returned to me." Because they had rejected all His warnings, there was now nothing left for Him to do but to punish them. And so He tells them in 4:12 to get ready, for He is coming to judge them. This verse is often used as if it were a call to repent. But it is really a threat of judgment. God is now coming in anger. See Hosea 1:6.

Amos does appeal to them, however, in chapter 5. The Lord tells them to seek good by turning to Him, not evil by trusting in their idols, 5:14. He tells them to hate evil, to love good, and to judge rightly, 5:15 (note "in the gate" again). He tells them to follow justice and righteousness, 5:24. It is like His last appeal to them even while He speaks of judgment.

3. Visions, 7:1 - 9:10

In 7:1 to 9:10 the Lord shows Amos some visions. These are pictures of ways in which He might punish Israel.

First He shows him a vision of locusts, 7:1-3, but agrees not to send them when Amos asks Him not to. The same thing happens with a vision of fire destroying the land, 7:4-6. Then the Lord appears to Amos holding a plumb line and says that He will punish Israel with war, making all their land desolate, and that he will kill Jeroboam's "house" or "family," 7:7-9. All this came about later, 2 Kings 15:8-10; 17:1-23. The "plumb line" is a line used by a brick-layer to show that a wall stands up straight. It meant that God would punish the people of Israel in righteousness for all their sins, see Isaiah 28:17. "I will not pass by them any more" meant that God was forsaking Israel and would not be with them to help them any longer.

In 7:10-17 the idol-priest Amaziah tries to stop Amos from preaching God's Word. He tells the king that Amos had rebelled against him and had said that Jeroboam himself would be killed, 7:10,11. Then he tells Amos not to prophesy at Bethel because it is the king's holy place, 7:12,13! He treated Amos' preaching as if it were Amos' own word, and not God's Word! That is what unbelievers always do. Amos' answer is another word from God, telling of judgment on Amaziah for his refusal to obey Him. Opposing God's Word never stops God's judgment. It only makes it come harder on the one who opposes.

In chapter 8 Amos sees a basket of summer fruit and is told that the end has come for Israel. God is not going to stand for their wickedness any longer. In Hebrew, the words for "summer fruit" and "end" sound alike. So when Amos said he saw "summer fruit", God said it was a picture of the "end" of Israel. He speaks of their greed, deceit, and cheating, 8:4-6. He rebukes them for swearing by the false gods whose images were at Dan and Beersheba, 8:14. These false gods were "the sin of Samaria". Samaria was the capital of Israel.

In 9:1 Amos sees the Lord calling for judgment. The "capitals" or tops of the pillars may mean the head men of Israel. No one would be able to escape or to hide from God when judgment came, 9:2-4. God has all power on earth and in heaven, and He is everywhere, so how could people run away from Him, 9:5,6?

But in 9:8-10 God says that He will not entirely destroy Israel. He will scatter them among the nations. That is just what He has done. Today the Jewish people are found among all the nations of the world. But all of those who did not really believe that He would punish them would die in the judgment, 9:10.

4. Final bringing back and blessing, 9:11-15

The book of Amos closes with a promise of final bringing back and blessing, 9:11-15. Israel will be raised up again by God, and some day they will be head of the nations, 9:11,12. In those days there will be so much blessing that people will not be able to finish

reaping before it is time to plough again, 9:13. Israel will again be in its own land and will never again be taken away from it, 9:14,15. See Hosea 2:21-23; 14:4-8; Joel 2:27; 3:18-21. This blessing will be when the Lord Jesus comes back in glory and gathers the people together again in their land, Matthew 24:31.

MESSENGERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 3 Amos

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. Amos prophesied during the time of
 - a) Hosea.
 - b) Ezekiel.
 - c) Malachi.

2. God told Amos that He was going to judge other nations for their cruel treatment of the Jews, but He was going to judge Israel and Judah because
 - a) they refused to build the temple.
 - b) they were guilty of many grievous sins against God.
 - c) they were giving more than one-tenth to the priests.

3. The Lord showed visions to Amos. They were used
 - a) as pictures of ways in which God might punish Israel.
 - b) because God did not want people to know what would happen.
 - c) by the enemy to confuse the prophet.

4. In one vision the Lord showed Amos a basket of summer fruit. It meant that
 - a) harvest time was near.
 - b) the birds of the air would rescue the nation.
 - c) God's patience was coming to an end, and Israel would be judged for their wickedness.

5. The book of Amos closes with a promise that
 - a) Israel will be raised up some day to be head of the nations.
 - b) Israel will be able to return to Egypt.
 - c) Amos' wife would come back to him again.

Enter TRUE of FALSE for the following-

6. Amos was a herdsman before he became a prophet.
7. The prophecy of Amos was about judgment for other nations as well as Israel.
8. God sends messages of warnings before He sends judgment upon His people.
9. In one of the visions the Lord appeared to Amos with a plumb-line.
10. God said that He would destroy Israel completely.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Can the accusations against Judah be levelled at the church today?
Which do you think is the most challenging to our Christian walk?

Obadiah

We do not know for sure when Obadiah prophesied. It was probably after Israel and Judah had been carried into captivity. He may have lived about the time of Jeremiah. You will remember that the Edomites came from Esau, who was Jacob's brother, vs. 1,8, 10,18,19,21; Genesis 25:25,26. There had been much war between Edom and Israel, 1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Samuel 8:14; 1 Kings 11:15,16; 2 Kings 14:7. So the Edomites had been glad when Israel and Judah were conquered, v.12. They had spoken proudly against them. They had gone into the cities of Israel and Judah to rob their houses, v.13. They had caught some of the Jews who were escaping, had killed some of them, and had given others over to their enemies, v.14. So God spoke through Obadiah of how He was going to punish the Edomites for their violence, v.10. God punishes His own people for their disobedience to Him. But He will punish other people who do harm to His people.

Obadiah may be outlined as follows:

- 1. The destruction of Edom, vs. 1-4**
- 2. The completeness of the destruction, vs. 5-9**
- 3. The reason for the destruction, vs. 10-14**
- 4. A picture of the day of the Lord, vs. 15,16**
- 5. The final greatness of Israel, vs. 17-21**

1. Edom was going to be destroyed, vs. 1-4

The Edomites were very proud, v.3. They lived in a valley among rocky hills. There was only a narrow way into the valley, which they could easily protect. They thought that no one could ever

get in and overcome them. "The clefts of the rock" refer to that narrow way in, which passed between high rock walls. God was going to bring the nations against Edom. They would overcome the Edomites and humble them in their pride, v.4. Edom would no longer be a people, v.2.

2. The destruction would be complete, vs. 5-9

When thieves or robbers come to steal, they always leave something, v.5. (Compare verse 5 with Jeremiah 49:9.) But these armies would leave nothing which Edom had owned, v.6. Edom's friends would turn against them and become their enemies, v.7. All the Edomites would be destroyed, vs. 8,9.

3. The reason for the destruction, vs. 10-14

The destruction was because of the Edomites' treatment of Israel and Judah when misfortune came to them, vs. 10-14. For "casting lots" in verse 11, compare Joel 3:3; Nahum 3:10; John 19:23,24. The Edomites had not been sorry for Israel but had helped Israel's enemies against them. God looks on Israel's enemies as if they were His own enemies. See Genesis 12:3.

4. God's punishing of Edom would be like a picture of the Day of the Lord, vs. 15,16

For the meaning of this phrase, see again our note on Joel 1:15-20. When God judges the nations, He will deal with them as they have done to others, v.15. He will deal with them especially as they have dealt with the Jews. See Matthew 25:31-46. That was the way in which God was going to deal with the Edomites.

5. The final greatness of Israel, vs. 17-21

Israel is not always going to be troubled by others. **At the last, they will be great among the nations.** They will possess everything which God has given to them, v.17. In that day there will be no people from Esau left, v.18. All the land will belong to Israel, even that which was then owned by Edom, vs. 19,20. When He

speaks of the "captivity" in verse 20, He means that the Israelites, who were then captives, would some day own all of the land. And the Lord Himself will be King over all, v.21. The "saviors" He speaks of here will be judges whom God will raise up to rule for Him in the land of the Jews. See Judges 2:16.

Obadiah's words concerning the destruction of Edom have been fulfilled. People go to look at the houses where the Edomites lived. These houses were carved out of rock. People marvel when they see the things which the Edomites did. But where there used to be many people, today there is no one.

MESENTERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 4 Obadiah

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

- God spoke through Obadiah to warn of punishment on
 - Israel.
 - Samaria.
 - Edom.
- Obadiah may have lived during the time of
 - Job.
 - Jonah.
 - Jeremiah.
- The Edomites were a people who were extremely
 - humble.
 - proud.
 - good looking.
- When misfortune came to Israel & Judah, Edom usually responded by
 - feeling sorry for them.
 - helping the enemies of Israel.
 - sending food.
- Israel will be restored to her rightful place and her king will be
 - Solomon.
 - Herod.
 - the Lord Himself.

Enter TRUE of FALSE for the following-

- There were many wars between Edom and Israel.
- God promised that all the Edomites would be destroyed.
- There are many people living in Edom today.
- God promised that the "captives" of Israel would some day own the lands of Edom.
- God's punishment of Edom would be a picture of "the Day of the Lord".

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Obadiah reminds us that God must punish sin. What effect does this knowledge have on you?

Jonah

We do not know very much about Jonah. We do not know for sure when he lived. We know that it was before the time of the second Jeroboam. He prophesied of something which happened during that king's reign, 2 Kings 14:25. That is all we know about him, except what we read in this book.

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. It was a very wicked city. It was so wicked that God decided to destroy it. But first He sent Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh and to give them a chance to repent, 1:2. Jonah probably knew that Assyria would one day cause much trouble to Israel and to Judah, such as we read in 2 Kings 18. So he did not want God to have mercy on Nineveh, 4:2. Instead of obeying God, he tried to run away from Him! This book tells how God dealt with Jonah. It is a good lesson for us to obey God and not to do just what we want to do.

The outline of the book is as follows:

1. Jonah tries to run away, chapter 1

- a. His flight, 1:1-3
- b. The storm, 1:4-14
- c. Jonah thrown into the sea, 1:15-17

2. Jonah's repentance, chapter 2

- a. His prayer, 2:1-9
- b. He is delivered, 2:10

3. Jonah's preaching and its result, chapter 3

- a. He obeys God, 3:1-4
- b. Nineveh repents, 3:5-9
- c. God pardons Nineveh, 3:10

4. Jonah's anger and God's patience, chapter 4

- a. He is displeased, 4:1-5
- b. God teaches him, 4:6-11

1. Jonah tries to run away, 1:1-17

Chapter 1 tells how Jonah tried to run away. Jonah seemed to think that he could get away from God, 1:10. There are many people who have tried that. But no one can get away from God. Read Psalm 139:7-12. Jonah had to suffer for his disobedience, and he made others suffer as well. God was determined that Jonah should obey Him. That was for Jonah's own sake. Obedience brings blessing. Disobedience always brings sorrow and loss. But God turned it into a blessing to men who had not known Him, 1:16. Verse 17 is quoted by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 12:40. He says it is like a picture of His being three days and nights in the grave.

2. Jonah's repentance, 2:1-10

Chapter 2 tells how Jonah repented. God kept Jonah alive inside the big fish. Jonah repented of his disobedience. He saw how foolish it was to disobey God, 2:8. (Have we learned that lesson?) He decided to do as he had been told, 2:9. Then God made the fish vomit Jonah up onto the land again, 2:10. This was probably not far from Nineveh. It would seem from Luke 11:29,30 as if the people of Nineveh saw or heard of this happening. That may be one reason the people of Nineveh repented as soon as they heard Jonah's message.

3. Jonah's preaching and its result, 3:1-10

Chapter 3 tells of Jonah's preaching and what happened when he preached. God spoke again to Jonah, and this time he obeyed, 3:1-4. God gave Nineveh enough time to repent of its sins. He did not send judgment at once. Compare 2 Peter 3:9. The people of Nineveh obeyed God, 3:5-9. They fasted and prayed. They left off their wickedness. And when God saw their repentance, He had mercy on them, 3:10.

4. Jonah's anger and God's patience, 4:1-11

Chapter 4 tells of Jonah's anger and of God's patience with him. Jonah was not pleased that God had spared Nineveh, 4:1-5. Perhaps God told him to tell the people of Nineveh that He had had

mercy on them. Certainly Jonah knew somehow that God was not going to destroy the people of Nineveh. Evidently Jonah was not merciful as God is, 4:2. It is a great pity when God's messengers are hard and not ready to forgive others. God wants them not only to talk about His kindness, but to be like Him in kindness. That is where Jonah failed. In spite of all, he evidently still hoped that God would destroy Nineveh, 4:5!

God was very patient with Jonah and tried to teach him, 4:6-11. First He spoke gently to him, 4:4. Then He showed Jonah how he could have pity on a gourd-vine, which was only a plant to protect him from the sun. God showed him how he was thinking only of himself and not of others. How much more should he have pity on a great city in which there were thousands of people, 4:11! Some people are kinder to things and to animals than they are to other people. See Matthew 12:11,12. That is because they think so much about themselves and not about others. God's people should not be like that.

We do not know whether Jonah learned his lesson. Probably he did. I like to think that perhaps Jonah himself wrote this book and that he did it to tell of his own disobedience and lack of mercy, and of how God had shown him how wrong he had been.

MESSENGER OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 5 Jonah

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. Nineveh was
 - a) a large city.
 - b) a small city.
 - c) a village in the desert.

2. God told Jonah to
 - a) run away.
 - b) warn Nineveh of coming judgment.
 - c) build an ark.

3. When Jonah disobeyed, God prepared to deal with him by
 - a) casting him into a den of lions.
 - b) sending a large fish to swallow him.
 - c) causing a mountain to fall on him.

4. When Jonah repented
 - a) he was allowed to return home.
 - b) God sent him back to preach to Nineveh.
 - c) he earned a good salary as a fisherman.

5. When God spared Nineveh, Jonah was
 - a) happy.
 - b) angry with God.
 - c) worried.

Enter TRUE or FALSE for the following-

6. Nineveh was a good city.
7. The entire city of Nineveh repented, including the king.
8. Jonah felt sorry for a plant.
9. Jonah was "three days and three nights" in the fish's belly. This is a picture of the death of the Lord Jesus.
10. God loved the people of Nineveh, and He also loves you and me.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What have you learned from the story of Jonah?

Micah

Micah prophesied in the land of Judah, as we see from his mentioning the kings in 1:1. Read about those kings in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. He prophesied during the time of Isaiah and Hosea. See Isaiah 1:1; Hosea 1:1. "The Morasthite" means that he lived in a place called Moresheth. His prophecy speaks of God's judgment which was about to come on Israel and Judah. Samaria was the capital of Israel; Jerusalem was the capital of Judah, 1:1. At the same time, he mentions the blessing which will finally come upon Israel and Judah.

We may outline Micah like this:

1. God speaks of the coming judgment, 1:1 - 3:12

- a. Reason for and result of judgment, 1:2-16
- b. The wickedness of the people, 2:1-11
(Their final restoration, 2:12,13)
- c. The wickedness of the elders, 3:1-12

2. God speaks of final blessing, 4:1 - 5:15

- a. The coming kingdom, 4:1-8
- b. The trial and triumph of Jerusalem, 4:9 - 5:1
- c. The coming King, 5:2-4
- d. Israel in the last days, 5:5-15

3. God speaks with His people, 6:1 - 7:20

- a. He pleads with them, 6:1-8
- b. He speaks of their sins, 6:9 - 7:6
- c. The prophet's confidence in God's faithfulness, 7:7-20

1. God speaks of the coming judgment, 1:1 - 3:12

God first speaks of the reason for that judgment and the result of it, 1:2-16. He calls the nations to witness that He is about to come

down in judgment, 1:2-4. He had called Israel to be His witnesses, but they had turned to the worship of false gods, 1:5. (The false gods were worshiped on "high places". See 1 Kings 11:7.) So God would witness to Himself by punishing His people. This judgment was going to come first on Israel, and Samaria would be completely ruined, 1:6,7. See 2 Kings 17:5-18; 18:9-12, where we see how this prophecy was fulfilled. "Her hires" in verse 7 means the things which the people of Samaria had found while worshiping idols. They thought that the false gods had given them these things. Remember that God calls idolatry adultery. The judgment was going to come even to the gate of Jerusalem. This probably refers to what we read in 2 Kings 18:13 - 19:7. Later on, of course, Judah also was taken captive for their sins. "Make thee bald" in verse 16 speaks of shaving the head as a sign of mourning for the children who would be carried away as captives. In 1:8-16 the prophet mourns as a sign of how Israel would see sorrow as a result of its sins.

In 2:1-11 God speaks of the wickedness of the people for which He was going to judge them. They coveted things which belonged to other people and took those things by deceit and fraud and robbery, 2:2,8,9. They worked evil against God, 2:1, and so God was going to work evil against them, 2:3. They were going to be completely ruined, 2:4, and the fields which they had stolen would be taken over by their enemies. They would not listen to the prophets who warned them, 2:6, but only wanted to hear preachers who praised sin, 2:11. (How many people today are like that!) And so they would be sent away out of their land, 2:10.

Verses 12 and 13 come in here to speak of how God, who was about to scatter His people, would some day gather them together again.

He then speaks of the heads of the people, 3:1-12. The rulers, instead of helping the people, robbed them, 3:1-4. God looks on people like sheep. The rulers should be like shepherds and should help the people. God wants rulers to serve the people, but those rulers were thinking only about themselves. So the rulers would cry for help when judgment came, and God would not have mercy on them, just as they had refused to have mercy on the people, 3:4.

The men who said that they were prophets also were feeling covetous, 3:5. They prophesied only for pay. If people paid them, they prophesied only of peace; that is, they said that even evil doers would not be judged by God. How many false prophets like that there are today! The true prophet always warns people about their sins; sins always bring God's judgment, 3:8.

Again in 3:9-12 he speaks of the sin of covetousness. Rulers, prophets, and priests would only do their work if they were paid for it. They did not work for God, but only for money! And yet, in spite of their wickedness, they said that God was on their side, 3:11! Therefore God was going to destroy Jerusalem, 3:12. The time came when this prophecy was fulfilled just as God said.

2. God speaks of final blessing, 4:1 – 5:15

In 4:1 - 5:15 God speaks of the blessing which will come some day.

He speaks of the coming kingdom in 4:1-8. This part is quoted by Isaiah in his prophecy, 2:2-4. Or it is possible that Micah quotes it from Isaiah's prophecy. The "mountain of the Lord's house" means the kingdom of the Lord, when He shall be seen in His temple in Jerusalem and shall rule from there over all the world. A mountain is often a picture of a kingdom in the Bible. People will go continually to Jerusalem to be taught by the Lord, 4:2. He will put an end to war, 4:3, and all people will live peacefully, 4:4. See Zechariah 9:10. Israel will never again forsake the true God, 4:5. Israel will be brought back to their own land, and God will reign over them forever, 4:6,7.

Jerusalem's trial and triumph are spoken of in 4:9 - 5:1. Jerusalem would first see great trouble, 4:9,10. This has a double meaning. It refers first to the captivity in Babylon, 4:10, but also to the great tribulation which Israel will see in the last days, just before the Lord comes. See Matthew 24:21. In that day the nations will gather together against Jerusalem to destroy it, 4:11. But God will destroy them instead, 4:12,13. Compare Joel 2:18-20; Zechariah 14:1-5. When the Lord appears, the people of Jerusalem ("the daughter of Zion" means "the people who live in Zion" or "in

Jerusalem") will be given power over their enemies and will destroy them, 4:13. See Zechariah 9:12 - 10:7. But before that, they will be besieged and will suffer shame, 5:1.

Then God speaks of the coming King, 5:2-4. This refers, we know, to our Lord Jesus Christ. He was going to come from Bethlehem, but He also has been for all eternity, 5:2. He was born in Bethlehem as a man, Matthew 2:1, but as Son of God, He never had a beginning. This verse was quoted by the elders of the Jews in their answer to Herod's question in Matthew 2:5,6. He is the One who will care for and protect His people: the true Ruler, who is the Shepherd of His people, 5:4.

Two things are said about Israel in those last days after the Lord comes, 5:5-15. First, they will be a source of blessing to people who obey God, 5:7. That is what is meant by "dew" and "showers." In those days the Jews will be Jehovah's witnesses to men as He intended from the beginning. See Isaiah 43:10. Then they will be like a lion against those who do not obey God, 5:8. The Jewish people will be the rulers on the earth when the Lord reigns, and they will be used by Him to punish evildoers. In those days He will teach His people to trust in Him alone, 5:10,11. He will purify them from all their idolatry, 5:12-14, and will punish the disobedient nations, 5:15.

3. God speaks with His people, 6:1 - 7:20

God speaks with His people in 6:1 - 7:20. He speaks to them, and the faithful ones answer Him.

First, He pleads with Israel, 6:1-8. What evil has He done to them so that they should leave Him, 6:1-5? Did He not deliver them from their slavery in Egypt? They should remember all His goodness to them in those days and should hold to Him. There is a lesson here for us in these days too. In 6:6-8 He teaches us that He wants godliness and obedience from His people, not just their offerings. People who think that they can please God by giving Him things while they refuse to give Him their hearts and to obey Him are very wrong indeed.

In 6:9 - 7:6 He speaks again of the people's sins. He mentions deceit in buying and selling, 6:10,11, violence and lying, 6:12, and tells of the punishments which are coming on them as a result, 6:13-16. For "statutes of Omri", see 1 Kings 16:25,26, and for the "works of the house of Ahab", see 1 Kings 16:29-33. The people had become murderers, and there were so few righteous people that it was as if there were none at all, 7:2. They loved evil, 7:3. In this verse the covetousness of the judges is mentioned again. There was no faithfulness in any one, and no one could trust even his closest friends or relatives, 7:4-6. The Lord Jesus quoted 7:6 in Matthew 10:21,35 and Luke 12:53.

The prophet speaks in 7:7-20 as if speaking for the faithful people among the nation of Israel. It is a prayer of confidence in the Lord, an expectation that God will do as He has said. God will yet deliver Israel, and those who have mocked the Jews will then have shame, 7:10,16. They will be afraid of God in that day, 7:17.

He closes with a song of praise to God for His mercy in forgiving His people, as He will yet do, 7:18,19, and for His faithfulness to His promises, 7:20. Even though Israel has sinned and has been punished for it, 7:13, God must yet keep the promises which He made to their fathers. He has not cast the Jews off forever. See Romans 11:28,29.

MESSENGERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 6 Micah

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. Micah was a prophet at the time of
 - a) John the Baptist.
 - b) Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos.
 - c) Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

2. Micah's prophecy spoke of God's coming judgment upon
 - a) Pharaoh.
 - b) the king of Nineveh.
 - c) Israel and Judah.

3. The leaders of God's people should be like
 - a) task masters.
 - b) hired servants.
 - c) shepherds.

4. God said there would be a time when Jerusalem would be destroyed. The time came when this prophecy was
 - a) fulfilled.
 - b) reversed by God.
 - c) changed to a blessing.

5. God said that the coming King would be born in
 - a) Jerusalem.
 - b) Egypt.
 - c) Bethlehem.

Enter TRUE or FALSE for the following-

6. The false prophets would only prophesy for pay.
7. In the last days the Jews will be a blessing to many.
8. The Jewish people will be rulers on the earth, but first God must purify them of their idolatry.
9. Those who have mocked the Jews will be proud of what they have done.
10. Micah closes his prophecy with a song of praise to God for His mercy in forgiving His people.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

How relevant do you think the message of Micah is in Christendom today?

Nahum

Although Nahum himself does not tell us this, it seems that he prophesied in Judah during the time we read about in 2 Kings 18 and 19. His prophecy is against Nineveh, which was the capital of Assyria. His prophecy seems to have been caused by the Assyrian king's threat against Jerusalem. So Nahum prophesied while Isaiah was prophesying. See 2 Kings 19:20-34. Nahum speaks of the destruction of the Assyrian armies, and then goes on to tell how, later on, Nineveh would be destroyed. Jonah had prophesied that Nineveh would be destroyed if the people did not repent of their sins. They did repent then and were not destroyed. But now the Assyrians were defying God in their pride, and so God warns them that He will destroy them.

We may outline Nahum like this:

- 1. God's greatness in anger, 1:2-8**
- 2. The destruction of the Assyrians, 1:9-15**
- 3. The overthrow of Nineveh, 2:1 - 3:19**
 - a. Description of the battle, 2:1 - 3:3
 - b. Doom of Nineveh, 3:4-19

1. God's greatness in anger, 1:2-8

In 1:2-8 there is a description of God's greatness and of how terrible He is in His anger. The Assyrians thought that He was no greater than the gods men had imagined. See 2 Kings 18:32-35; 19:10-13. But He is the true God, and He alone has all power. He does not destroy His enemies at once, 1:3. He gives them time to repent, as He did to the Assyrians. But when He does judge them, no man can stand before Him, 1:6. Men may boast, as the Assyrians

did, as long as God is silent. But when He speaks in anger, their boasting will be finished. It is good for us to read these verses carefully and to think about them. There are many people today who think that because God is now showing love and kindness (as He did when He sent Jonah to Nineveh), therefore they can think lightly of Him. Some day they will be very sorry! Verse 7 is a lovely picture of God's kindness to those who trust in Him. He will keep them safe even while He punishes those who make light of Him.

2. Destruction of the Assyrians, 1:9-15

In 1:9-15 there is a prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrians. The fulfillment is in 2 Kings 19:35-37. The Assyrian king and captains imagined great things against God, 1:11. They thought they were going to overcome Him as they had "overcome" the false gods. They did not know it was really God who had given them those victories. But God said that they would be "cut down" like trees, even when they were quiet, 1:12. Note how God said that the Assyrians themselves used the picture of cutting down trees to describe their overcoming other people, 2 Kings 19:23. Verse 14 seems to be against the Assyrian king. No more of his seed would be sown, that is, he would have no more children. See 2 Kings 19:37. Part of verse 15 seems to be quoted from Isaiah 52:7. Isaiah spoke of the good news of God's final triumph when Christ comes. Nahum spoke of the good news of God destroying the Assyrians. The people of Jerusalem were made very anxious when the Assyrians came, but they would be made glad to hear that Assyria had been destroyed. See 2 Kings 19:21. But verse 15 may have a double meaning and may refer also to Israel's final deliverance from her enemies at the end of the age.

3. The overthrow of Nineveh, 2:1 - 3:19

The rest of the book goes on to speak of how Nineveh itself would finally be destroyed, 2:1 - 3:19. This all came about later.

First there is a description of the fighting in 2:1 - 3:3. This is full of short, quick sentences, as if Nahum were feeling excited, like one

who is actually watching a battle. Read it carefully. If you can read it in the Revised Version, you will see how quickly it runs. Verses 11 and 12 are a picture of Nineveh like a den of lions – lions that used to go out looking for prey. Some people have thought that in 2:4 there is a description of modern motor cars, but that is because they have not thought well what Nahum was really speaking about. He was talking about the war-chariots which would drive very fast in the streets of Nineveh when it was taken by the armies.

Nahum closes with a description of Nineveh's final doom, 3:4-19. The people of Nineveh thought that their city could not be taken. It had a very thick and high wall all around it to keep out enemies. So God asks Nineveh if it is better than No in Egypt, 3:8. That city too had seemed to be in a very strong place, but it had been conquered, probably by the Assyrians themselves, 3:10. So would Nineveh fall. Even though they should make more bricks and strengthen their walls much more, they would not be able to save themselves, 3:14,15. Nineveh would be left without any people in it, 3:17,18; 2:10. God would judge it for its wickedness, 3:4,19.

History tells us that the enemies did come against Nineveh, and at first they could not take it because of its great, high wall. Then the river came up in a great flood and destroyed a big part of the wall. When the king of Nineveh saw this, he shut himself into his palace, set fire to it, and so died. Possibly that is what Nahum meant in 1:8; 2:6; and 3:13,15.

MESSENGERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 7 Nahum

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. The prophecy of Nahum was probably written during the time we read of in 2 Kings 18 and 19. His prophecy was against
 - a) Jerusalem.
 - b) Nineveh.
 - c) Bethlehem.
2. Another prophet who prophesied against Nineveh was
 - a) Malachi.
 - b) Elijah.
 - c) Jonah.
3. One of the ways Nahum uses to describe the greatness of God is by writing about His
 - a) patience.
 - b) love.
 - c) anger.
4. The Assyrians thought they would overcome Jehovah as they had overcome the false gods, but God said that they would
 - a) have to join forces with Israel first.
 - b) be cut down like trees.
 - c) not be successful until the third try.
5. The enemies of Nineveh came to capture the city
 - a) but the people made bricks for the walls and were safe.
 - b) and destroyed all the people.
 - c) but God sent His angel to protect them.

Enter TRUE or FALSE for the following-

6. Nineveh was a city without walls.
7. Nahum tells of a terrible battle with war chariots in the streets of Nineveh.
8. Nahum speaks of the good news of God destroying the Assyrians.
9. The king of Assyria was to have many more children.
10. Nineveh was better than No and continues to this day.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What lesson, or blessing has the Lord drawn your attention to in your meditation of Nahum 1:2-8?

Habakkuk

We cannot say for sure when Habakkuk prophesied. It was probably just before the Chaldeans came up against Judah, as we read in 2 Kings 24:1. Babylon was the capital of the Chaldeans. As you will see in 1:6, God says that He is going to send the Chaldeans against Judah. The Assyrians had already carried Israel captive, as we read in 2 Kings 17. At that time, the good king Hezekiah reigned in Judah. He trusted in God, and God delivered him from the Assyrians, 2 Kings 19. Hezekiah's son Manasseh led the people back into idolatry, 2 Kings 21. Hezekiah's great-grandson Josiah was a good king. He tried to lead the people back to the true God, 2 Kings 22, 23. But the hearts of the people were set on evil, and when Habakkuk spoke, the people of Judah were doing very bad things, 1:2-4. He complained to God about it, and God told him how He was going to send the Chaldeans to punish the people of Judah for their sins.

The outline of Habakkuk is like this:

1. Judah's sins and punishment, 1:1-11

- a. Habakkuk complains to God about their evil doing, 1:2-4
- b. God shows Habakkuk how He is going to punish Judah, 1:5-11

2. The Chaldeans' sins and punishment, 1:12 - 2:20

- a. Habakkuk wonders why God should use such a wicked nation, 1:12-17
- b. God answers Habakkuk's complaint, 2:1-20
 - He encourages Habakkuk to trust in Him, 2:1-5
 - The Chaldeans will receive what they have done, 2:6-8
 - The Chaldeans' sins (the three "woes"), 2:9-17
 - The foolishness of idolatry, 2:18-20

3. Habakkuk's prayer, 3:1-19

- a. He remembers God's works, 3:1-15
- b. His trust and joy in God, 3:16-19

1. Judah's sins and punishment, 1:1-11

Habakkuk's cry to God in 1:2-4 shows how the few righteous people who were left in Judah felt. He saw wicked people destroying and troubling others, and he could not understand why God did not do something about it, 1:2. There was nothing but fighting and quarreling and unjust judgments, 1:3,4. Sometimes today we wonder, just as Habakkuk did, why God does not punish bad men right away. We need to know that, although God does not do it right away, He has not forgotten. He will act when His time comes. See Acts 17:31.

God answers Habakkuk that He is going to send the Chaldeans to punish Judah, 1:5-11. He describes how terrible the soldiers of the Chaldeans were when they fought against others. Note how 1:5 is quoted in Acts 13:41.

2. The Chaldeans' sins and punishment, 1:12 - 2:20

This makes Habakkuk wonder again how God could use such a wicked nation as the Chaldeans to punish His people, 1:12-17. God is too pure to look on evil, so how then could He use evil men like that, 1:13? Why did He not punish the Chaldeans too? Verses 14 to 17 are a picture of Nebuchadnezzar taking men like a fisherman catching fish in his net.

God again answers Habakkuk, 2:1-20. Habakkuk first listens to hear how God will explain it to him, 2:1. It is a good thing to give God a chance to explain things which we do not understand. Some people just make up their minds that God must be wrong. They do not wait for Him to show them His reasons.

God first encourages Habakkuk to trust in Him, 2:2-5. If what He is speaking about seems slow in coming, the believer should just wait patiently for Him to work, 2:3. See 2 Peter 3:9. God will not fail to do what He has said He would. The righteous man will just

go on trusting in God, 2:4. See how this verse is quoted in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11, and both 3 and 4 are quoted in Hebrews 10:37,38.

He then tells him that the time is coming when the Chaldeans also shall be punished. They shall be made to suffer what they have made others suffer, 2:6-8. Compare Matthew 7:2; 26:52; Revelation 13:10. God may use wicked men for a time, but He does not make them wicked, and He will finally punish them for their wickedness.

He then tells about the sins of the Chaldeans, how they treated other people with violence and oppression, 2:9-17. There are three "woes" spoken against them: in 2:9-11; 2:12-14; and 2:15-17. They gained riches by treating others cruelly, but this would be shame for them. Their sins were against themselves, that is, they would bring back punishment on them, 2:9,10. They built houses with blood, that is, through killing other people or through working them to death, 2:12. But their work would come to nothing, 2:13, and in the end only God's glory would be seen, 2:14. Compare Isaiah 11:9. This last verse tells us what God will do in the end time when He shall overcome all His enemies and when all people left on the earth shall know Him and worship Him. See Zephaniah 2:11; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 19:6. See also Isaiah 11:9 where the same word is found. Verses 15 to 17 speak of the Chaldeans making other people drunk, and so God would make them drunk too. As you will see from verses 16 and 17, this means that they had destroyed others with violence, and so God would destroy them with violence. See this same picture in Jeremiah 25:15-28.

Chapter 2 ends with a word about the foolishness of worshipping images. The man who makes an idol worships the thing which he himself has made, 2:18! See Isaiah 2:20. It is made of wood or stone, or of gold or silver, so how can it live or speak? There is no life in it at all, 2:19. But God is alive, and He is King, 2:20. Men should fear before Him.

3. Habakkuk's prayer, 3:1-19

Habakkuk then closes with his prayer in chapter 3. It is as if he has had his questions all answered and is not wondering any more, but just trusting in God.

He remembers God's works when He delivered Israel from Egypt, 3:1-15. Although God must come in anger, Habakkuk asks Him to have mercy on those who obey Him, 3:2. Compare Nahum 1:7. For 3:3,4, see Exodus 19:16-18. For 3:5, see Numbers 11:33; 16:46-50. For 3:8, see Exodus 14:21-30. For 3:11, see Joshua 10:12-14. You may notice other things too as you read these words.

He closes with words of trust and joy in God, 3:16-19. He trembles at God's greatness and decides to wait for Him to punish Israel's enemies, 3:16. And He decides to rejoice in God, even if he has nothing else here on earth to rejoice in, 3:17,18. These are beautiful words of devotion to God. Habakkuk knows that God will strengthen him in trouble, 3:19.

The book of Habakkuk shows us how, in a time when wickedness and sinfulness abound, a man may still trust in God and obey Him. It is not true to say, as some people do, "We cannot trust God because all the people we know are sinners!" That is only an empty excuse!

MESSENGERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 8 Habakkuk

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. Babylon was the capital of
 - a) the Egyptians.
 - b) the Ishmaelites.
 - c) the Chaldeans.

2. Habakkuk cried to God because there were few righteous people left in
 - a) the world.
 - b) Bethlehem.
 - c) Judah.

3. God warned the people that He would use the Chaldeans to punish
 - a) Judah.
 - b) Nineveh.
 - c) Egypt.

4. "The righteous man will go on trusting God." The Spirit revealed this truth to
 - a) Habakkuk and Daniel.
 - b) all the minor prophets.
 - c) Habakkuk and Paul.

5. The man who makes an idol
 - a) worships the true God.
 - b) worships the thing which he himself has made.
 - c) worships in Spirit and in truth.

Enter TRUE of FALSE for the following-

6. Hezekiah was a grandson of Josiah.
7. The Chaldean soldiers were gentle and peace loving.
8. It is a good thing to give God a chance to explain things which we do not understand.
9. The Chaldeans would have to be punished.
10. The book of Habakkuk closes with a prophecy.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What practical lesson can we learn from Habakkuk's final prayer?

Zephaniah

We know nothing about this prophet except what we read in verse one. For the story of King Josiah, see 2 Kings 22:1 - 23:30. Josiah was the last good king of Judah. He tried hard to bring the people back to God. They pretended to follow him, but their hearts were set on evil. Probably Zephaniah prophesied before Josiah tried to make things better in Judah. In Zephaniah's prophecy God tells how He is going to punish the people of the land and the nations because of their wickedness. This prophecy was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar came with his armies, as we read in 2 Kings 25. At the end Zephaniah speaks of how God will finally turn from His anger and will bless the people of Jerusalem and the nations which will be left.

We may outline Zephaniah like this:

- 1. The punishment coming on the land, 1:2 - 2:3**
- 2. The punishment coming on the nations, 2:4-15**
 - a. On the Philistines, 2:4-7
 - b. On Moab and Ammon, 2:8-11
 - c. On Ethiopia and Assyria, 2:12-15
- 3. The warning to Jerusalem, 3:1-8**
- 4. Blessing at the last, 3:9-20**

1. The punishment coming on the land, 1:2 - 2:3

God had determined to punish the people of the land, 1:2 - 2:3. They had refused all His warnings and had made Him very angry with their wickedness. See 2 Chronicles 36:15,16. Zephaniah warns them again that God is going to punish them terribly. Note the words used in this section: "consume," 1:2,3; "cut off," 1:3,4; "punish,"

1:8,9; "desolation," 1:13,15. The destruction of the land was going to be terrible, and all those who had done evil would be destroyed.

The "Chemarims," 1:4, means the "black-robed" priests, that is, the priests of the false god Baal. God was going to destroy those false priests together with the other idol priests. "The host of heaven" in verse 5 means the sun, moon, and stars. People were worshipping these things as if they were gods! "Milcom," 1:5, was another false god, called also Molech or Sikkuth. See Amos 5:26. People still said they worshiped Jehovah, but they used His Name together with the names of others. Some people who call themselves Christians do the same thing today, and this makes Him angry.

In verse 7 the "sacrifice" means the killing of the people of the land. Compare Isaiah 34:6 and Jeremiah 46:10. The "guests" were the Chaldeans, who would be coming to "eat up" the land. A person who sacrificed a peace-offering would call his friends as guests to help him eat it. See 1 Samuel 16:5. God uses this as a picture.

Note in verse 12 what some men were saying. It was like saying that there was no use in fearing God; He could not help His worshipers nor punish sinners. There are many foolish people today who say the same kind of thing. But God was going to punish such people then, and He will punish them today. Most of those were rich people who trusted in their riches. But their riches would be spoiled, 1:13, and would not help them in the day of God's anger, 1:18.

Note that the day of God's judgment is called "the day of the Lord" in this section, 1:7,14-18. It is the day when God shows His power over His enemies. Compare Joel 1:15; 3:14. The day of the Lord came then when God punished His people. But there is another day of the Lord coming, when God will punish the world for its disobedience to Him. Perhaps verses 14-18 have a double reference, both to that time and to the time which is coming.

Because of that coming day of judgment, God tells the people to take warning, 2:1,2. He also tells the meek (or obedient) ones to draw near to Him and to do righteousness so that they may be kept

by Him from the punishment which is coming, 2:3. Compare Nahum 1:7.

2. The punishment coming on the nations, 2:4-15

In 2:4-15 God speaks of the punishment which is coming on the nations.

The land of the Philistines also would be destroyed and left without people ("desolate"), 2:4-7. Where there were cities, there would be only wilderness where shepherds would feed their sheep. The time would come when God would bring the Jews back from their captivity, and then they would take care of their sheep in the country which used to belong to the Philistines, 2:7.

The countries of Moab and Ammon would also be left without any people, 2:8-11. They had spoken and acted proudly against the people of Israel and Judah. See Ezekiel 25:3,8; Amos 1:13. So God was going to make their lands as empty as those of Sodom and Gomorrah were. See Genesis 19:24,25. See also Proverbs 16:18, and think about it carefully. "To famish the gods" in verse 11 means that the false gods would have no one to worship them. They would be left hungry. The idolaters believed that the gods ate the sacrifices offered to them. After God has judged the nations, men will worship Him alone. See Isaiah 2:11,17; Habakkuk 2:14; Zechariah 14:16.

The judgment would also come on Ethiopia and Assyria, 2:12-15. Nineveh, which was a very large and prosperous city (see Jonah 1:2; 3:3; 4:11), would be left in ruins and without any people. Only wild animals would be there. See Nahum's prophecy. All of this has really happened. Where Nineveh once stood, there is now nothing but heaps of earth and ruins. The destruction was so great that for a long time people even forgot where Nineveh had once stood!

3. The warning to Jerusalem, 3:1-8

God warns Jerusalem in 3:1-8. He speaks of its wickedness and how the people troubled others, 3:1, and of its refusal to obey His voice and to trust in Him, 3:2. Its rulers, instead of helping people,

robbed them by wrong judgments, 3:3. Its prophets prophesied false things (compare Jeremiah 28:1-4), and its priests did evil things, 3:4. The Lord had punished other nations, hoping that the Jews would fear and repent. But they only did worse and worse, 3:5-7. God is going to judge the nations. And since the Jews had not acted like His people, they also would have to suffer, 3:8.

4. Blessing at the last, 3:9-20

But God does not take pleasure in having to punish people. So in this prophecy also, God looks forward to the time when He will bring blessing on the earth, and especially to the Jews, 3:9-20.

The "pure language" of verse 9 means the speaking of praise and worship out of pure hearts. In the last days, after God's work of judgment, He will bring the people who are left on the earth to love and to worship Him truly. (He is doing that today through His Word in the gospel. See John 4:23,24.) "The daughter of my dispersed" in verse 10 means the people of God who would be scattered away from their own land. The proud and disobedient ones would be destroyed out of Israel. Those who were left would be a poor people who would trust in God. This does not necessarily mean that they would lack wealth, for we know that in the last days there will be much prosperity. See Matthew 5:3. They will no longer be made ashamed nor will they again do evil, 3:11-13. See Joel 2:27.

Verses 14 to 17 tell of the great joy which will be in Jerusalem in those days. The people who live there ("the daughter of Jerusalem") will sing for joy, 3:14. Their judgment will be over, their enemies will have been destroyed, and the Lord Himself will be there, 3:15-17. He will rejoice in His love for them. Compare Isaiah 62:5. Verse 17 is a beautiful picture of God singing for joy about His people, just as they sing for joy about Him in 3:14. The Jews, who have been made ashamed because of their sins, will finally be saved and will be honored among all the people who will be left on the earth, 3:19,20.

MESSENGERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 9 Zephaniah

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. Josiah was a good king of Judah. He tried to
 - a) build the temple.
 - b) make peace with Egypt.
 - c) bring the people back to God.

2. Men of Jerusalem were saying that the Lord will not do good or evil. This meant that
 - a) the Lord will not punish sinners or help His people.
 - b) God does not care what people do.
 - c) He will save all men at last.

3. "The Day of the Lord" is
 - a) Christmas Day.
 - b) the day when He will punish people for disobeying Him.
 - c) the Day of Atonement.

4. Three groups of people who were doing wrong in Jerusalem were
 - a) farmers, bankers, and tax collectors.
 - b) rulers, prophets, and priests.
 - c) soldiers, shepherds, and sailors.

5. In a coming day Christ will come and
 - a) Die again for His people.
 - b) Israel will be hated by all nations.
 - c) every man will be a law to himself.

Enter TRUE or FALSE for the following-

6. Zephaniah was a well known prophet.
7. Zephaniah prophesied about God's judgment on Judah, Jerusalem, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria.
8. The people were worshipping the sun, moon, and stars, and the false gods Baal and Moloch.
9. Some people who call themselves Christians today are only pretenders.
10. God takes pleasure in punishing people.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

God is a God of Love. In the light of the teaching of Zephaniah does this mean that although God will judge sinners, eventually all shall be forgiven and enjoy eternity with God? If not, why not?

Haggai

The other prophets of whom we have read so far all prophesied before Judah was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all prophesied after some of the Jews had been brought back again to their own land. They lived nearly seventy years as captives, and then some of them were allowed to return. You should read the book of Ezra in order to understand these prophets, for they spoke at that time.

The Jews had begun to build the temple of God, but enemies had made them stop. See Ezra 4. The people were discouraged and said that it was not yet the time to build God's house, Haggai 1:2. So God sent Haggai and Zechariah to stir them up to go on with the work. See Ezra 5:1.

Haggai can be outlined like this:

- 1. The first message [the command to build], 1:1-15**
 - a. The warning to the people, 1:1-11
 - b. The people obey God, 1:12-15
- 2. The second message [the glory of the temple], 2:1-9**
- 3. The third message [God promises to help His people], 2:10-19**
 - a. Their uncleanness, 2:10-14
 - b. His blessing, 2:15-19
- 4. The fourth message [God will honor the one who obeys Him], 2:20-23**

1. The first message, 1:1-15

The first message is a warning from God to the people about their not building the house of worship for Him, 1:1-15. They were

building good houses for themselves, 1:4. But they were saying that God's house could wait. They had left off building the temple for seventeen years. They were afraid of the enemies and were putting their own comfort before God's honor. We are supposed to obey the rulers of the world. But if God tells us to do something, we must obey Him even if men do not like it. See Acts 4:18-20. Only we need to be careful that we are really obeying God and not just doing our own will. God's people ought also always to think of His honor before their own comfort. God had seen how the people were thinking of themselves first, and so He had not blessed them, 1:5-11. Their crops had failed and their money had not been enough, 1:6. There had been lack of rain, 1:10,11. We need to remember that all our good is only from God. We cannot do well in anything unless He blesses us. And He cannot bless us – unless we give Him the first place in everything.

The people immediately listened to God's Word and obeyed it, 1:12-15. God immediately told them that He would be with them to keep and to help them. See Ezra 5:1 - 6:15.

2. The second message, 2:1-9

Haggai's second message came about the time when they began again to build the temple, 2:1-9. Many were afraid that the new temple would be a very poor thing, 2:3. Some old men had seen the beautiful temple of Solomon, and they knew that the new one would be nothing like that. God tells them that the time would come when the temple would be more glorious even than it was in Solomon's time, 2:6-9. This part of the prophecy looks on to the time when the Lord will come in glory. The "shaking of all nations" in verses 6 and 7 will be at the last, when the Lord judges His enemies and when the Lord Jesus comes back in glory. See 2:21,22; Matthew 24:21,22,29, 30; Luke 21:25-27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. At that time the Lord Himself will live in the temple, which shall be built in Jerusalem then, and all people will see His glory. Note how verse 6 is quoted in Hebrews 12:26.

3. The third message, 2:10-19

The third message came about two months later, 2:10-19. In it, God tells the people that, although they are really not clean in themselves, He will bless them for their obedience.

In verses 10 to 14 He reminds them that when a clean thing touches an unclean thing, it does not make it clean. But when an unclean thing touches a clean thing, it makes it unclean. See Leviticus 22:4-6; compare 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. So the Jews were unclean because of sin, and everything they did in serving God was unclean also. We need to remember this – that the best we can do is really good for nothing unless God accepts it in His kindness and love.

However, God was going to bless the Jews, 2:15-19. He reminds them that, before that time, they had not had enough to eat or to drink, 2:16,17. But He asks them to note how, from the time that they began to obey Him and to build the temple, He would bless them, 2:18,19. This is a picture of how God accepts and blesses people who are really unclean in themselves, but who yield to Him and obey Him. He can do that because Christ died to pay for our uncleanness.

4. The fourth message, 2:20-23

The fourth message came on the same day as the third one, 2:20-23. It is a message to the governor, Zerubbabel. It tells how God honors the one who obeys Him. Again we have the word about shaking the heaven and the earth and destroying the power of earthly kingdoms, 2:21,22. As we have seen, this refers to the great judgments coming on the world. Verse 23 may refer to Zerubbabel as a picture of Christ. He is the Chosen One of God. Or it may refer to Zerubbabel as a picture of God's people, the Jews. We know that Christ will be King over all the earth in the last days and that Israel will be greatly honored then. See Zephaniah 3:19,20. Some people have even thought that perhaps Zerubbabel himself will be raised from the dead and honored. Possibly all three ideas are in this promise together. The seal on a signet ring, v.23, was used by a king to

mark his messages as a sign of authority. The ring was also worn by the king as an ornament on his hand. So the promise means that Zerubbabel (or the ones he pictures) would be set in the place of honor and of power.

MESENTERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 10 Haggai

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. The first message is a warning from God to His people because they were not
 - a) keeping the Ten Commandments.
 - b) tithing.
 - c) putting the things of God first.
2. The second message refers to the time when
 - a) the flood covered the earth.
 - b) the Jews crucified the Lord.
 - c) the Lord will come in glory.
3. In the third message God said that even though the Jews were not clean in themselves, He would bless them for their
 - a) large gifts.
 - b) children's sake.
 - c) obedience.
4. God promised to bless His people when they began to
 - a) keep the Sabbath.
 - b) build the temple.
 - c) build the wall of Jerusalem.
5. The fourth message tells of how
 - a) the world will be destroyed.
 - b) God honors the one who obeys Him.
 - c) children should obey their parents.

Enter TRUE of FALSE for the following-

6. Haggai prophesied after some of the Jews had been brought back again to their own land.
7. The Jews had begun to build the temple of God, but the enemies had made them stop.
8. The third message came about ten years later.
9. When an unclean thing touches a clean thing, it also becomes clean.
10. Haggai and Zephaniah lived and prophesied about the same time.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

From the four particular messages brought out in Haggai, which one has spoken to you the most? Share one thought you have received.

Zechariah

Zechariah prophesied at the same time as Haggai, 1:1. See Haggai 1:1; 2:1,10; Ezra 5:1. His prophecy tells of more things than Haggai's. He speaks to help the people who, as we saw in Haggai, were feeling discouraged. He tells them of God's purpose to bless His people Israel.

There are some things in Zechariah which are not easy to understand. Some of his visions are hard to explain. But other things are quite clear as we compare his words with the words of other prophets. This is the way in which we come to understand God's words. If a thing is not clear by itself, we remember it until some day we read a word in another book of the Bible which will make it plain.

One very interesting phrase is found several times in Zechariah. It is the phrase, "thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me," 2:9,11; 4:9; 6:15. In each case it is the Lord Himself who is speaking. We remember that the Word of God, John 1:1, has always been the One who speaks for God, even before He became Man. So in Zechariah, the One who speaks is the Lord, but He also says He has been sent by the Lord. This is one of the hints we have in the Old Testament of something which God has made clear in the New Testament, that is, that the One God is more than One Person.

We may outline Zechariah something like this:

- 1. The opening message, 1:1-6**
- 2. The eight visions, 1:7 - 6:8**
 - a. The man among the myrtle trees, 1:7-17
 - b. The four horns and the four carpenters, 1:18-21

- c. The man with the measuring line, 2:1-13
- d. The high priest before the Lord, 3:1-10
- e. The golden candlestick, 4:1-14
- f. The flying roll, 5:1-4
- g. The woman in the ephah, 5:5-11
- h. The four chariots, 6:1-8

3. The crowning of the high priest, 6:9-15

4 The word about fasting, 7:1 - 8:23

- a. The question, 7:1-3
- b. God wants obedience, not mere form, 7:4-14
- c. God intends to bless Jerusalem, 8:1-17
- d. Instead of fasting, there shall be joy, 8:18-23

5. The final blessing, and the troubles which must come first, 9:1 - 14:21

- a. The judgment coming on Syria and Philistia, 9:1-8
- b. The victory and return of the Jews, 9:9 - 10:12
- c. The trouble coming on Jerusalem, 11:1-17
- d. The salvation of the Jews, 12:1 - 13:9
- e. The time of the end, 14:1-21

1. The opening message, 1:1-6

Zechariah's opening message is in 1:1-6. It is a call to the Jews to return to the Lord with all their hearts so that He may be able to bless them, 1:3. He had warned their fathers about sin, and they had not listened to Him, 1:4. So He had been angry with them, 1:2. And the punishment He had warned them about had at last come on them, 1:5,6. God thus reminds the people who had come back from the captivity, which had been the punishment for their fathers' sins. God wants to bless Jerusalem again, but He can do it only if the people really set their hearts on pleasing Him.

2. The eight visions, 1:7 - 6:8

There are then eight visions given, 1:7 - 6:8. These visions tell of God's blessings on Jerusalem and of His judgments on the

nations. They are not all easy to understand. But we will think of them as we are able.

The first vision is of a man standing among the myrtle trees, 1:7-17. He was riding on a horse, and there were other horses with riders as well. In those days there were many myrtle trees near Jerusalem. "The bottom" means some valley near to Jerusalem. These riders on horses are pictures of angels who go out to see what is happening in the world, 1:10. They bring back the message that all is quiet, that is, that there are now no armies fighting, 1:11. This may have been to encourage the few Jews, who may have felt afraid because they were so few and so weak. The angel who is with Zechariah then prays for God to have mercy on Jerusalem, 1:12. God answers that He intends to bless the city, 1:13-17. He is angry with the nations ("heathen" means "nations" in the Bible). He had allowed them to punish the Jews for their sins. But they had treated the Jews harder than God wanted them to, 1:15. He has felt sorry for the Jews who have suffered so much, and He has now come back to Jerusalem, 1:16. The time is coming when there shall be great blessing in the land, with many people, and when Jerusalem shall be greatly honored, 1:17. The complete fulfillment of this prophecy is still to come.

The second vision is of four horns and four "carpenters" or "smiths", 1:18-21. A "horn" is used in the Bible as a picture of power. These are four "powers" or nations which have troubled the Jews, 1:19. Some have thought that these powers were Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, as we read in Daniel. At the time when Zechariah spoke, Greece and Rome had not yet troubled Israel. Other people have thought that the four powers may have been Assyria, Chaldea, Persia, and Egypt. Zechariah does not make it clear who they were, but the people who heard him probably knew. The four "carpenters" or "smiths" were four other powers who were going to punish the nations who had troubled Israel. "To fray them" in verse 21 means to cut them in pieces or destroy them. The lesson is, as we saw in Habakkuk 2, that God uses wicked nations to punish His people, but He will

punish the nations for their wickedness to His people. This second vision follows on what God said in 1:15.

The third vision is of a man with a measuring line, 2:1-13. A measuring line is used to see how big something is. The thought is probably that this man was going to measure Jerusalem to see if it was big enough for all the people who would be coming to live there, 2:2. But an angel comes to tell him not to bother, for the people who would come there would be so many that they would be all around outside the walls of the city, 2:4. God Himself would be their wall to protect them, and their glory, 2:5. This is followed by a call to the Jews who were still in Babylon to come out of it before it would be destroyed, 2:6-9. This follows on the vision in 1:18-21. And the chapter closes with the promise of blessing on Jerusalem, 2:10-13. God will be seen there in glory, and many people will obey Him and worship Him there. This vision also will be completely fulfilled in the future, when Christ comes in glory.

The fourth vision is of the high priest standing before the Lord, 3:1-10. In this chapter the high priest is like a picture of Israel. He stands before the Lord, who is the Judge of men. Satan is there to accuse Joshua, to prevent God from having mercy on him, 3:1. But the Lord rebukes Satan, 3:2. Joshua is clothed with dirty garments, 3:3. This is a picture of Israel, dirty before God with their sins. See Isaiah 64:6. But the Lord tells His servants to take away Joshua's dirty garments, 3:4. As He says, this is a picture of taking away Joshua's sins. He is then clothed with clean clothes, and a turban (as worn by the priests) is put on his head, 3:5. And he is told that if he will walk in God's will, God will let him serve Him, 3:6,7. We must remember that the Jews were much troubled about the sins for which God had punished them. This vision is to encourage them and to show them that God had forgiven them, and that if they would now obey Him, He would let them serve Him again. It is also a beautiful picture of salvation. Satan tries to keep people from being saved. Sinners are as if they were wearing dirty garments before God. But God makes those who trust in Christ to be clean from all their dirty sins, 1 John 1:7,9. He makes them to be righteous in His

sight, 1 Corinthians 6:11. And then He tells them to obey Him and so to be His servants. The vision closes with a prophecy of the coming of the "Branch" who will bring peace and blessing when He comes, 3:8-10. This is one of the names of Christ in the Old Testament. See Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15.

The fifth vision is of a golden "candlestick" or "lampstand", 4:1-14. This lampstand has a bowl on the top of it, with pipes going to seven lamps to take oil to them. There is an olive tree on each side of the lampstand, with a pipe running from each tree to the bowl. In this way the lampstand is kept full of oil. (In those days they burned olive oil in their lamps. See Exodus 27:20.) Probably the lampstand is a picture of the Jews being helped by God's power in His Spirit. The two olive trees probably stand for Joshua (the high priest) and Zerubbabel (the governor). The lesson is given in verses 6 to 10. The Jews were very weak in themselves, but God would finish His work by His own Spirit and power in them. The kingdom ("great mountain", v.7) which had tried to stop the work (see Ezra 4) would not be able to hinder them. Zerubbabel had begun the work of building the temple, and he would also finish it by God's help, vs. 7,9. The Lord Himself is seen in the "seven eyes" and would rejoice in the result. All of this (as we see in verse 6) should be remembered by us. We in ourselves are very weak, and our enemies are very strong. But we may trust in God, for His work depends on His strength, not on ours. We should do our best, trusting in Him, knowing that He will work in His own power. In the end, all the praise will thus be to Him.

The sixth vision is of a flying book or roll, 5:1-4. In those days "books" were written on sheepskins which were glued together end to end and then rolled up. This roll is said to be God's curse on those who stole and on those who swore falsely, 5:3,4. Swearing falsely is swearing that a thing is true when it is not. It also means swearing that you will do something when you do not intend to do it. To use God's Name in false swearing is a thing many people do. They say, "Before God," when they know they are lying. God hates all such use of His

Name. See Exodus 20:7. Though God was going to bless Jerusalem, He would cut off those who stole and who swore falsely.

The seventh vision is of a woman in an ephah, 5:5-11. An ephah was a measure used for buying and selling grain. See Amos 8:5. The woman was a picture of wickedness, 5:8. So the woman in the ephah stood for wickedness or cheating in buying and selling, just as we read in Amos 8:4-6. Some people think that the weight of lead stands for God's anger, but Zechariah does not tell us. The ephah, with the woman in it, is taken to Shinar, which is where Babylon was. The meaning of this vision may have been to remind the Jews that God hates fraud and deceit and that He had punished their fathers for it (as well as for other things). It may suggest too that God is finally going to punish such wickedness when He destroys the Babylon He speaks of in Revelation chapter 18. Some people think that the city of Babylon will be built again by men and destroyed by God in the last days. Others think that the Babylon of Revelation is a picture of false religion and dishonest business which God will judge. The vision in Zechariah 5 shows us that God hates dishonesty in business.

The eighth vision is of four chariots, 6:1-8. These seem to be spirits of judgment going forth into the earth. The one going toward the north (where Assyria and Chaldea were) is said to have "quieted the Lord's spirit in the north," v.8. That means that they have punished the countries with which He was angry there, 1:15, so that He is not angry any more. Zechariah does not explain to us how those nations were going to be punished. He only says that they were.

3. The crowning of the high priest, 6:9-15

There follows then the picture of the crowning of the high priest, 6:9-15. Zechariah was told to make crowns of silver and gold and to set them on Joshua's head as if he were a king. Joshua is thus like a picture of Christ (the "Branch", v.12), who will build the real temple of the Lord, v.12, and will sit in it as a king-priest. See Amos 9:11. There is a sense in which Christ is building a temple now. See

Ephesians 2:21,22. But Zechariah's prophecy has to do with the Lord's glory after He comes back to earth.

4. The word about fasting, 7:1 - 8:23

Chapters 7 and 8 tell us of a question about fasting and of its answer.

The Jews used to fast and to weep in the fifth month in memory of the burning of the temple. See 2 Kings 25:8,9. The new temple was now almost finished. Should they go on fasting and weeping now, or should they stop? 7:1-3. Remember that fasting, that is, not eating, was a sign of sorrow.

The Lord's answer comes to Zechariah that He is not pleased with mere forms, 7:4-14. He tells them that their fasting and mourning in the fifth month (for the burning of the temple) and in the seventh month (for the killing of Gedaliah; see Jeremiah 41:1-3) had not been to please the Lord, 7:5. They were only pleasing themselves, 7:6. They had not obeyed the words of God by His prophets, 7:7. If they wanted to please Him, they should do as He had said. They should act in kindness and justice to others, not in hardness and cruelty, 7:8-10. God had told their fathers that, but they had refused to obey, 7:11,12, and so He had been angry with them. He had rejected them and had scattered them among the nations, 7:13,14. The lesson here is that just going through a form means nothing at all to God. He wants us to obey Him from our hearts and to do His will.

He then tells how God intends to bless Jerusalem, 8:1-17. There were but a few people in Jerusalem when Zechariah spoke. But God was there, and the city would become a place of truth and righteousness, 8:3. The time would come when it would be full of people, both old people and children, 8:4,5. This would be the Lord's doing, for He would save His people, 8:6-8. Ever since they had laid the foundation of the temple, God had decided to bless them, 8:9-13; see Haggai 2:15-19. God had turned from His anger to do good to Jerusalem, 8:14,15. His people should now turn from their evil doings and do good so that He might bless them, 8:16,17.

The times which they had spent in fasting in the fourth month (because of the taking of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 25:3,4), in the fifth month (because of the burning of the temple), in the seventh month (because of the killing of Gedaliah), and in the tenth month (because of the coming of Nebuchadnezzar to besiege Jerusalem, Jeremiah 52:4) – those times should all be times of joy and not of sorrow, 8:18,19. For the time would come when the Lord would live in Jerusalem and when people would come from every place to worship Him, 8:20-22. In those days the Jews will be held in honor as God's people and as His witnesses.

These prophecies have never yet been completely fulfilled. For the Jews did not turn to God with all their hearts. They kept on doing things according to form, with their hearts far from Him, Matthew 15:8,9. Finally, they rejected Christ when He came to them, and they caused Him to be killed. They would not accept Him even after He rose again from the dead. And so God punished them and scattered them again among the nations. But these prophecies will all be fulfilled when Christ comes in glory. The following chapters of Zechariah tell how and when all these things will at last come about.

5. Final blessing, and troubles which must come first, 9:1 - 14:21

Chapters 9 to 14 tell of the final blessing on the Jews and of the troubles which must come first.

First there are a few verses telling of the trouble coming on Syria and Philistia, 9:1-8. Syria was a country to the north of the land of Israel. Philistia was a country to the west of the land of Judah. Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, and Sidon were all cities of Syria. Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron were all cities of Philistia. This prophecy was fulfilled later on when the Greeks came and conquered the land. At that time God protected the Jews, as we read in verse 8.

The rest of chapter 9 and chapter 10 go on to the time of the end and tell of the final victory of the Jews and of their return to their own land. First there is a description of the King coming to Jerusalem, 9:9. This had a fulfillment when the Lord Jesus rode into

Jerusalem, as we read in Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15. But there is also a thought of His coming at the last as the Prince of Peace. When a king came riding on an ass, it was like showing that he was coming in peace, and not in war. The words "having salvation" really mean "being saved" and mean His final triumph over all His enemies. At that time God will put a stop to all war, and Christ shall rule over all the earth, 9:10. See Micah 4:3-7. Chapter 9, verse 11, seems to tell of the result of His work on the cross. Chapter 9, verse 12, to chapter 10, verse 7, tells of how God will make the Jews strong to overcome all their enemies. Their enemies had overcome them and will overcome them again, as we see in chapter 14. But when the Lord returns, it will be the Jews' turn to fight with their enemies and to destroy them. See Micah 4:13. In 10:6, "the house of Joseph" refers to Ephraim, which was another name of Israel. See our note on Hosea 5:1-3 (page 7). In 10:8-12 God tells of how He will finally bring the Jews from all the countries where He has scattered them, back to their own land. This will be after the Lord comes in glory to be their King.

Chapter 11 tells of the trouble coming on Jerusalem. In verses 1 to 6 there is a picture of judgment on the land. God would not deliver the Jews from the troubles which were coming. Verses 7 to 14 are like a picture of the reason for those troubles. In verse 7 the prophet is told to do something which is like a picture of the Lord as the Shepherd of His people. As we will see, these words are a picture of how the Jews would reject Christ. See verse 12 and Matthew 26:15, also verse 13 and Matthew 27:9. In the two staves, "Beauty" is a picture of God's agreement with His people, 11:10, which would be broken because of their sins, and "Bands" is a picture of the tie between Judah and Israel, 11:14. When Christ came, He was rejected by the Jews, and so God left them, and Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Verses 15 to 17 tell of the coming of another "shepherd." This is the "antichrist" or "false prophet" who is to come just before Christ returns. He will be destroyed by Christ. See Revelation 19:19,20. God calls rulers "shepherds" because He wants them to care for their people. That false shepherd will care only for

himself, v.16, and will greatly trouble the Jews. That will be in the time of the Great Tribulation. See 13:8,9.

Chapters 12 and 13 tell of the coming salvation of the Jews. This will be when Christ comes again in glory. Verses 1 to 9 tell how God will save the Jews from their enemies. We read more about this in chapter 14. Verses 10 to 14 tell how they will mourn when they finally know that the Jesus whom they have always rejected is really the Messiah or Savior for whom they have been looking. They will be sorry for their wickedness in having caused Him to be killed, 12:10. See John 19:34-37; Revelation 1:7. In that time God will destroy all idols, 13:1,2; see Isaiah 2:18, and there shall be no more false prophets, 13:3-6. Verse 7 refers to the death of the Lord Jesus. See Mark 14:27. Verses 8 and 9 tell of the Great Tribulation, that is, the great time of trouble which will come on the Jews just before the Lord Jesus comes in glory. See Matthew 24:21. That trouble will be so great that two-thirds of the people in the land will be destroyed. Only a third of them will be left, and even they will suffer much. They will call on God to save them, and He will answer them.

Chapter 14 tells how all these things will finally be brought about. The enemies of the Jews will again gather together to fight with them, 14:1,2. They will take Jerusalem and will begin to take the Jews captive again. Then the Lord will appear suddenly and fight with the Jews' enemies, 14:3-5. This is spoken of also in Joel 3:2 and Revelation 14:14-20. Verses 6 to 11 tell of the blessing and peace which will follow. The "light" of verses 6 and 7 probably means the light of knowing God. "It shall not be clear nor dark" seems to mean that it shall not be clear in one place and dark in another. All people will know God in the same way in that day. See Habakkuk 2:14. For the "waters" of verse 8, see Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Joel 3:18. Verse 9 means that all men will worship the Lord alone, and all in the same way. The people who fought against Jerusalem will be punished, 14:12-15. Those who are left will obey the Lord, and will come to Jerusalem every year to worship Him there and to rejoice with the Jews in the

blessings of the kingdom, 14:16-19. (That is the purpose of the "feast of tabernacles".) If they do not, they will be punished. And in Jerusalem every one and every thing will be holy to the Lord, that is, they will be devoted to His service, 14:20,21. That will be a wonderful time on the earth!

MESSENGERS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 11 Zechariah

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. Zechariah's opening message is a call for
 - a) judgment on Israel.
 - b) Israel to pay the temple tax.
 - c) the Jews to return to the Lord with all their hearts.

2. The vision of the riders on horses speaks of
 - a) angels who go out to see what is happening in the world.
 - b) the army of Israel preparing for war.
 - c) the coming of the Great Tribulation.

3. Crowns of silver and gold were to be set on Joshua's head. Joshua speaks to us of
 - a) a general in the armies of Israel during the time of Moses.
 - b) an old story.
 - c) the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The times spent in fasting
 - a) did not satisfy the Lord.
 - b) would be times of joy when the Lord reigns in Jerusalem.
 - c) would have to be repeated.

5. When a king came riding on an ass it indicated
 - a) that he was preparing for war.
 - b) that he was coming in peace and not in war.
 - c) that the end of the world was near.

Enter TRUE of FALSE for the following-

6. Some things Zechariah talks about are hard to understand.
7. A false shepherd will come just before Christ returns.
8. In Zechariah's prophecy there were a total of eight visions.
9. The Jews will be glad when they see Christ coming and realize that He is the Messiah whom they rejected.
10. During the time of Great Tribulation two-thirds of the people in the land will be destroyed.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

List the eight visions of Zechariah. Which brings the greatest challenge to your life?

Malachi

Malachi is the last of the prophets of the Old Testament. He probably prophesied not long after the time of Haggai and Zechariah. His prophecy is a warning to the people, and especially to the priests. They had again become careless and disobedient to the Lord. Their hearts were becoming so hard that they did not even realize how careless they were. We can see this by their questions when the Lord speaks to them. See 1:2,6,7; 2:14,17; 3:7,8,13.

We know nothing about the prophet Malachi. Some have even wondered if Malachi was his real name. The word "Malachi" means "my servant" in Hebrew. Some have thought that possibly Ezra was the real writer and that he just called himself the servant of the Lord, not putting down his real name. But we do not know for sure about that.

The outline of Malachi is like this:

- 1. The Lord's love to Israel, 1:2-5**
- 2. The priests' and people's careless service, 1:6-14**
- 3. The curse on the priests, 2:1-9**
- 4. The wrong marriages, 2:10-16**
- 5. The Lord will judge evil, 2:17 - 3:6**
- 6. The tithes, 3:7-12**
- 7. The difference between the righteous and the wicked, 3:13 - 4:3**
- 8. Conclusion: The coming of Elijah, 4:4-6**

1. The Lord's love to Israel, 1:2-5

Malachi's prophecy begins by the Lord telling Israel of His love for them, 1:2-5. Possibly the people felt discouraged by all their

troubles. They asked how God had shown that He loved them. Malachi shows how different had been God's treatment of the Edomites. Esau was Jacob's brother. But God had not blessed Esau's children, and He would oppose them always. We remember that the Edomites were always enemies of Israel. See Obadiah's prophecy. Israel would see how God punished Edom for their enmity and would praise the Lord, 1:5. It is because the Lord loves His people that He punishes their enemies.

2. The priests' and people's careless service, 1:6-14

The Lord then speaks of the priests' and people's carelessness in serving Him, 1:6-14. This showed that His people did not love Him. They did not honor and fear Him as they should, 1:6. Their not honoring Him was shown in the way they treated His offerings. It was like saying that His table (His altar) was not worth honoring, 1:7. When they wanted to sacrifice an animal to Him, they would choose a blind one or a lame one or a sick one and would sacrifice that, 1:8! They thought that there was nothing wrong in that. They would give to God what they would not want to keep for themselves! God had told them in the Law to offer Him only animals which had nothing wrong with them. See Leviticus 22:17-25. They knew very well that even a human governor would be insulted by such a gift as a sick animal. But they thought that they could offer to God an animal which they would not give to their governor! That was like saying that God was not as great as their governor! It was despising His Name! How many people there are today who think they can give God worthless things which they do not want to keep for themselves! That is not honoring God – it is despising Him. We should give Him our very best: our best strength, our best time, and our best possessions. But first of all we should give Him our hearts. That is where the people of Israel were making their real mistake. God would not hear the people who despised Him like that, 1:9. He would not accept their offerings, 1:10,13. The Lord is a Great King and should be honored with reverence and fear, 1:11,14. His Name was honored among the Gentiles, but His own people were not honoring Him!

3. The curse on the priests, 2:1-9

Then there is a curse on the priests who were leading the people astray, 2:1-9. God had made an agreement to bless Levi (their ancestor) because of his righteous life, his fear of God, and his testimony, 2:5-7. He taught others and turned them away from sin. That is what priests should do. (We who trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation should remember this, for we too are priests. See 1 Peter 2:5,9.) But those priests turned people out of God's way by their teaching, 2:8. Instead of turning them from sin, they were making them do wrong things. This they were doing by accepting bad offerings from them, by saying that the Lord's service was a tiresome thing, 1:13, and by setting a bad example in wrong marriages, as Malachi goes on to show. So God was dishonoring them, just as they dishonored Him, 2:9. Read 1 Samuel 2:30 and think about it very carefully. Are you honoring God or despising Him?

4. The wrong marriages, 2:10-16

He then speaks of wrong marriages among the people, 2:10-16. The priests and the people were marrying women of other nations who worshiped idols, 2:11. See Deuteronomy 7:3; Ezra 9:1,2; Nehemiah 13:23-31. (We Christians too are told not to marry persons who are not Christians. See 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14.) Not only that, but some of the men were even divorcing their Jewish wives in order to marry those other women, 2:10,13,14. God saw the sorrow of the wives who had been divorced. That was another reason why He would not accept the people's offerings. In the beginning God created only one man and one woman, 2:15. He could have made many women for Adam, but He made only one because He wanted Adam and Eve to care for their children in a right way. He said that two people should be like one, Genesis 2:24. God hates divorce, and He hates violence, 2:16. Men should remember this and should not treat their wives harshly. Men may like divorcing their wives and marrying others, but God hates it and will punish those who do it.

5. The Lord will judge evil, 2:17 - 3:6

Then God tells how He will judge evil, 2:17 - 3:6. God was displeased because some people were saying that God loved those who did evil and that He would not judge them, 2:17. Some very foolish people say that today! God warns them that His messenger will come to the temple, but that when He comes, He will judge those who do evil. No one will be able to stand before Him. He will purify the sons of Levi (the priests), 3:3. This He will do by punishing the evildoers, 3:5. Afterward those who were left would offer righteous offerings with true hearts, and those offerings would then be accepted by God, 3:3,4. The Jews looked for the Lord's coming to His temple (see "whom ye seek" in verse 1). They thought that His coming would be a blessing to them. They forgot that when the Lord appears, the first thing He must do is to judge sin. Compare Amos 5:18. We now know that the "messenger of the covenant" is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who is coming suddenly to judge sinners and to purify His people Israel. God's faithfulness to His promise was the only reason why the Jews were not destroyed for their sins, 3:6.

6. The tithes, 3:7-12

Then there is a message concerning the tithes, 3:7-12. God had told the people to give one-tenth of what they earned to support the priests and the Levites. See Numbers 18:24-28; Deuteronomy 14:22-28. This portion belonged to the Lord. But the Jews had not been giving it. So there was lack of food in God's house, 3:10. See Nehemiah 13:10. God says that they were robbing Him in not giving Him His portion, 3:8. Because of that, a curse was on them, 3:9. The "devourer" of verse 11 means the locusts which were eating up the crops.

7. The difference between the righteous and the wicked, 3:13 - 4:3

He speaks of the difference between the righteous and the wicked in 3:13 - 4:3. Some people were saying that it was a waste

of time to serve the Lord, 3:14. They saw that proud and wicked people seemed to be happy and prosperous, 3:15. But there were other people who heard God's Word and talked together about it and obeyed it, 3:16. God heard them and would not forget that they had feared Him. They would be His own people in the day when He came to judge men, 3:17. In that day people would see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, 3:18. For the wicked would be destroyed, 4:1, but the righteous would be victorious and would rejoice, 4:2,3. Compare Psalm 37:1-13, and notice also in Psalm 73 how Asaph envied the prosperity of wicked men and how God reminded him of their end. When we see wicked people prosper now, we also should remember their coming punishment.

8. Conclusion: The coming of Elijah, 4:4-6

Malachi closes his prophecy in 4:4-6. God reminds the people about His Law, 4:4. He tells them that He will send Elijah to them to help them before the great day of the Lord comes. See Joel 2:31 and read again our note on Joel 1:15. This promise had a first fulfillment when John the Baptist came. See Matthew 11:14; Luke 1:17. It will have its real fulfillment just before the Lord comes, as we read in 3:1. See Mark 9:11,12.

MESSENGRS OF JUDGMENT AND GLORY

TEST 12 Malachi

(Use Form B from the Website Menu)

Enter the letter of the correct answer.

1. The word "Malachi" means
 - a) holy.
 - b) humble.
 - c) "my servant".
2. Malachi's prophecy begins by the Lord telling Israel
 - a) that He will punish them.
 - b) that He will send another flood.
 - c) of His love for them.
3. One proof that the people did not really love the Lord was that they
 - a) offered blind and sick animals.
 - b) were lazy on the Sabbath.
 - c) complained for lack of water.
4. One of the complaints the Lord had against the people was that they
 - a) married women of other nations.
 - b) went to war against the Philistines.
 - c) did not honour their parents.
5. God had told the people to give one-tenth of all their earnings. These tithes were used to
 - a) buy property for more temples.
 - b) support the king.
 - c) support the priests and Levites.

Enter TRUE of FALSE for the following-

6. Malachi is the last of the twelve minor prophets and his book ends in a curse.
7. Some of the priests were causing the people to do wrong by giving them a bad example.
8. The Lord will come like the Sun of Righteousness, but first He will judge all wicked people.
9. Proud and wicked people prosper, so it is a waste of time to serve the Lord.
10. Elisha is mentioned in this prophecy.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

The challenge of Malachi concerns the attitude and behaviour of God's people. What would you say is most lacking in the believer's walk today?