



*the morning star rises in your hearts,<sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.<sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

**The Prophetic Mouth-** *Or the Prophet's Authority. The prophets' mouths reveal God.*  
"God gives Himself in the word of His mouth" (G. Vos).

*<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 18:18** I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.*

*<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Chronicles 36:12** He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD.*

*<sup>ESV</sup> **Amos 3:7** "For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.*

**The Prophet as Seer.** *A prophet is the mouthpiece of God who is called and who proclaims the Word of God by the empowerment of the Spirit to the priests, the kings and the people who also "sees" things not usually perceived by other people.*

**Link to Deuteronomy (Torah/Teaching of Moses)- What was required of Israel? How were they to live in light of YHWH's grace and word in reliance upon the Holy Spirit?**

*<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 10:12-13:** "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,<sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good!"*

**Fear**

**Walk**

**Love**

**Serve**

**Keep**

**= True Piety/True Religion in both Old and New Covenants**

Remember, that the Gospel produces a whole person restoration-transformation by God's grace and Spirit, that brings well-being-shalom-peace-contentment-joy-well-ordered affections-loves in Christ: fear, walking, loving, serving, keeping, etc.

*<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 18:15-19:** "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers- it is to him you shall listen-<sup>16</sup> just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear*

again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' <sup>17</sup> And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. <sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. <sup>19</sup> And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

***“Next to Mosaism, Prophetism marks and epochal onward movement in Old Testament revelation” – Geerhardus Vos***

Though Old Testament revelation advances, it is important to remember that Israel’s storyline is suspended with the Book of the Twelve and with Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah (the “Latter Prophets”). Now a poetic/prophetic commentary is given and recorded for us in the Latter Prophets (S. Dempster).

The storyline will not continue again until ‘The Writings’, particularly with Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles, and Daniel (one important reason why Daniel is not listed as a prophet, because his book continues Israel’s storyline into the New Testament era).

**Interpreting the Book of the Twelve (Minor Prophets):** A literary-theological unit.

*ESV Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

We will interpret in a threefold reading of the prophets (which is how we should interpret the Old Testament as God’s people):

- 1) **First Reading:** *“How did the people of Israel first hear the words of the prophets within their cultural milieu?”*- Considering the message of the prophet in his historical context and time period in redemptive-history.
- 2) **Second Reading:** *“How do the prophets point to Jesus Christ?”* (cf. Luke 24:24ff): Considering the message of the prophet as it becomes clearer throughout redemptive-history, and particularly with the coming of Jesus Christ.

**TYPE → ANTITYPE**

**PROPHET → JESUS**

**ISRAEL → CHURCH**

**NATIONS → UNBELIEVERS**

3) **Third Reading:** “How do we read the prophets “in Christ as the Church today”? Considering the message of the prophet as it applies and has implications for Christ’s Church today.

Let us remember what our father in the faith, John Calvin wrote concerning the prophets as the very “key” to rightly interpreting and understanding the prophets:

“...I urge readers to remember to use the key which I gave them, so that they may understand aright. That is, whenever the prophets describe the bliss awaiting believers and which appears as but a tiny shadow in this world, let them recall this distinction: to provide a clearer picture of God’s goodness, the prophets portrayed it figuratively in terms of earthly advantages. While portraying them this way they nevertheless meant to lift men’s hearts above the earth, above the elements of this world and above this perishable sphere, and to lead them to meditate on the blessedness of the spiritual life” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1541, 446-47).

### **Thematic Outline of The Twelve:**

*The Book of the Twelve* has popularly been known as the *Minor Prophets*. These twelve books or prophetic oracles are not minor in the sense of unimportant, but minor in length compared to the “major” or more extensive prophetic oracles found in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah (Compare Hosea’s 12 chapters with Isaiah’s 66 chapters for example, or Nahum’s 3 chapters and Jeremiah’s 52 chapters).

*The Twelve* was compiled in the Hebrew Bible as one book. The authors of the prophetic word lived and labored in God’s vineyard from the ninth century B. C. (Obadiah) to the fifth century B. C. (Malachi) *The Twelve* covers then over four hundred years of redemptive-historical prophetic word and center primarily around two most important events (“*Why the exile-death-discipline?*” & “*When will be the restoration and fulfillment of God’s Kingdom promises?*”):

#### **EXILE (Death) AND RESTORATION (Resurrection)**

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| <b>1. Hosea</b>   | <b>8. Habakkuk</b>   |
| <b>2. Joel</b>    | <b>9. Zephaniah</b>  |
| <b>3. Amos</b>    | <b>10. Haggai</b>    |
| <b>4. Obadiah</b> | <b>11. Zechariah</b> |
| <b>5. Jonah</b>   | <b>12. Malachi</b>   |
| <b>6. Micah</b>   |                      |
| <b>7. Nahum</b>   |                      |

**Theme: “Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is Near!”** Faithful YHWH sent the prophets to reveal himself to the people, to remind the people of his covenant promises, to cause the hearts to the people to repent and turn to him (bWv vb. turn back, return/ “shub”) by faith.

## **Common Themes in *The Book of the Twelve*:**

### **KING**

### **COVENANT**

#### **TABERNACLE/TEMPLE/DWELLING (“IMMANUEL”- God with us)**

- God’s King and Kingdom is Coming: The “Impending Eschaton”
- God’s Covenant Promises to His People
- Day of the LORD
- God’s Justice and Wrath
- God’s Salvation and Restoration of His People
- God’s Unifying Israel/Judah under One Davidic- Shepherd-King
- God’s Mercy to Israel and the Nations
- God’s Patience
- Eschatological Hope: God will dwell with Israel in shalom-peace
- The Covenant Unfaithfulness, Idolatry and Sins of God’s Covenant People
- Restoration, Remnant, and Eschatological Shalom-Peace. What Zephaniah promises could be the summary for all of the Book of the Twelve (Zeph. 3:14-21):

<sup>ESV</sup> **Zephaniah 3:14-21:** *Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! <sup>15</sup> The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. <sup>16</sup> On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. <sup>17</sup> The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. <sup>18</sup> I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. <sup>19</sup> Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. <sup>20</sup> At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather*

*you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.*

**Abrahamic Promise:** 1) Seed; 2) Land; 3) Blessings to the Nations



**Book of the Twelve:** 1) Repentant/Believing Remnant; 2) God dwelling with believers in restored paradise-land; 3) Salvation and mercy for the nations.

### **Common Sermon Form of the Prophets of the Book of the Twelve**

The sermons or prophecies of “The Twelve” have a three-part structure; this is often called a “covenant lawsuit”:

- 1) Accusations against Israel**
- 2) Judgment as a consequence for their sins**
- 3) Eschatological Hope for repentant believers**

Stephen Dempster notes importantly: “When these prophetic texts are used to help to interpret the narrative storyline that has led to the dead end of exile in Babylon, *instead of being regarded as books of doom and gloom they inspire hope and comfort*” (my emphasis).

**HOSEA-** God’s Covenant Unfailing Love – The Idolatry and Unfaithfulness of God’s People- *God’s Bride will be redeemed by grace alone.*

**JOEL-** The Day of the LORD – Preparation and Repentance- *True Israel will repent and live repentantly by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**AMOS-** Loving God and Neighbor- *God’s king will restore and unite God’s people and teach them righteousness.*

**OBADIAH-** God’s Sovereign Purpose in History- *God will come in justice, wrath, and salvation for those awaiting Him.*

**JONAH-** God’s Mercy to the Nations- *Let us rejoice of our unworthiness, and evangelize others with the good news of God’s mercy in Christ for the chief of sinners!*

**MICAH-** God's Justice and Mercy- *Let us repent and enjoy God's favor as we anticipate the Shepherd-King from Bethlehem.*

**NAHUM-** God's Patience and Wrath- *Let us repent and enjoy God's favor.*

**HABAKKUK-** "The Just Shall Live by Faith"

**ZEPHANIAH-** The Wrath of God on the Day of the LORD

**HAGGAI-** Rebuilding the Temple of the LORD-Glory will return

**ZECHARIAH-** Eschatological Hope and Glory

**MALACHI-** God's Covenantal Faithfulness

Geerhardus Vos in his masterpiece *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* lists four important topics/themes of the Old Testament prophets:

1. The Nature and Attributes of YHWH
2. The Covenant Bond between YHWH and Israel
3. The Rupture of the Covenant Bond between YHWH and Israel: the Sin of Israel
4. The Judgment and the Restoration: Prophetic Eschatology

The *chronological order and summary content* of *The Twelve* is as follows:

- 1) **Hosea:** Jeroboam II king of Israel and Uzziah to Hezekiah kings of Judah, ca. 790-725 B.C. (Israel → Judah):

**Hosea the Prophet** lived and ministered for YHWH during this dark time of idolatrous unfaithfulness of God's people, seeing the defeat and end of the once great and powerful Northern Kingdom of Israel. *The people of Israel were characterized by complacency, self-indulgence, and apostasy.* Against this historical background, Hosea was called to preach and marry Gomer, a woman who would end up an unfaithful wife and adulteress because of a propensity to adultery. This marriage was to illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness and the practice of spiritual adultery against her God. Although God has loved and married Israel, she had been an unfaithful wife with a propensity to spiritual adultery.

Hosea prophesied of the people's covenantal unfaithfulness to YHWH despite the love and favor that God had shown to them. Israel had become idolaters over time because of their *syncretism*. Israel's greatest sin was syncretism leading to idolatry, and a turning away from the true and living God. Syncretism in Israel was practiced as YHWH and Baal were both worshipped together by the people.

**God is faithful to his people. The Book of Hosea reveals the depths of God's love for his covenant people.** God is faithful in sending the Lord Jesus Christ to take to Himself an undeserving and unfaithful Bride, who has a propensity to spiritual adultery. We are Gomer; we have been loved immensely, above and beyond our wildest imaginations in Jesus Christ- -yet we "*cheat on God with other lovers*". Let us ask God for strength to love Him as He allures us, and restores us, and rules over us by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ! God will allure his people. Through His Word by His Holy Spirit, God makes Himself known to us. He tells us of His love and His faithfulness in Jesus:

*ESV Hosea 2:14 "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.*

God will restore his people to the covenant relationship with his as Husband. God in Christ has betrothed us to Himself through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Jesus has said "**I Do**" on our behalf. As True God, He has accepted us as our Bridegroom, as True Man, He has laid down His life, shed His precious blood to redeem us, and committed Himself to us forever (Rev. 1:5b-8; Tit. 2:11-14), as One Mediator, He is the permanent marriage bond between God and man—in Christ, sinners find reconciliation and grace:

*ESV Hosea 2:19, 23: And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. <sup>20</sup> I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD...<sup>23</sup> and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'"*

God will grant to them a Messianic- Davidic King to rule over his people in righteousness. Our Exalted Jesus sends His Spirit to write the Law in our hearts, to give us undivided hearts to fear His Name, He subdues our hearts with His love and grace, and rules and reigns over us (Psa. 86:11):

*ESV Hosea 3:5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.*

Those who are not his people will be called sons of the Living God!

*ESV Hosea 1:10-11: Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." <sup>11</sup> And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.*

God's grace is always greater than the sins of his people! God's faithfulness is always greater than our unfaithfulness!

*ESV Romans 9:21-27: Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? <sup>22</sup> What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for*

glory-<sup>24</sup> even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?<sup>25</sup> As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"<sup>26</sup> "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"<sup>27</sup> And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved..."

God says to us today as His Beloved People:

**1 Peter 2:9-11:** *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

<sup>10</sup> **Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.** <sup>11</sup> **Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.**

**Let the people of God remember:** *O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit (Hos. 14:8)*

## 2) **Joel:** Joash king of Judah, ca. 875-848 B.C. (?) (Locust plague → Remnant)

The context of the Book of Joel took place after a historical locust plague had devastated the land. Joel uses the imagery of the great devastation of locusts to warn the people (Joel addresses the people as "Judah," "Jerusalem," and "Israel," 2:27; 3:16) and to describe "the army of the Lord" who is coming upon Israel, which will be God's hand of judgment.

Some scholars argue that the "army of the Lord" could be understood as a literal army or as archetypal language in Joel's use of the locust plague to describe the future (cf. Joel 1:4; 2:2,5,11,25). Regardless of whether the use of "army" is a figurative or a real army, the LORD sent the devastation as a judgment for covenant disobedience, and God was "head of his army" as the Great and Divine Warrior who punishes the people and the land for covenant breaking, Joel 2:11, 25 (the army is also referred to as a "nation", Joel 1:6 [yAgj]).

*Apocalyptic Literature: Joel has elements of Apocalyptic literature; "Apocalyptic" means "Unveiling or revelation" literally. Apocalyptic writing is a branch of visionary writing that portrays the end of history and the eternity that succeeds that time.*

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Joel's prophecy uses language and imagery found in other pieces of *apocalyptic literature*. One of the main characteristics of apocalyptic literature is "symbolism" which is found in much of the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. *The use of apocalyptic language in prophecy concerning Eschatology or the end when God's judgment will occur, is to draw a sharp contrast between the characteristics of Joel's age with the age that is to come* (cf. Zeph. 1:2; 3:9-20) (Ladd, 153).

***The central message or overarching theme of the Book of Joel is the Day of the LORD - the Day of the LORD's righteous judgment is near-- and the need of repentance from the people (Joel 1:15; 2:1,11,15,31; 3:14; cf. Ez. 30:2,3; Is. 13:6).***

***Odendaal says that "every historical coming of this day [the Day of the LORD] is always a type and promise of its final coming and forms an intrusion of the consummation (Interpreting, VanGemeren, 45).***

One important theme related to the Day of the LORD in Joel's prophecy is that the Land of Israel is punished or receiving from God covenant curses for covenantal disobedience (which was what the great Prophet Moses told the people would happen in Deuteronomy 26-30).

***<sup>ESV</sup> Deuteronomy 28:38-39: You shall carry much seed into the field and shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them.***

The Day of the LORD has dawned or appeared in the Land of Israel (although it was believed by many in that time, that God's judgment or Day of the LORD would come upon the sinful world. But God shows that judgment begins with the house (or land!) of God! If the people will repent of their sins ("turn" from their sins to the LORD), the gracious God of the covenant people, promises to refresh the devastated land, return the covenantal blessings to his people, and even to the animals of the land. Ultimately, God promises to restore all creation as before the plagues (2:19-27; cf. Romans 8: 19-22).

God graciously promises to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh (2:28); whoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered (2:32); He will gather the remnant, those the LORD has called (2:32b); He will subdue the nations and separate them from his people, permanently sending them out of the land (3:4-15); The LORD will be the ultimate and permanent refuge of his people (3:16; cf. Ps. 23:6b); He will bring restoration to the land and the people of the land, and the LORD will dwell with his people permanently in Zion (3:17-21). These are great promises and truths that this prophecy communicates in Scripture for all of God's people and his creation: "The LORD dwells in Zion" (Joel 3:21b): The LORD dwells in the midst of His people for eternity (cf. Rev. 21:1ff).

***These great promises and blessings will happen also on the Day of the LORD.*** On the Day of the LORD, ***there will be both blessings and curses***; covenantal blessings for God's people, and curses of wrathful judgment for the wicked (Blessings: Is. 35:8-10; Obad. 19-21; Zeph. 3:18-20; Zech. 14:10,11; curses: Is. 10:3; 63:4-6; Jer. 51:2; Ezek. 7:7; Hos. 1:9; Joel 2:2; Zeph. 2:2).

***This Day of the LORD is inaugurated on the cross of Jesus Christ.*** Jesus says: ***"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit (not merely the land), but the earth."*** Jesus Christ has come to save his people from the wrath to come prophesied in images by Joel in the Old Covenant. Like the Old Covenant Israelites to whom Joel prophesied, the locust plague (the great army) was nothing compared to the punishment of God to be revealed! Jesus Christ saves his people from this coming wrath by taking God's wrath upon himself. On the cross we see an intrusion of God's Last Day wrath (or the wrath like the Day of the LORD) upon Jesus Christ. In Him we find shelter from the wrath to come and a sacrifice that satisfies God's judgment against sin. Jesus receives the judgment, so that God's people who turn to Him in repentance and faith may receive His Spirit of restoration

and be saved! VanGemeren writes: “The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of God’s presence in suffering, of communion with God, and of the promised restoration. ***He is the Spirit of Restoration.***”

*ESV 2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

3) **Amos**: Jeroboam II king of Israel and Uzziah king of Judah, ca. 760 B.C. (Israel → Judah)

*Amos addresses two major sins of fallen people in God’s World: 1) Idolatry and 2) Social Injustice. God’s people are to demonstrate covenantal love in reliance upon the Holy Spirit by loving one’s neighbor as oneself.* Rather than loving their neighbor as themselves, there was great hatred and social injustice especially with regard to their poor revealing not her separate-ness (i.e. “holiness”) from the ways of the nations (and worldly living and thinking) but how much like the world she had become:

*ESV Amos 2:6-8: Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals-<sup>7</sup> those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned;<sup>8</sup> they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.*

*ESV Amos 4:1 "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring, that we may drink!'*

Israel even broke the Sabbath because of covetousness and greed, doing business when they should have been hearing and learning God’s Word. The Sabbath day was given to the people of Israel as the visible sign that God had given her as a special nation of people who lived under His Royal and Holy Law:

*ESV Amos 8:5 saying, "When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances...*

Because Israel became like the nations, there was no love or compassion for neighbors (4:4-5), there was blatant and gross idolatry (2:8), and the people trusted in anything and everything *other than their Covenant God YHWH* who was the Creator and Sustainer of life, health, giver of rain, crops, and peace (4:6-11).

In Amos 9:11-15, the Prophet Amos tells the remnant of God that there will be restoration when “David’s fallen tent” or “tabernacle” (referring to the Davidic dynasty) is rebuilt in a new time of hope; this will be a time that will be after the restoration of God’s people from exile and a time of new creation when all of believing Israel and all believing nations (Gentiles) will be gathered permanently back into the land where God will permanently rule and dwell in their midst (cf. Rev. 21:1ff; 22:1ff).

**David's "fallen tent" or "tabernacle" or "dynasty" that was currently split and divided into northern and southern kingdoms would again be united, rebuilt and restored! The benefits of this rebuilt Davidic dynasty will be hope and salvation for Israel and also for the world-** -all those who believe in Jesus Christ the greater son of Davidic and one who sits upon David's throne at God's right hand:

*ESV Amos 9:11-15: "In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, <sup>12</sup> that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name," declares the LORD who does this. <sup>13</sup> "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. <sup>14</sup> I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. <sup>15</sup> I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them," says the LORD your God.*

Dr. Luke in the 'Acts of the Apostles' teaches us from the Council of Jerusalem that clearly this day spoken of by the Prophet Amos has dawned with the coming of Jesus Christ:

*ESV Acts 15:14-19: Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. <sup>15</sup> And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, <sup>16</sup> "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, <sup>17</sup> that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things <sup>18</sup> known from of old. <sup>19</sup> Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God...*

The exile of God's people (both Jew and Gentile) was coming to an end with the coming of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Peter 1:1, 17, 2:11 for the language of "exiles" being used for the church made up of Jew and Gentile). Through the power of the Spirit, God's people would be able to love God with all, and their neighbor as themselves in Christ.

With the coming of Jesus Christ, the Day of the LORD's judgment is imminent. Salvation is extended to all who believe- - including the nations or Gentiles (*goyim*). The Book of Acts tell us that Jesus Christ "rebuilt the fallen tent of David" and its ruins and restoration is found when Jew and Gentile repent and submit in Lordship to the King of kings and Lord of lords who sits on the greater Davidic throne at God's right hand!

This rebuilt tent or tabernacle is the true Temple of God that was founded upon Jesus Christ and His Work (and the Apostles and Prophets) (Eph. 2:20) and is being built up into a Holy Temple unto the Lord!

*1 Peter 2:4-6: As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*

4) **Obadiah**: Jehoram king of Judah (Southern Kingdom), ca. 580 B.C. (Exile → Exilic/Post-exilic)

The Kingdom of God will come! ***The Kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdoms of the LORD!*** The Kingdom of God will overthrow all foreign kings and their nations. The Kingdom of God will eventually manifest itself! We should keep this in mind as the people of God especially when it seems that the nations rage against God, His Anointed One, and His Kingdom people, and the nations seem to find success in their power and strength and false religions.

The Prophecy of Obadiah is short; it is in fact the shortest book in the Old Testament with only 21 verses! There is an old saying that “good things come in small packages” (That’s what my mother told me anyway!). Unfortunately, the good things of Obadiah’s small prophetic package have not always been obvious in the history of Christian interpretation of this book. The Latin translator Jerome wrote memorably about Obadiah when he said *quanto brevius est, tanto difficilium* or “It is as difficult as it is brief” (*An Introduction to the Old Testament*, Dillard and Longman, pg. 385).

Although Obadiah’s prophecy has been hard to interpret throughout history and has often been avoided because teachers and preachers could not find a relevant application to their congregations based on a book that told of a nation called Edom’s punishment and judgment. Yet as obscure as the prophecy may seem at first, it ends on a clear and powerful note that help us to interpret the entire book:

***“...And the kingdom shall be the LORD’s” – v. 21b***

This truth is revealed more clearly in Revelation 11:15:

***"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."***

The redemptive-historical “back story” for Obadiah’s message is primarily against Edom’s pride, cruelty and hatred of their “brother” Jacob (Israel). The Edomites allied with Babylon to sack Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

***ESV Obadiah 1:10 Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.***

The Edomites proudly boasted in their power and in the helplessness of Judah in a time of great trouble:

***ESV Obadiah 1:11-12: On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. <sup>12</sup> But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress.***

***When Jerusalem was razed to the ground by the Babylonians, the Edomites rejoiced in their overthrow!*** The supposed end of Israel with the fall of Jerusalem was the realization of all their hopes and dreams- -the defeat of Israel, Jacob their brother. We must remember that Israel was

God's special covenant people to reveal His Kingdom to all nations- -to fight against His Kingdom people was to fight against God Himself!

Yet Edom should not rejoice, because God will judge them for their sins and transgressions against Israel. God would destroy Esau and the Edomites:

*ESV Obadiah 1:18 The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.*

Despite what seemed to be the end of God's Kingdom in Israel, Obadiah prophesied encouragement to the people, telling them that YHWH will ultimately triumph and righteousness will prevail over the wickedness of all the nations on the Day of the LORD. The Prophecy of Obadiah is against Edom, but the judgment of Edom expands to include the nations in verses 15-16:

*ESV Obadiah 1:15-16: For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head. <sup>16</sup> For as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations shall drink continually; they shall drink and swallow, and shall be as though they had never been.*

God's kingdom will come with the restoration of God's people under His Messianic King. The restoration of God's people and his Kingdom began with the coming of Christ. Jew or Gentile can be part of this Kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ. The expansion of the Kingdom beyond the borders of Israel is happening all over the world as men repent and believe the good news of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Thanks be to God for his King! Kiss the Son lest he be angry and you perish in your way; blessed are all men who take refuge in him (Psalm 2:7-12)!

## 5) **Jonah:** Jeroboam II king of Israel (Northern Kingdom), ca. 700 B.C. (Evil of Nineveh → Exilic/Post-exilic)

**God is Sovereign Creator and Compassionate King:** As in the other prophets of *The Book of the Twelve*, the Book of Jonah reveals that God is the Creator God, the LORD who made heaven and earth. God is Creator and LORD over all creation and all creation is accountable to him for the way they live. It is interesting to note how God reveals his sovereignty not only in salvation in the Book of Jonah (2:9), but also in how he uses creation to perform his will.

For instance, when Jonah runs from God, the Bible says that YHWH "hurled a great wind upon the sea" (v. 4) that threatened the ship and her crew's life. Also, when Jonah is thrown into the sea, he goes down to the depths and God "appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah (v. 17), again revealing that God rules over his creation and his creatures for his own purposes. At the end of the Book of Jonah, God "appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah" (v. 6) and God "appointed a worm" (v. 7) showing his great power and sovereignty over his creation from the greatest and most formidable sea to the smallest worm- -

*...All creation serves God's purposes and will!*

***Why doesn't Israel serve God the Sovereign King? This is what Jonah's prophecy is about!!***

**God is gracious to those who repent:** God also reveals himself as gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abounding steadfast love for those who repent and turn from their sins to love and obey him by His grace (4:2).

Repentance is an important message and theme in Jonah's prophecy. God cares for repentant Gentiles, too! Jonah's prophecy actually contrasts God's mercy extended to the Gentiles and a reluctant Israelite who does not want to offer mercy to sinners. We are reminded that even when men are unfaithful, God is faithful to make his word known and reveal himself to those who are repentant.

It is important to note that Jonah represents Israel at this time in redemptive-history. Israel has been called to be a light to the nations and make God's Kingdom known to the world. However, like Jonah, Israel is reluctant and is out of relationship with God and his purposes for the repentant nations. Jonah is no mere Israelite, but an important prophet of God who is called to be the very mouthpiece of YHWH (see our introduction sermons).

If the most spiritual and gifted in Israel- -a very prophet of God- -can run from God and be angry with him when he shows mercy to the nations- -what kind of spiritual predicament is Israel in? How can God have mercy on this imperial pagan power who has constantly threatened Israel's existence? Because God is gracious to those who repent.

If profane sailors and wicked Ninevites could repent, so could Israel by God's power and grace! (cf. 1:5ff; 3:5ff). We should not underestimate Jonah's plight and be willing to sympathize with him. As stated before, Nineveh was responsible for destroying Jonah's homeland and he had perhaps been witness to the sinful and cold-hearted treatment of many women and children by the Assyrians. In fact, the Prophet Nahum describes the abominable sinfulness of Nineveh as a message of the LORD; Nineveh is described as a "bloody city":

*ESV Nahum 3:1-7: Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder- no end to the prey! <sup>2</sup> The crack of the whip, and rumble of the wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot! <sup>3</sup> Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end- they stumble over the bodies! <sup>4</sup> And all for the countless whorings of the prostitute, graceful and of deadly charms, who betrays nations with her whorings, and peoples with her charms. <sup>5</sup> Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame. <sup>6</sup> I will throw filth at you and treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. <sup>7</sup> And all who look at you will shrink from you and say, Wasted is Nineveh; who will grieve for her? Where shall I seek comforters for you?*

Through this experience of a reluctant ministry to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, Jonah comes to understand God's character much better. In fact, he says (in line with God's revelation to Moses in the Book of Exodus when God revealed his glory):

*ESV Jonah 4:2 And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.*

*ESV Exodus 34:6-7: The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."*

**God is just and merciful to the repentant:** Although sin must be punished and God is just to do so in his sovereign rule over mankind, nevertheless, God is free to exercise mercy and compassion on those who repent. Rather than show justice (what the sinful people deserve) God can also show mercy and compassion. Remember the words of God through Moses to Pharaoh recorded for us by the Apostle Paul in Romans 9?

*ESV Romans 9:14-16: What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." <sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.*

**God is a "missionary God":** God is revealed as a "missionary God" whose concern for salvation is for the world- -not merely for Israel (that's us!!). Abraham was called to be the "Father of many nations" and the Prophecy of Jonah reveals God's heart in this way. To put it in New Testament terms, God desires that his people would go in His authority to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Matt. 18:18-20) as Jesus reveals more clearly in the "Great Commission" (the "ends of the earth" include not only Nineveh but because of God's grace, Washington D.C.!).

Jonah was the type of believer who is glad to receive God's mercy and love, but then once they have been reconciled to God expect him to destroy their enemies and show his justice rather than his grace. Jonah and all of Israel were the recipients of God's grace by faith, but they did not believe that God could show others grace. And that is precisely another area where God's thoughts are not our thoughts (cf. Isaiah 55:8ff): God calls us to himself and shows us mercy, then he tells us to take this good news to our worst enemies- -to tell them too to believe upon the LORD Jesus Christ and they will be saved!

What is foreshadowed and illustrated in Jonah becomes reality in Christ (Estelle, pg. 3). In the New Testament, Dr. Luke records for us concerning Jesus' ministry that many in Israel had witnessed (and even marveled, cf. Luke 4:22; 7:9; 8:25; 11:14!) at Jesus' Kingdom signs, but most of them had rejected the King himself. Jesus says to them in response to their unbelief:

*"This generation is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah" (v. 29).*

Jesus is saying by using the term "this generation" that all of Israel at the time of Jesus was in spiritual bankruptcy and unbelief.

So, Jesus says basically: "You want a sign that the Kingdom of God is present in me? I will give you a sign to show you the Kingdom!" Jonah the Prophet's period was characterized by repentance from Gentiles (the Ninevites) when they saw that Jonah had undergone a powerful salvation experience "from the dead" that only God could have performed and responded to his preaching of repentance from sin.

The sign that you will be given is unrepentance and folly in Israel! As Jonah preached to Nineveh (the Gentile Nations), they repented of their sins and turned to the Living God. In other words, as

Ninevah realized that Jonah had been in the belly of a whale for three days and when he returned only through the power of God, the Ninevites repented and turned to God.

Jesus' great sign for all to see will be that after he preaches and makes known the Kingdom he will be killed and be in the heart of the earth for three days. Like Jonah, he will return and this sign will serve to show men that only the power of God could accomplish this and all the world will be without excuse that God has vindicated the truth of Jesus' identity as the Divine Son!

As Greydanus wrote: "The Lord does not state here that Jonah's preaching was a sign and that His own preaching will be a sign, but Jonah himself and his experiences were the sign."

In Matthew's Gospel chapter 12, verses 38-41 we read:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." <sup>39</sup> But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ***40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*** <sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

***Jesus' resurrection will be the sign that Jesus is who he says he is! Another aspect of the sign however is that many Gentiles will believe and many in Israel (like Jonah and his time period) would be judged for their disbelief.***

There are several facets to Jesus' message of the "sign of Jonah" but another aspect could be that Jesus is saying that as the Gentiles in Jonah's day experienced repentance and salvation, so through his death and resurrection many Gentiles will experience the same. In Jonah's day the repentance of the Gentile Ninevites eventually was the reason why Israel was destroyed in 722 B.C. Jesus is probably saying that another aspect of the sign is that in the same way that this occurred in Jonah's time so it will also occur in Jesus' ministry.

In other words, as Jonah's mission led to the salvation of the Gentiles and the destruction of Israel, so too did Jesus' mission lead to the salvation of the Gentiles and the destruction of Israel. Is this not the thinking of Jesus as revealed in Dr. Luke's Gospel as well as the Apostle Paul's teaching in his letter to the Romans?

6) **Micah**: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah kings of Judah, ca. 725 B.C.  
(Israel/Judah → Judah)

The people of God had become sinfully and idolatrously very sick during the time of Micah. The covenant people who had been called to manifest God's Kingdom in a world of sin and misery had become wounded beyond repair in Israel and Judah (both the northern and the southern kingdoms were full of sin:

***ESV Micah 1:9 For her wound is incurable, and it has come to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem.***

Israel and Judah had become just like the idolatrous, God-denying pagan kingdoms that surrounded them rather than being a “kingdom of priests to YHWH and a holy nations” (Exodus 19:6). Although things in Israel and Judah were extremely bad, Micah the Prophet did not lose hope in the faithfulness of God to His people:

***ESV Micah 7:7 But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.***

Although judgment would come on Israel and Judah before God’s Kingdom would be fully established, nevertheless, Micah would look to the Lord and wait on God prayerfully. Micah realized that even in times when it seemed like the church was in a hopeless condition, he prayerfully sought God, knowing He is faithful to his people and he will build his church and the gates of hell will never prevail against her.

A key verse for interpreting the message of Micah’s prophecy and understanding the Church’s mission is Micah 6:8. In this passage, Micah looks back prophetically and redemptive-historically to Moses and Samuel, two prophets before him. Micah speaks of YHWH and the truth of his covenant purposes for his people:

***ESV Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?***

Although Israel and Judah will suffer the punishment of God because of their sins, nevertheless, Micah graciously grants the people who believe a glorious vision of the future. Micah’s prophecy gives several visions of the future so that this wonderful future might inform Israel’s present inglorious state and encourage the brokenhearted and humble who continue to believe God’s promises.

Although the full manifestation and realization of God’s Kingdom would be delayed in Jerusalem, there would come a day when a princely ruler would be born and then the Kingdom would come in its fullness. There will be judgment- -but also salvation for those who believe. For instance in Micah 5:2-5, we read of the future hope of God in Jesus Christ:

***ESV Micah 5:2-3: <sup>1</sup> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. <sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. <sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. <sup>5</sup> And he shall be their peace.***

Israel is taught that one day the divided Israel in turmoil and war and tribulation will be the new united Israel who will experience *shalom-peace* when a ruler shall be born in Bethlehem. Micah prophesies to an Israel who will suffer and did suffer exile from their land because of the punishment for their sins against God and covenant breaking (Micah 7:8-20). Yet there is promise for the future for those who believe God’s covenant promises to Abraham:

***ESV Micah 7:15 As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them<sup>1</sup> marvelous things.***

Like the great salvation event of the Exodus, so God will show his believing people marvelous things again! God's covenant will be fulfilled through God's continuing promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob being realized. As God "remembered" the covenant during the time of the Exodus from Egypt, so he will "remember his covenant again. This time will be more particularly revealed the steadfast love of God, the compassion of God and the permanent forgiveness of sins.

In fact there will one day be a future when a remnant of all Twelve Tribes of Israel will be saved:

*ESV Micah 2:12 I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men.*

*ESV Micah 5:7-8: Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man.<sup>8</sup> And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver.*

*ESV Micah 7:18-20: Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.<sup>19</sup> He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.<sup>20</sup> You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.*

## 7) **Nahum**: Hezekiah king of Judah, ca. 630 B.C. (Nineveh → Judah)

*A key verse for interpreting Nahum's prophecy?* Chapter 1, verse 3a:

*ESV Nahum 1:3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.*

*What is the summary of Nahum's message? God is the Divine Warrior!* Although Assyria was powerful, she was under the judgment of God, and her end was near. Nahum must have been a very brave soul because he prophetically preached, railing against Assyria at the height of her power (when he began his preaching there was no evidence that Assyria would be weakened and destroyed). Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, would fall (on the surface his prophecy doesn't seem to lend itself to much practical application for our times- -but it is an imminently theologically practical book of inspired Scripture!). Considering Nahum's prophecy from the larger perspective of redemptive-history and more particularly in light of the coming of Christ: ***God is the Divine Warrior who judges evil.***

- **God is a jealous God (1:2a); what does it mean that God is "jealous"?**

*God's anger is revealed as jealous and zeal.* In God's jealousy for His people, he is angry with those who oppose them; in God's zeal he is covenantally committed to defend, love and protect those he calls his own. Because God is jealous for his rule and reign over his creation, he will not

tolerate rebellion and opposition to his sovereignty. This is why Nahum describes God in this way as jealous and zealous in 1:2-3, which is an echo of God's words in the Book of Exodus when God reveals Himself to Moses:

***ESV Exodus 34:6-7: The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, <sup>1</sup> forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."***

In the revelation of God's Law, God describes himself as a jealous God who will not tolerate idolatry (Exodus 20:5; His Name is revealed as Jealous [*Qanna*], Exo. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; Josh. 24:19). God is impartial in his judgment upon sinners: "[God is He]...who will by no means clear the guilty" (1:3; Exodus 34:7) is language that Moses and Nahum use to describe those who are unfaithful to God and oppose him.

- **God is Judge:** God's judgment brings retribution for sins against God. Retribution means simply "pay back". God gives punishing eternal wrath to those who richly have deserved and stored up for themselves wrath for the Day of Wrath. As the Apostle Paul says in Romans 2, a hard-hearted and unrepentant person is storing up wrath for himself (a recompense or "pay back" from God):

***ESV Romans 2:5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.***

- Nahum says that God as the Great Judge is revealed as an avenging and wrathful God (1:2b). How does the Lord "take vengeance upon his enemies"? (1:2c) Through His wrath upon sin.

It is important to note that in 1:2, God is called an "avenging" or "vengeful" God three times (from Hebrew verb *nakam*); this is very important when considering how God reveals himself. The repetition three times of a character attribute is to focus attention and stress importance like an underlined sentence in writing (for example: "Holy, holy, holy", Isaiah 6):

***ESV Nahum 1:2 The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.***

*In other words, God is holy, holy, holy and because he is too holy to look upon sin, he is also avenging, avenging, avenging according to Nahum 1:2.*

- God is slow to anger and great in power (1:3a)
- God will not clear the guilty before him (1:3b); this implies and teaches us that God must take the initiative in solving the problem of guilt. If one is guilty before God to seek to remove his guiltiness is only to exacerbate and amplify and aggravate it before God's holy throne!
- God is good and a stronghold for those who trust in Him (1:7)

- God is also the one who will pursue his enemies to destruction (1:8).

God is revealed here in Nahum's prophecy as gracious and merciful but also wrathful- -not only a loving God, but a just and vengeful God and both these attributes we must hold together in our speaking of God as He has revealed himself. God's wrath is revealed in his jealousy for His character and truth and His zealous vengeance against his enemies; God's goodness is revealed in his zealous love, redemption to the covenant community who live by faith trusting in Him.

When John the Baptist was called to prepare the way for Messiah (Isaiah 40) as the last prophet of the Old Covenant epoch, he described the imminent arrival of Messiah as a time characterized by the "wrath to come":

*<sup>ESV</sup> Matthew 3:7-11: But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup> And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

When Jesus came and showed grace and love by healing the sick and preaching the gospel rather than bringing in the full measure of God's vengeance and wrath against sinful mankind immediately, John the Baptist was confused and even for a season doubted who Jesus was (Matt. 11:1-19). The Messianic time that John thought would be characterized by God's clear revelation of himself as Divine Warrior to the world came in an unexpected and even surprising manner.

When Jesus Christ came He heightened the eschatological battle and showed and revealed himself to be the Divine Warrior but He did not fight against God's enemies and the Church! Rather, he focused his wrath by engaging in a greater spiritual battle in spiritual warfare with a greater more formidable foe- -the very devil himself (Heb. 2:14-18). Jesus healed in his attacks, he forgave, he exorcised demons, he resisted temptation, he overcame death and hell and the devil on behalf of his people as the Divine Warrior!

Jesus as the Divine Warrior waged war against not merely the flesh and blood enemies of Israel but more intensely he waged war against Satan himself. The warfare against Satan ended in the cross and the tomb, and he was victorious through resurrection and ascension!

For all who believe Jesus Christ is the Consummate Divine Warrior who has defeated the stronghold and bondage of Satan, he has removed our lifelong fear and bondage to death, and made us free to live as the children of God through faith in Him!

Those who resist and war against Christ, will war against His Church as well. But God will come in wrath and judgment against them. We as the Church "in Christ" still struggle against Satan and evil, and we are to resist the devil and fight in Jesus' Name through spiritual warfare that is described in Ephesians 6:12-20.

We may not see and experience God's holy judgment and wrath displayed against His and our enemies in our lifetime- -but this judgment will come. God will curse those who dishonor those who believe as Abraham believed, and are united to Jesus Christ! Jesus will return in wrath for those who reject him- -for those who oppose him in unbelief, he will come as the great and wrathful Divine Warrior to judge the world!

*Revelation 19:11-21: Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. <sup>13</sup> He is clothed in a robe dipped in<sup>1</sup> blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>17</sup> Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, <sup>18</sup> to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave,<sup>1</sup> both small and great." <sup>19</sup> And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. <sup>20</sup> And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence<sup>1</sup> had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. <sup>21</sup> And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.*

8) **Habakkuk**: Manasseh or Josiah kings of Judah, ca. 605 B.C. (Rise of Babylon → Judah)

**Question:** *Which is heavier? The evil of Babylon or the evil of Judah?* God can freely use crooked instruments like Babylon to establish His Kingdom. And God's people are to trust Him. No matter how things may seem from our perspective, we should continue to pray by God's grace and enter into dialogue with the living God. This is what Habakkuk is doing in his prophecy. Habakkuk is showing forth righteousness particularly in its manifestation of walking by faith and not by sight and full understanding. As the LORD says to Habakkuk (2:4):

*"...The righteous shall live by his faith."*

Although God's timetable seems "slow" to impatient sinners with a finite focus and vision, God's vision is sovereign and will be accomplished:

*"For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay" (2:3).*

**What is the Summary of Habakkuk's message? Mature believers trust God by faith, knowing that God's sovereign design for establishing righteousness upon the earth will be accomplished.**

Many years before Habakkuk in redemptive-history, during Abraham's time, the question was asked: "**Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just (or right)?**"-Gen. 18:25. Habakkuk's prophecy asks this question again. As God has promised, although wickedness and injustice seems to prevail in a world of sin and misery, God's Kingdom will be fully manifested over the entire earth; although God's people are under chastisement and discipline by God during Habakkuk's time, God's glory will be established over all wicked and evil kingdoms that do not know the LORD.

The situation in Judah during Habakkuk's time is that there is much injustice and law-breaking in the land:

***ESV Habakkuk 1:2-4: O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? <sup>3</sup> Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. <sup>4</sup> So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.***

At first glance, what we see Habakkuk doing in his prophetic laments (particularly in 1:2-4, 12-17) is questioning God's righteousness.

God will raise up the Babylonians, enable and allow them to grow strong militarily, in order to chastise and discipline his people of Judah, and Habakkuk is questioning God for doing such a thing. One of the truths revealed in the Book of Habakkuk is that God uses "crooked sticks" to strike the earth in order to accomplish His will.

The Babylonians would be God's instruments of his righteousness—although it appeared to sinful man as a sort of unrighteousness. God can chastise his people through temporal earthly rulers and kingdoms of man. His people can only observe and worship the LORD for his glorious ways of salvation (that are very mysterious)- ***-but they must walk by faith*** (2:4).

Here is where our faith in God must begin. Many folks look around and say: "Where is your God?" "Where is the coming in judgment that your speak about?" "When will justice and righteousness be accomplished in this world?" "When will that 'perfect society' that the Bible speaks about where God will dwell peacefully with his people come to pass?"

Habakkuk's prophetic-oracle-burden is then a kind of **Theodicy**. **What is a Theodicy?** Milton defined it as a seeking "to justify the ways of God to man" showing that God is in the right and is glorious and worthy of praise despite contrary appearances. *Theodicy* is a form of apologetic, or defense of the faith whereby God is "vindicated" and acknowledged as righteous, even though it appears that he is not concerned.

Theodicy asks the questions, primarily of unbelievers (but also of believers as *The Book of Habakkuk* makes known to us) that ask: "How can God be just and allow injustice?" "How can God be a good God when he allows evil?"

“How long, O LORD?” asked the Psalmist. ***How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?*** –Psalm 13:1

Although Judah was evil and acting unrighteous, Babylon’s evil and unrighteousness far outweighed Judah on the scales of justice and righteousness. For Habakkuk, the cure for sins in Judah was far worse than the disease (F.F. Bruce, *The Minor Prophets*, pg. 834). However, God would use the more evil and unrighteous people to make Judah more righteous through cleansing, purification, discipline, judgment beginning at the Household of God (cf. 1 Peter 4:16ff).

***ESV Habakkuk 1:12-14: Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. <sup>13</sup> You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he? <sup>14</sup> You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler.***

In the midst of this painful situation, Habakkuk’s prophecy would be a written vision that would stand as a testimony to God’s faithfulness and promises (2:2-3). No matter how things might seem, God is faithful.

Not much righteousness in Judah, and certainly no righteousness in Babylon, but the righteousness, the justice, the hope that Habakkuk longed for, God would provide in the most unexpected way. In fact, the righteous and justice that mankind longs for is not found within mankind, even in the best societies; rather, the righteousness that God requires, God will provide! All mankind is rather like the LORD describes then in Habakkuk 2:4-5:

Puffed up before God in his soul; all that is found within sinful man is unrighteousness (v. 4); greedy for more money and power, but no longing or seeking after God (v. 5; cf. Rom. 3:10ff).

As the people of God wait upon the LORD, so they walk by faith. This kind of attitude is what characterizes true disciples of the LORD. This quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted three times in the New Testament because although Christ has come, we still await the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God and the righteousness and justice that all mankind longs for in a world of sin and misery (cf. Rom. 8:18-25):

***ESV Romans 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,<sup>1</sup> as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."***

The cure for our ills in this world of sin and misery is found on the cross of Jesus Christ. Here we have God’s answer to suffering, injustice, sinfulness, oppression and every inhumane manner of mankind. On the cross we see the Righteous One for the unrighteous; on the cross we see God’s righteousness and his justice appear when Christ is killed in place of His people, so that they might have a righteousness before God and be healed of their sins.

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ then is God’s answer to our *Theodicy*. God is just and the justifier of those who believe in Christ Jesus!

***ESV Romans 3:21-22: But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-<sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:***

***ESV Romans 3:23-26: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,<sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.<sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

9) **Zephaniah**: Josiah king of Judah, ca. 630 B.C. (Josiah's reforms → Judah)

Reformer Martin Bucer wrote in his commentary that if anyone wishes all the secret oracles of the prophets to be given in a brief compendium, let them read through the brief prophecy of Zephaniah.

***What is the central theme of Zephaniah's prophecy?*** One thing about Zephaniah and his prophecy is that he doesn't get side tracked by prophetic rabbit trails; the primary sustained focus of Zephaniah is on one central theme: **the Day of the LORD**. Zephaniah's message of "doom" reveals a coherent and compelling eschatological vision (Motyer, *The Minor Prophets*, Vol. III, pg. 897).

In fact, Zephaniah's prophecy became the source of the medieval hymn *Dies Irae* ("the Day of Wrath"). Zephaniah makes the point that his Day of the LORD is a day of calamity and destruction for the entire world; yet somehow, mysteriously, according to God's goodness and grace, this calamitous day is also the Day of Salvation for some.

Zephaniah theologically and prophetically balances God's judgment coming on the Day of the LORD with God's salvation-mercy that will be revealed in a remnant-restored-reformed Israel. So, although judgment from God will come for sin, there will also be the revelation of the salvation of God for His people.

Rather than successfully fulfilling God's call to be a blessing to the nations, Jerusalem and Judah had become idolaters like the nations around them (they had become "Canaanized" or "Babylonianized"). After five decades of King Manasseh's apostasy (697-642 BC), Judah was in a terrible mess spiritually. King Manasseh who should have led the people according to the Law of Moses (Deut. 17:14-20) instituted religious syncretism (or worship of YHWH and other gods) that was borrowed from the Canaanites, particularly the worship of Baal.

Because of this, God would punish all of creation for their sins (1:2-3). All the nations were guilty before God as well (it was not that God would somehow punish the innocent) but what Israel had become as sinfully defiled before God was indicative of the sinful defilement of the nations, or all creation as well. You can imagine an oracle-prophecy-sermon like this one and the response. Zephaniah climbs the pulpit, prays for God's help and His Spirit, then raises his voice and finger toward heaven in order to say that all creation is under God's sovereign judgment:

***Zephaniah 1:2-3 <sup>2</sup> "I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. <sup>3</sup> "I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of***

***the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the rubble<sup>1</sup> with the wicked. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.***

Another way of understanding the use of the undoing of creation in verses 2-3 is also to understand that the judgment of God that will come soon is also a foretaste of the ultimate judgment of God when he restores all of creation through judgment and fire. God will come in Theophanic judgment as Warrior, Judge and King. God through Zephaniah uses language of the creation account to declare what will occur in the soon to come judgment, as well as the final judgment when God will act against sinful mankind. In place of the harmony and order of creation, these will be replaced by chaos and disorder.

The judgment of God is compared to the judgment of the flood in Noah's day but this time it will be much more intensive and by fire:

***Zephaniah 3:8<sup>8</sup> "Therefore wait for me," declares the LORD, "for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.***

As the Apostle Peter wrote in the New Testament:

***2 Peter 3:9-10<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,<sup>1</sup> not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies<sup>1</sup> will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.<sup>2</sup>***

Part of the eschatological vision that Zephaniah reveals to the people is that the King who reigns eternally in Jerusalem upon David's throne will be none other than "the LORD in your midst" (3:15b); the King that will sit enthroned upon David's throne ruling over Jerusalem will be "The LORD your God in your midst, a mighty one who will save (3:17).

That's how that he can be both David's son and David's Lord as Psalm 110 revealed to the people: ***The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."*** (cf. Luke 20:41-44).

On the eve of Israel's exile, it is revealed that no one but the LORD YHWH Himself could be the Savior and deliver his people from their sins; no one but the LORD YHWH himself could save his people from their depravity.

When the people of God would have compared this revelation with the prior revelation of the prophets that Messiah, the King would be "the righteous branch of David" (Jer. 23:5-6); the "one shepherd, God's servant David" (Ezek. 34:23); a priest crowned king, whose name is "Branch" (Zech. 6:11-13) or the Lord, Messenger of the Covenant, who will purify the sons of Levi (Malachi 3:1-3); they could have understood by faith that Messiah would be YHWH Himself.

But at this point in redemptive-history, this was not fully understood by the people and this would the great news revealed on Christmas night by the angels in the little town of Bethlehem, Ephrata.

Messiah, the LORD, the King who would reign on David's throne at God's right hand in heaven would be God, but also distinct from God. The Word, who is God, would be made flesh:

*John 1:1-4, 14: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life,<sup>1</sup> and the life was the light of men....John 1:14 <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The salvation of God's people, the restoration of Israel, the restoring of Israel's fortunes would be realized in the Word becoming flesh- -our "Immanuel"- -God with us! Those who believed whether Jew or Gentile, would be restored as the Remnant-Restored-Reformed Israel and heir of God's covenantal promises just as Zephaniah prophesied:

*Zephaniah 3:19-20 <sup>19</sup> Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. <sup>20</sup> At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.*

Messiah, Jesus Christ, would experience God's eschatological-judgment-wrath upon the cross; God's wrath poured out upon Messiah would be substitutionary, a slaughtered lamb for all who believe; all creation would be affected as Christ would die for the True Israel for whom he came to die.

As the LORD God had prophesied through Zephaniah and revealed himself as the Savior and King in the midst of His people, so we see this fully revealed in the Book of Revelation:

*Revelation 7:15-17: <sup>15</sup> "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. <sup>16</sup> They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. <sup>17</sup> For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

As Zephaniah preaches to the people, so may the Word of God continue to go forth:

*<sup>ESV</sup> Zephaniah 2:3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands;<sup>1</sup> seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.*

Obey God's word by seeking him while he may be found and call upon him while he is near in repentance, then you too may be "Zephaniah" ["God hides"] or the one whom God hides or shelters on the day of his anger.

## **Summary of Pre-Exilic/Exilic Prophets (so far!):**

**There were 6 prophets to the Southern Kingdom of Judah** (captured in 587 B.C. by the Babylonians with destruction of Jewish Temple in Jerusalem).

**There were 3 prophets to the Northern Kingdom of Israel** (captured in 722 B.C. by Assyria under Sargon II).

After the overthrow of Babylon by the Persian Empire, the great ruler Cyrus the Great allowed the Jews to go back to the land of Jerusalem in 537 B.C.

### **There were 3 Post-Exilic Prophets**

#### 10) **Haggai**: Darius Hystaspes, ca. 519 B.C. (New Era → Remnant)

In the Book of Haggai, we find the Israelites who have been allowed by Cyrus the Great of Persia to return to the Promised Land of Canaan, after about seventy years in Exile.

The people of God return to a wilderness in Judea: the land is disordered, and weeds and thorns grow in the Promised Land. These who return (a very small number compared to those who went into Exile originally), are like pioneers trying to “make it” in a land that was once “home” to their families before them.

The new foundation of the Temple is laid immediately after they return in ca. 539, but because of the everyday problems of survival the Israelites are forced to face, and opposition from those peoples around them, the building of the Temple is stalled and the Israelites have grown *complacent because of discouragement*.

***God in his grace raises up two prophets: Zechariah and Haggai in 520 BC to address the people's spiritual complacency*** (Ezra 5:1ff). God also raises up the great Darius I of Persia, who is used by God to allow the post-exilic people to continue to build their temple, despite the problems still surrounding the region of Judah. From the time of the new start of building the temple, Haggai the Prophet gives four oracles to Israel, dated precisely between August and December 520 BC.

The reason for his prophecies or oracles of Haggai was because despite the fact that Darius ensured the people the Temple would be built with no more opposition, the people had grown weary and satisfied with the *status quo* during this time. They needed to be encouraged to continue building God's Kingdom House as his covenant people.

In Haggai 2:10-14, the prophet teaches the Israelites that even with the new temple, holiness is not contagious; they will need to be made clean to truly and properly worship God in Spirit and truth. Notice the way these questions are asked in verses 12-14.

This teaches the people that holiness is not contagious- - it comes only from God, but uncleanness and impurity is contagious and comes from sin. The LORD even uses the term “this people” instead of “my people” because of their need to be purified and to become truly a holy nation and a chosen priesthood.

In Haggai 2:15-17, the prophet again points the people's eyes forward with a prospective, continuing promise to them. He says concerning their future hopes of “what will come to pass.” God is still faithful, even if his people are not. In the last part of verse 17, the LORD says I send upon you the curses of Deuteronomy, yet you did not turn to me in repentance. However, by the LORD's grace he will be faithful to cleanse and purify them for service

as Zechariah 3 teaches us in Zech. 3:9 that says: ***“I will remove the iniquity from the land in one day.”***

The hope of the people of God is that in the fullness of time, Christ came, one who was greater than Zerubbabel and from his line as the greater Davidic King according to Matthew’s genealogy. Jesus was the greater and more glorious Temple of God. Through His blood God removed the iniquity from the land in one day upon the cross.

The temple in the OT pointed forward to Christ as the place where God dwelled with his people, but the Apostle John teaches us in chapter one of his Gospel: the Word became flesh and tabernacled or dwelt among us, we have seen his glory the glory of the only begotten Son of God.

Christ is the cornerstone of the final Eschatological Temple, by his Spirit—whether Jew or Gentile- - there is a new priesthood, a holy nation, a permanent new temple *in Jesus* who tabernacles, or “temples” with His people by the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

***Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,<sup>1</sup> but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,<sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.<sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by<sup>1</sup> the Spirit.***

In Jesus is where we find the embodied permanent dwelling of God with His people! Christ is the final Eschatological Temple spoken of by the prophets!

We are indeed a Last Days community between the New covenant restoration and the full restoration of the Heavens and the Earth - -we truly live between promise and fulfillment, but we have the words and work of Christ to fully assure us that God’s promises are “yes and amen” in Christ! It is true people of God- - as Haggai the prophet encouraged the Old covenant restoration- - so Christ encourages the New Covenant restoration people: “I am with you always” and so we look forward to the day when we shall be in the presence of the LORD forever! But we must wait patiently!

Remember, Revelation 21:22-17 teaches us that there will be no temple in the New Heavens and the New Earth- - this will be the ultimate fulfillment of Haggai’s promises. But also remember: *Wait upon the LORD; be of good courage and he shall strengthen your hearts; wait I say on the LORD!*

11) **Zechariah**: Darius Hystaspes, ca. 519 B.C. (New Era → Remnant)

Zechariah the Prophet prophesied at the time of Darius of Persia (ca. 520-18 BC), during the same time as the Prophet Haggai, with a preaching ministry that spanned about fifty years (520-470 BC). He became a martyr for His faithful preaching and teaching, and was nobly recognized by the Lord Jesus Christ for His faithful example (Matt. 23:35; 2 Chron. 24:20-21).

Zechariah's prophesy is saturated with rich, biblical, gospel truth. He speaks of the hope of the Incarnation that we celebrate at Christmastide. Let us meditate on this wonderful book of prophecy to encourage our souls to joy this Christmas! Christ has come! God promises His believing people:

***And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.*** (ESV Zechariah 2:5)

The theme of Zechariah's Gospel is that though the people of Israel are unfaithful to His covenant, God will be faithful to His covenant promises, and God Himself will come and make His holy presence known in their midst, making His people holy. God will dwell in the midst of His people! God's great promise is:

***"I will be their God and they shall be my people, and I will dwell in their midst forever".***

**Repentance:** Because God is holy, and we are sinful, God's people need daily repentance (Zechariah 1). God's people are called to a life of repentance before His holy throne. God will through preaching and the power of His Spirit bring His people to repentance. In light of all the good that God has done for His people, the people are called to repent: *"Return to me...and I will return to you"* (1:3). In the Incarnation, the Son of God came preaching "repentance and the forgiveness of sins".

**Holy, Spirit-Filled People:** *"God's glory is revealed in the midst of the people"* (Zechariah 2:5). How? Ultimately, through the "pierced one" who is a fountain for sinners to bathe in! (12:10, 13:1). Though there is sin in God's people, God's glory will be revealed, and His power and grace will transform them into a holy people. In the Incarnation, the Son of God came to make the good news of the Kingdom known, and was pierced for His people's iniquity, so that by His blood, and through repentance and the forgiveness of sins, God's glory by His Spirit could be realized in His people, and as a *"wall of fire around"* them (2:5a). On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came as fire and glory to dwell in the purified church.

**Righteousness:** God's people need righteousness (Zechariah 3). Though the people, symbolized by Joshua the High Priest, are soiled with filthy, sinful garments. The LORD will remove these garments of filth and wickedness, and give His righteousness to all who believe. In the Incarnation, the Son of God took our flesh to earn perfect righteousness before God, and to clothe His own with His own glorious righteousness.

**Power from the Most High:** God's people need the power and fullness of His Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4). *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,"* says the LORD (4:6). God will grant a full supply of His Holy Spirit so that God's people through His grace (4:7b) can live the holy lives that we have been called to live. In the Incarnation, the Son of God was anointed with the Spirit without measure to be the "Christ" or "Anointed One" to provide the Holy Spirit for us so that they could have access to "grace upon grace" without measure in union with the risen Son of God.

***"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom***

*they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. (<sup>ESV</sup> Zechariah 12:10)*

**Mediator:** God's people need a crown Priest-King- "The Branch" (Zech. 6). God's people need a king to rule and reign over them as a "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace". We need one to subdue our evil hearts to God's purposes. We need one who is also a priest to offer a final sacrifice and offering on our behalf for the forgiveness of sins, and to pray for us continually, both day and night, for our faith not to fail. In the Incarnation, the Son of God was the Holy "Branch" of Jesus, True and Faithful Israel, to offer Himself as the final sacrificial offering, the True Lamb of God, to take away the sins of God's people, and to be enthroned on High as only Mediator and Priest-King, full of compassion and power for His people.

**Fasting and Feasting:** God's people's fasting will lead to feasting (Zech. 7-8). Though God's people are called to humble themselves from the heart through fasting, this will lead to feasting with the LORD in their midst. Though the people are presently humbled in this world of sin and misery, we will sup with the LORD for evermore! Hallelujah! In the Incarnation, Christ came fasting through humility even unto death, so that He might secure everlasting life for His own and invite us to an eternal Supper and Feast of the Lamb! When we gather at the Lord's Table at communion, we can be reminded that this is a foretaste of the feast that we shall enjoy with Christ for all eternity.

**Fountain:** God's glory that is promised in Zechariah's prophecy is ultimately revealed in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ (Zech. 9:10; 13:7). God has richly provided for believing sinners a FOUNTAIN. In this fountain, Jesus Christ has purchased through His blood, our forgiveness, joy, and sanctifying grace. Through the Incarnation of the Son of God, God brings both comfort and conformity to Christ! Let us rejoice in the Incarnation!

*"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. (<sup>ESV</sup> Zechariah 13:1)*

## 12) **Malachi:** Artaxerxes Longimanus, ca. 433-424 B.C. (Apathy → Remnant)

The message of Malachi was about how church leaders and the church in general should and can have a right relationship with the living and true God by faith alone. The message of Malachi is directed to Israel's complacency (which is a common sinful theme in the *Book of the Twelve*). The people (like their fathers before them) want all the benefits of religion and all that the blessings that God can provide for them- -but they want these things on their own terms.

The people want a formalistic religion where they can merely ritualistically go through the motions, having their sins forgiven, and not having YHWH get too close to them in their life and doctrine. They want to be religious- -and like the heathen nations of the LORD- -but their religion does not always make them truly different from the heart. Only God can make people different and He begins by His Word and Spirit in our hearts (cf. Hebrews 4:12-13).

***What were the leaders of Israel guilty of before God?*** The sinful problems of the leadership, particularly the priests of Israel were heinous before God. The priests had become lazy and as degenerate as the people (2:1-9), and were did not considered God's Word or commands as important to themselves and the people as they should have (1:12-13).

There are three kinds of people in Israel that Malachi addresses: 1) Wicked and unbelieving Jews who are apostate and no longer listen to God's Word; 2) Formalistic Jews just merely going through the motions of worshipping God and putting their hope in their bloodline or hope in their ethnicity; and 3) the faithful and believing remnant of God's people who still believed.

***ESV Malachi 3:15-16: And now we call the arrogant [formalistic Jews] blessed. Evildoers [unbelieving apostate Jews] not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.'"<sup>16</sup> Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another [the believing remnant]. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.***

Malachi revealed to the people that God is father, but he is also a powerful King that must be obeyed because of the grace he has shown as father. Neither of these attributes should undermine the other. God was "Our Father and our God" or "Our Father and our Lord or King"; God was YHWH of Hosts, the LORD of Hosts and deserved respect:

***ESV Malachi 1:6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'***

***ESV Malachi 1:14 Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.***

God's character and Name (that revealed his holy character) was to be honored and revered through true and believing worship. The wicked and Israel and the formalistic in Israel did not truly revere God's name and could not be truly called God's children (cf. John 8:31-59). God's children would be those not merely who were Jewish ethnically, but those by faith of the nations who honored, revered, and worshipped God's Name (character revealed) as He is worthy to receive as Lord and King:

***ESV Malachi 1:10-11: Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.<sup>11</sup> For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be<sup>1</sup> great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.***

God's true children, whether or not they had the blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob flowing through their veins, were revealed by faith and true worship of the living and true God. God shows His love and reveals himself specially to those within Israel who believe;

there is a choice according to election from God's point of view. God reveals through Malachi that this has historically been the case in Israel:

***"I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob<sup>3</sup> but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert."***

God's love is for those who believe and continue to worship, serve and love him by His grace- -those who revere and honor His holy Name. The joy of the Lord, the blessing of God is not for all of Israel, but for believing Israel who fear-revere God's Name:

***ESV Malachi 4:2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.***

Many in Israel had grown cynical in their unbelief. They immediately desired for God to show forth his justice and wrath upon the wicked; little did they understand that many were indeed the wicked in God's eyes who would not receive blessings but retribution for their many sins against God. Malachi tells the people that Elijah the Prophet (or one like him prophetically) will be sent to the people before the Coming Day of the LORD (implying that Israel was as idolatrously sinful and cold in heart as in the days of King Ahab, Jezebel, and the Prophet Elijah).

***ESV Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.***

***ESV Malachi 4:5 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.***

The purpose Elijah and the messenger of the covenant would be to purify believing Israel so that they may be holy, sanctified and pure and be blessed rather than cursed on the Day of the LORD that was yet to come; at this time, many were not ready for the coming of the LORD, and so they should have been repenting of their sins before God rather than expecting a vindication of the wicked that was not God's intent for them:

***ESV Malachi 3:2-4: But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.<sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.<sup>1 4</sup> Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.***

For those in Israel who were unbelievers and merely formalistic, there was only wrath and judgment to be expected from God's appearing:

***ESV Malachi 4:1<sup>1</sup> "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.***

The people called by God's Name, YHWH's true "treasured possession" would be those who believed God's promises, and lived by faith obeying the LORD:

*ESV Malachi 4:4-6: "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. <sup>5</sup> "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."*

Malachi teaches the people that if they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets (here specifically mentioned in chapter 4), then they will not listen and believe and trust and obey even if someone rises from the dead. If the people of God are true believers at that point in redemptive history, then they are those who walk by faith in God's promises, remembering the Law of Moses and hearing the Word of God through the prophets.

This means that the true people of God, or True Israel have always been those with repentant hearts. True Israel did not believe that they were saved by works of the Law of Moses, but by grace through faith in God's promises. They sought by faith to trust and obey knowing that there was no other way to be happy in Jesus, but nevertheless, they also looked to sacrificial animals to atone for their sins; they knew that they could not and did not live perfectly the Law as was required of them.

In Jesus we find the hope of salvation in Malachi for those who believe and the continuing threat of judgment and destruction for those who turn away from him in disbelief!

*Who indeed can endure the Day of His Coming?* Only those who are eagerly awaiting him hopefully by faith:

*ESV Romans 8:23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

*ESV Galatians 5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.*

*ESV Hebrews 9:28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

**Canonical order of the Twelve Prophets:** (According to Keil and Delitzsch)- -this would be good to memorize for a simple overview of history:

Prophets of the pre-Assyrian period: Hosea to Nahum

Prophets of the Chaldean-Babylonian period: Habakkuk and Zephaniah

Prophets after the Exile-Captivity: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

### **Prophetic Timeline:**

Dates	Exile Time	Prophets	
9 <sup>th</sup> Century BC	Pre-exilic	Elijah/Elisha	
8 <sup>th</sup> Century BC	Pre-exilic	Jonah Amos Hosea Micah Isaiah	722 BC: Northern Kingdom of Israel exiled by Assyria
7 <sup>th</sup> Century BC	Pre-exilic and Exilic	Nahum Zephaniah Joel (?) Habakkuk Jeremiah Obadiah Ezekiel	597/86: Southern Kingdom of Judah exiled by Babylon
6 <sup>th</sup> Century BC	Post-exilic	Haggai Zechariah	
5 <sup>th</sup> Century BC	Post-exilic	Malachi	

**Interpretation/Christian Application:**

1) **First Reading:** *“How did the people of Israel first hear the words of the prophets within their cultural milieu?”*- Considering the message of the prophet in his historical context and time period in redemptive-history.

2) **Second Reading:** *“How do the prophets point to Jesus Christ?”* (cf. Luke 24:24ff): Considering the message of the prophet as it becomes clearer throughout redemptive-history, and particularly with the coming of Jesus Christ.

**TYPE → ANTITYPE**

**PROPHET → JESUS**

**ISRAEL → CHURCH**

**NATIONS → UNBELIEVERS**

3) **Third Reading:** *“How do we read the prophets “in Christ as the Church today”?:* Considering the message of the prophet as it applies and has implications for Christ’s Church today.

**God's Self-Revelation:** How is the Triune God revealed?

God is great and sovereign Creator, Judge, and Savior. God the Father reveals Himself in Theophany-Cosmic ways. The prophets are clothed with the Word as Jesus the Son will fully reveal when the “Word will become flesh” (John 1:14). The Spirit of God is the Author of the Prophet’s call and prophecy, but also promised to restore God’s people.

**Man's Sinful Condition:** What is FCF (Fallen Condition Focus)?

Let us live lives of repentance and faith, hoping in our God to fulfill all of His promises to us!

**Pastoral/Practical-Experiential Wisdom:** How then should I live?

Grateful that God’s Word is always true. He is always faithful.

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