

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah

Hosea

Author: Hosea 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Hosea as the Prophet Hosea. The Book of Hosea is the prophet Hosea's personal account of his prophetic messages to the children of God and to the world.

Date of Writing: Hosea, the son of Beeri, prophesied for quite some time, from 785 to 725 B.C. The Book of Hosea was likely written between 755 and 725 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Hosea can be divided into two parts: (1) Hosea 1:1-3:5 is a collection of symbolical actions pointing to the idolatries of Israel; (2) Hosea 3:6-14:9 contains the condemnation of Israel, especially Samaria, for the worship of idols.

The first section of the book displays three distinctive parables illustrating how God's children return time after time to idolatry. The symbolical emphasis can be seen clearly in the first chapter as Hosea compares Israel's turning away from God to idols as a marriage to a prostitute who won't stay true to her husband.

The second section can be subdivided two separate ways. Three divisions can be seen according to the reign of the kings of Hosea's day or by the subject matter of the parables. This section contains Hosea's rebuke of the Israelites but followed by the promises and the mercies of God. Hosea joyfully looked forward to the coming of the Redeemer and is quoted often in the New Testament (Matthew 9:12-13; Romans 9:25-26; 1 Peter 2:10).

Key Verses: Hosea 1:2. How disappointed was God in His children as He saw them time after time turn their backs on Him as they would again worship idolatry and heathen acts. Hosea 2:23. This is the wonderful prophetic message from God to include the Gentiles [non-Jews] as His children as recorded also in Romans 9:25 and 1 Peter 2:10. Hosea 6:6. Jesus quoted this saying as recorded in Matthew 9:12-13 when instructing the Pharisees why He associated with sinners. Hosea 14:2-4. The entire Gospel is contained in these three verses as mankind is to ask God's forgiveness, repent from its wicked ways, and accept the loving, mercy of its Creator which leads to eternal life with God the Father.

Brief Summary: The Book of Hosea is a prophetic accounting of God's relentless love for His children. Since the beginning of time God's ungrateful and undeserving creation has been accepting God's love, grace, and mercy but unable to refrain from its wickedness. Hosea takes this act of unfaithfulness personally as he takes a prostitute in marriage.

Hosea shows how God's love is once again restored to His children and the sins of His children are forgotten with a repentant heart of His followers. The prophetic message of Hosea foretells the coming of Israel's Messiah 700 years in the future and Hosea is quoted often in the New Testament.

Practical Application: The Book of Hosea assures us of God's amazing love for mankind. But it is also a picture of how God is dishonoured and hurt by the actions of His people. How can a wife who is given an abundance of love, mercy, and grace treat her lover with so much disrespect? Yet, we have done just that for centuries. As we look at how the Israelites turned their backs on God we need to look no further than the mirror in front of us to see a reflection of those same Israelites.

Only by remembering how much God has done for each us will we be able to avoid hurting the One who can give us eternal life in Glory instead of the Hell we deserve. It is essential that we learn to fully reverence our Creator. When we do make a mistake Hosea has shown us that if we have a sorrowful heart and a promise of repentance then God will again show His never-ending love to us.

Brief Outline of Hosea

- I. AN UNFAITHFUL WIFE & FAITHFUL HUSBAND (Ch. 1-3)
 - A. Hosea's Family (Ch. 1)
 - B. Unfaithful Wife (Ch. 2)
 - C. Faithful Husband (Ch. 3)

- II. AN UNFAITHFUL NATION & THEIR FAITHFUL GOD (Ch. 4-14)
 - A. Israel's Unfaithfulness (Ch. 4-6)
 - B. Israel's Punishment (Ch. 7-10)
 - C. God's Love (Ch. 11)
 - D. God's Discipline (Ch. 12-13)
 - E. Israel's Restoration (Ch. 14)

Joel

Jehovah Elohim - The Lord is God!

Author: The Book of Joel states that its author was the Prophet Joel (Joel 1:1).

Date of Writing: The Book of Joel was likely written between 835 and 800 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Judah, the setting for the book, is devastated by a vast horde of locusts. This invasion of locusts destroys everything; the fields of grain, the vineyards, the gardens and the trees. Joel symbolically describes the locusts as a marching human army and views all of this as divine judgment coming against the nation of her sins. The book is highlighted by 2 major events. One is the invasion of locusts and the other the out pouring of the Spirit. The initial fulfilment of this is quoted by Peter in Acts as having taken place at Pentecost.

Key Verses: Joel 1:4; Joel 2:25; Joel 2:28.

Brief Summary: A terrible locusts plague is followed by a severe famine throughout the land. Joel uses these happenings as the catalyst to send words of warning to Judah that unless the people repent quickly and completely, enemy armies will devour the land as did the natural elements. Joel appeals to all the people and the priest of the land to fast and humble themselves as they seek God's forgiveness. If they will but respond, there will be renewed material and spiritual blessings for the nation. But something much worse than their current calamity was coming - the Day of the Lord. At this time the dreaded locust will seem as gnats in comparison, as all nations receive their judgment.

Practical Application: Without repentance, judgment will be harsh, thorough and certain. Our trust should not be in our possessions but in the Lord our God. God at times may use nature, sorrow or other common occurrences to draw us closer to Him. Oftentimes, troubles are warnings of worse times coming, and need to be heeded, so that we repent and get right instead of get harder!

Brief Outline of Joel

- I. Chapter 1:
 - A. Introduction
 - B. Announcement of a coming judgment of locusts
 - C. Announcement of the coming judgment from the heathen nations, of which that of the locusts were a type
 - D. A lamentation of sorrow for what God was having to do to Israel
 - E. A call for Israel to repent
- II. Chapter 2:
 - A. A recurrence to the same judgments
 - B. A description of their captors.
 - C. Another call to repentance
 - D. A promise of future blessing if they would repent
 1. The enemies overthrown
 2. The land blessed
 3. The Holy Spirit poured out
- III. Chapter 3:
 - A. The future overthrow of the enemy – in the Tribulation
 - B. The deliverance of Jerusalem
 - C. The blessing on the land
 - D. The permanency of the restoration

Amos

Burdensome

Author: Amos 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Amos as the Prophet Amos.

Date of Writing: The Book of Amos was likely written between 760 and 753 B.C. You will note that the books are not laid-out chronologically according to their date of writing.

Purpose of Writing: Amos is a shepherd and a fruit picker from the Judean village of Tekoa when God calls him, even though he lacks an education or a priestly background. Amos' mission was directed to Israel. His messages of impending doom and captivity for the nation because of her sins were largely unpopular and unheeded, however, because not since the days of Solomon have times been so good in Israel. Amos' ministry takes place while Jeroboam II reigns over Israel, and Uzziah reigns over Judah.

Key Verses: Amos 2:4; Amos 3:7; Amos 9:14.

Brief Summary: Amos can see that beneath Israel's external prosperity and power, internally the nation is corrupt to the core. The sins for which Amos chastens the people are extensive: neglect of God's Word, idolatry, pagan worship, greed, corrupted leadership and oppression of the poor. Amos begins by pronouncing a judgment upon all the surrounding nations, then upon his own nation of Judah, and finally the harshest judgment is given to Israel. His visions from God reveal the same emphatic message: judgment is near. The book ends with God's promise to Amos of future restoration of the remnant.

Practical Application: Sometimes we think we are not much to look at or listen to! We think we are just a salesman, farmer or housewife. Amos would be considered a nobody by most people. He wasn't a prophet or priest or the son of either. He was just a shepherd, a small businessman in Judah. Who would listen to him? But instead of making excuses, Amos obeyed and became God's powerful voice for change.

God has uses nobodies such as shepherds, carpenters, fishermen all through the Bible. Whatever you are in this life, God can use you. Amos wasn't much. But he was a servant for God, and he impacted an entire nation for God!

Brief Outline of Amos

- I. Pronouncing Judgment Against the Nations (1-2)
 - A. Damascus (1:3-5)
 - B. Gaza (1:6-8)
 - C. Tyre (1:9-10)
 - D. Edom (1:11-12)
 - E. Ammon (1:13-15)
 - F. Moab (2:1-3)
 - G. Judah (2:4-5)
 - H. Israel (2:6-16)
- II. Specific Judgments Against Israel (3-6)
 - A. Judgment Visions (7-9)
 - B. Locusts (7:1-3)
 - C. Fire (7:4-6)
 - D. Plumb line (7:7-9)
 - E. Summer fruit (8:1-3)
- III. Amos and Amaziah (7:10-17)
 - A. Capitals (9:1-4)
 - B. Salvation of the Davidic Dynasty in Judah (9:11-15)

Obadiah

Servant of Jehovah

Author: Obadiah verse 1 identifies the author of the Book of Obadiah as the Prophet Obadiah.

Date of Writing: The Book of Obadiah was likely written between 848 and 840 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, is only 21 verses long. Obadiah is a prophet of God who uses this opportunity to condemn Edom (a neighbouring country to Israel) for sins against both God and Israel. The Edomites are descendants of Esau, and the Israelites are descendants of his twin brother, Jacob. A quarrel between the brothers has affected their descendants for over 1,000 years. This division caused the Edomites to forbid Israel to cross their land during the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt. Edom's sins of pride now require a strong word of judgment from the Lord.

Key Verses: Obadiah verse 4; verse 12; verse 15.

Brief Summary: Obadiah's message is final and it is sure: the kingdom of Edom will be destroyed completely. Edom has been arrogant, gloating over Israel's misfortunes and when enemy armies attack Israel and the Israelites ask for help, the Edomites refuse and choose to fight against them, not for them. These sins of pride can be overlooked no longer. The book ends with the promise of the fulfilment and deliverance of Zion in the Last Days when the land will be restored to God's people as He rules over them.

Practical Application: God will overcome in our behalf if we will stay true to Him. Unlike Edom, we must be willing to help others in times of need. Pride is sin. We have nothing to be proud of except Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

Simple Outline of Obadiah

- I. Introduction (1-4)
- II. Edom's ruin and betrayal (5-7)
- III. God's Judgment (8-14)
- IV. The Day of the Lord (15-18)
- V. The Division of the Land (19-21)

Jonah

A Dove

Author: Jonah 1:1 specifically identifies the Prophet Jonah as the author of the Book of Jonah.

Date of Writing: The Book of Jonah was likely written between 793 and 758 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Fish and revival are the key words in this book. Jonah is not merely swallowed by a great fish, this event represents God extending His helping hand to save the prophet. It gives Jonah a unique opportunity to seek a unique deliverance, as he repents during this equally unique retreat. The revival which Jonah brings to Nineveh is one of the greatest evangelistic efforts of all time.

Key Verses: Jonah 1:3; 1:17; 2:2; 3:10,.

Brief Summary: Jonah's fear and pride cause him to run from God. He does not wish to go to Nineveh to preach repentance to the people, as God has commanded, because he feels they are his enemy and he is convinced that God will not carry out his threat to destroy the city. Instead he boards a ship for Tarshish, which is in the opposite direction. Soon a raging storm causes the crew to cast lots to determine that Jonah is the problem. He is so determined to NOT do the will of God, that he would rather die in the sea than obey God. They throw him overboard, and he is swallowed by a whale. In its belly for 3 days and 3 nights, Jonah repents of his sin to God, and the fish vomits him up on dry land (we wonder what took him so long to repent). Jonah then makes the 500 mile trip to Nineveh and leads the city in a great revival. But the prophet is displeased (he actually pouts) instead of thankful when Nineveh repents. God uses a wind, a gourd and a worm to teach him that God is merciful, but Jonah never gets his attitude right towards God's mercies.

Practical Application: We cannot hide from God. Regardless of our patriotism, we must never put our country ahead of God. Regardless of our reputation, nationality or race God loves us. Rejoicing in the salvation of others is an experience God wants us to share with Him (not be resentful, jealous or thinking it is not "real").

Brief Outline of Jonah

- I. Commission and Flight (Ch. 1:1-3)
- II. Contradiction and Exposure (Ch. 1:3-17)
- III. Confinement and Confession (Ch. 2)
- IV. Conversion of Ninevites (Ch. 3)
- V. Compassion on Jonah (Ch. 4)

Micah thru Malachi

Micah

Who is Like the Lord!

Author: The author of the Book of Micah was the Prophet Micah (Micah 1:1).

Date of Writing: The Book of Micah was likely written between 735 and 700 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The message of the Book of Micah is a complex mixture of judgment and hope. On the one hand, the prophecies announce judgment upon Israel for social evils, corrupt leadership and idolatry. This judgment was expected to culminate in the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem. On the other hand, the book proclaims not merely the restoration of the nation, but the transformation and exaltation of Israel and Jerusalem. The messages of hope and doom are not necessarily contradictory, however, since restoration and transformation take place only after judgment.

Key Verses: Micah 1:2; Micah 5:2; Micah 6:8; Micah 7:18-19.

Brief Summary: The prophet condemns the rulers, priest and prophets of Israel who exploit and mislead the people. It is because of their deeds that Jerusalem will be destroyed. The prophet Micah proclaims the deliverance of the people who will go from Jerusalem to Babylon and concludes with an exhortation for Jerusalem to destroy the nations who have gathered against her. The ideal ruler would come from Bethlehem to defend the nation and the prophet proclaims the triumph of the remnant of Jacob and foresees a day when Jehovah will purge the nation of idolatry and reliance on military might. The prophet sets forth a powerful and concise summary of Jehovah's requirement for justice and loyalty and announces judgment upon those who have followed the ways of Omri and Ahab. The book closes with a prophetic sermon comprising elements of a lament. Israel confesses its sin and is assured of deliverance through Jehovah's mighty acts.

Practical Application: Expect sinners to sin. Do not be offended when someone sins against you. Extend a caring arm to people whose sin makes them unbearable. Pray that your fellow Christians will stand strong in their difficult circumstances.

Brief Outline

JUDGEMENT FOR SIN (Ch. 1-2)

Judgment (Ch. 1)

False Prophets (Ch. 2)

JUDGEMENT AND SALVATION (Ch. 3-5)

Leaders Condemned (Ch. 3)

Kingdom of God (Ch. 4)

Deliverer from Bethlehem (Ch. 5)

COVENANT CONTROVERSY (Ch. 6-7)

Israel's Guilt (Ch. 6)

Hope for Israel (Ch. 7)

Nahum

Comforting

Author: The author of the Book of Nahum identifies himself as Nahum (in the Hebrew “Consoler” or “Comforter”) the Elkoshite (1:1). There are many theories as to where that city was though there is no conclusive evidence. One such theory is that it refers to the city later called Capernaum (which literally means “the village of Nahum”) at the Sea of Galilee.

Date of Writing: Given the limited amount of information that we know about Nahum the best we can do is narrow the timeframe the Book of Nahum was written to between 663 and 612 B.C. Two events are mentioned that help us to determine these dates. First Nahum mentions Thebes (No Amon) in Egypt falling to the Assyrians (663 B.C.) in past tense so it had already happened. Secondly, the remainder of Nahum's prophecies came true in 612 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Nahum did not write this book as a warning or “call to repentance” for the people of Nineveh. God had already sent them the prophet Jonah 150 years earlier with His promise of what would happen if they continued in their evil ways. The people at that time had repented but now lived just as bad if not worse than they did before. The Assyrians had become absolutely brutal in their conquests (hanging the bodies of their victims on poles and putting their skin on the walls of their tents among other atrocities). Now Nahum was telling the people of Judah to not despair because God had pronounced judgment and the Assyrians would soon be getting just what they deserved.

Key Verses: Nahum 1:1a; Nahum 1:7; Nahum 1:14a; Nahum 1:15a, (See also Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15); Nahum 2:13a; Nahum 3:19.

Brief Summary: Though now often called one of the Minor Prophets Nahum carried a major message of hope for the people of Judah. The Ninevites (Assyrians) were well known for their cruelty when they invaded an area. But God (who had reserved His punishment 150 years earlier due to their repentance) had now pronounced judgment. The annihilators would now become the annihilated.

In 612 B.C. the Babylonians and the Medes joined together and attacked the fortress city of Nineveh. The Ninevites lived inside walls 100ft high and wide enough for four chariots to ride abreast. They felt so secure in their stronghold that the king even gave wine to his soldiers to drink even though he knew the enemy was close. Still, God’s promise came true when He sent a flood and washed away part of the wall. The attackers rushed in and the drunken Assyrians ran away. The soldiers stopped chasing the Ninevites and plundered the city.

Practical Application: Nineveh once had repented and served the Lord God Jehovah (see Jonah). That had changed over the course of 150 years. They had turned away from God again and so God was judging them. The same holds true for us today. God is patient. He gives every country time to proclaim Him as their Lord. But He is not mocked. Any time a country turns away from Him to serve it’s own motives He steps in with judgment. As Christians it is our duty to stand up for Biblical principles and Scriptural truth. We are our country’s only hope.

Brief Outline of Nahum

Nineveh's Just Judge (Ch. 1)

Nineveh's Fall (Ch. 2)

Nineveh's Ruin (Ch. 3)

Habakkuk

To Embrace

Author: Habakkuk 1:1 identifies the Book of Habakkuk as an oracle from the Prophet Habakkuk.

Date of Writing: The Book of Habakkuk was likely written between 610 and 605 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Habakkuk was wondering why God was allowing His chosen people to go through the current suffering at the hands of their enemies. God answers, and Habakkuk's faith is restored.

Key Verses: Habakkuk 1:2; 1:5; 1:12; 2:2-4; 2:20; 3:2; 3:19.

Brief Summary: Habakkuk starts with Habakkuk crying out to God for an answer as to why God's chosen people are allowed to suffer in this captivity (Habakkuk 1:1-4). The Lord gives His answer to Habakkuk stating, "you wouldn't believe it if I told you" (Habakkuk 1: 5-11). Habakkuk then follows up by saying, "Ok you are God, but still tell me more about why this is happening" (Habakkuk 1: 17-2:1). God then answers him again and gives him more information then tells the earth to be silent before Him (Habakkuk 2:2-20). Then Habakkuk writes a prayer that is a psalm because it is set to music that expresses his strong faith in God, even through these trials (Habakkuk 3:1-19).

Practical Application: The Book of Habakkuk inspired Martin Luther's reformation and the book "Hinds Feet on High Places" by Hannah Hunnard. The application to the reader today is this, it is ok to question what God is doing. Sometimes it is not evident to us what is going on. Especially if we are thrown into suffering for a period of time or if it seems our enemies are prospering while we are just barely getting by. This book however, affirms that God is God. We just need to be still and know He is at work. He is who He says He is and does keep His promises. He will punish the wicked. Even when we cannot see it, He is at work. We need to stay focused on this, "The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments" (Habakkuk 3:16-19). Enabling us to go on the heights is taking us to the higher places with Him where we are set apart from the world. Sometimes the way we have to go to get us there is through suffering and sorrow but if we rest in Him and trust Him we come out where He wants us.

Brief Outline of Habakkuk

- I. Debate With God (Ch. 1-2:20)
 - A. Habakkuk's First Lament (Ch. 1:2-4)
 - B. God's Answer (Ch. 1:5-11)
 - C. Habakkuk's Second Lament (Ch. 1:12-17)
 - D. The Watchtower (Ch. 2:1)
 - E. God's Second Answer (Ch. 2:2-20)

- II. Habakkuk's Prayer (Ch. 3:1-19)
 - A. Habakkuk's Request (Ch. 3:2)
 - B. God Appears in a Vision (Ch. 3:3-15)
 - C. The Triumph of Faith (Ch. 3:16-19)

Zephaniah

Defended by the Lord

Author: Zephaniah 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Zephaniah as the Prophet Zephaniah.

Date of Writing: The Book of Zephaniah was likely written between 735 and 725 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Zephaniah's message of judgment and encouragement contain three major doctrines: 1). God is sovereign over all nations. 2). The wicked will be punished and the righteous will be vindicated on the day of judgment. 3). God blesses those who repent and trust in Him.

Key Verses: Zephaniah 1:18; 2:3; 3:17.

Brief Summary: Zephaniah had the courage to speak bluntly because he knew he was proclaiming the Word of the Lord. His book begins with "The Word of the Lord" and ends with "thus saith the Lord". He knew the many gods the people worshiped or even the might of the Assyrian army could not save them. God is gracious and compassionate, but when all His warnings are ignored, judgment can be expected. God's day of judgment is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. The prophets called it the "Day of the Lord". They referred to various events such as the fall of Jerusalem as manifestations of God's Day, each of which pointed toward the ultimate Day of the Lord.

Practical Application: Judgment of the wicked and hope for the faithful. With a few adjustments in names and situations, this prophet of 7th century B.C. could stand in our pulpits today and deliver the same message. Zephaniah reminds us that God is offended by the moral and religious sins of His people. God's people will not escape punishment when they sin wilfully. Punishment may be painful but its purpose may be redemptive rather than punitive. The inevitability of the punishment of wickedness gives comfort in a time when it seems that evil is unbridled and victorious. A person has the freedom to disobey God but not the freedom to escape the consequences of that disobedience. Those who are faithful to God may be relatively few, but He does not forget them.

Brief Outline of Zephaniah

- I. The Coming Doom (Ch. 1:1-6)
 - A. Against the Nations (Ch. 1:2,3)
 - B. Against Judah (Ch. 1:4-6)
- II. The Day Of The Lord (Ch. 1:7-18)
- III. Call To Repentance (Ch. 2:1-3)
- IV. Doom Of The Nations (Ch. 2:4-15)
 - A. Philistia (Ch. 2:4-7)
 - B. Moab and Ammon (Ch. 2:8-11)
 - C. Cush or Ethiopia (Ch. 2:12)
 - D. Assyria (Ch. 2:13-15)
- V. Doom Against Jerusalem (Ch. 3:1-5)
- VI. Refusal To Repent (Ch. 3:6-8)
- VII. Deliverance Of The Remnant (Ch. 3:9-20)

Haggai

Festive

Author: Haggai 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Haggai as the Prophet Haggai.

Date of Writing: The Book of Haggai was written in approximately 520 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Haggai sought to challenge the people of God concerning their priorities. He called them to reverence and glorify God by building the Temple in spite of local and official opposition. Haggai called them not to be discouraged because this Temple would not be quite as richly decorated as Solomon's. He exhorted them to turn from the uncleanness of their ways and to trust in God's sovereign power. The Book of Haggai is a reminder of the problems the people of God faced at this time, how the people courageously trusted in God and how God provided for their needs.

Key Verses: Haggai 1:4; 1:5-6; 2:9.

Brief Summary: Will the people of God reconsider their priorities, take courage, and act on the basis of God's promises? God sought to warn the people to heed His words. Not only did God warn them, but He also offered promises through His servant Haggai to motivate them to follow Him. Because the people of God reversed their priorities and failed to put God in first place in their lives, Judah was sent into Babylonian exile. In response to Daniel's prayer and in fulfillment of God's promises, God directed Cyrus the Persian king to allow the Jews in exile to go back to Jerusalem. A group of Jews returned to their land with great joy, put God first in their lives, worshiped Him and began to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem without the aid of the local people who lived in Palestine. Their courageous faith was met with opposition from the local people as well as the Persian government for approximately 15 years.

Practical Application: The Book of Haggai draws attention to common problems most people face even today. Haggai asks us: 1) to examine our priorities to see if we are more interested in our own pleasures than doing the work of God. 2) to reject a defeatist attitude when we run into opposition or discouraging circumstances. 3) to confess our failures and seek to live pure lives before God. 4) to act courageously for God because we have the assurance that He is with us always and is in full control of our circumstances. 5) to rest secure in God's hands knowing that He will abundantly bless us as we faithfully serve Him.

Simple Outline of Haggai

First Message - Get to Work (Ch. 1)

Second Message - Glory of God's House (Ch. 2:1-9)

Third Message - Comfort in Rebuilding the Temple (Ch. 2:10-19)

Fourth Message - Promise to Zerubbabel (Ch. 2:20-23)

Zechariah

The Lord Has Remembered

Author: Zechariah 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Zechariah as the Prophet Zechariah.

Date of Writing: The Book of Zechariah was likely written in two primary segments, between 520 and 470 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Zechariah emphasizes that God has used His prophets to teach, warn and correct His people. Unfortunately, they usually refuse to listen. Their sin brought God's punishment. The book also bears evidence that even prophecy could be corrupted. History shows that in this period prophecy fell into disfavour among the Jews, leading to the period between the Testaments when no lasting prophetic voice spoke to God's people.

Key Verses: Zechariah 1:3; 7:13; 9:9; 13:9.

Brief Summary: The book of Zechariah teaches that salvation may be obtained by all. The last chapter depicts peoples from all over the world coming to worship God, who desires that all people follow Him. This is not the doctrine of universalism, i.e., that all people would be saved because it is God's nature to save. Rather, the book teaches that God desires that all people worship Him and accepts those who do, regardless of their national or political expressions, as in the freeing of Judah and Jerusalem from their political enemies. Finally, Zechariah preached that God is sovereign over this world, any appearance to the contrary notwithstanding. His visions of the future indicate that God sees all that will happen. The depictions of God's intervention in the world teach that ultimately He will bring human events to the end He chooses. He does not eliminate the individual's freedom to follow God or rebel, but holds people responsible for the choices they make. In the last chapter, even the forces of nature respond to God's control.

Practical Application: God expects sincere worship and moral living of us today. Zechariah's example of breaking through national prejudice reminds us to reach out into all areas of our society. We must extend God's invitation to salvation to people of all national origins, languages, races and cultures.

Brief Outline of Zechariah

- I. An Encouragement (Ch. 1-8)
 - A. Call to Repentance (Ch. 1:1-6)
 - B. Night Visions (Ch. 1:7-6:8)
 1. The Horsemen (Ch. 1:7-17)
 2. Four Hornes (Ch. 1:18-21)
 3. Measuring Line (Ch. 2)
 4. Clean High Priest Garments (Ch. 3)
 5. Lampstand and Two Olive Trees (Ch. 4)
 6. Flying Scroll (Ch. 5:1-4)
 7. Woman in a Basket (Ch. 5:5-11)
 8. Four Chariots (Ch. 6:1-8)
 9. Crowning of Joshua (Ch. 6:9-15)
 10. Question of Fasting (Ch. 7-8)
- II. Future Messianic Kingdom (Ch. 9:14)
 - A. First Messianic Oracle (Ch. 9-11)
 - B. Coming of the Messiah (Ch. 9)
 - C. The Messianic Shepherd (Ch. 10)
 - D. The Messiah Rejected (Ch. 11)
 - E. Second Messianic Oracle (Ch. 12-14)
 - F. Judgment on the Nations (Ch. 12)
 - G. Scattered Sheep (Ch. 13)
 - H. Messianic Kingdom (Ch. 14)

Malachi

Messenger

Author: Malachi 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Malachi as the Prophet Malachi.

Date of Writing: The Book of Malachi was written between 440 and 400 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Malachi is an oracle: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi (1:1). This was God's warning through Malachi to tell the people to turn back to God.

Key Verses: Malachi 1:6; 2:7; 2:11; 2:13-16; 3:1; 3:6; 4:1-3.

Brief Summary: Malachi wrote the words of the Lord to God's chosen people who have gone astray. In particular the priests were in this group of people that have turned from the Lord. Priests were not treating the sacrifices they were to make to God seriously. Animals with blemish were being sacrificed even though the law stated animals without defect were the proper type of sacrifice to the Lord (Deuteronomy 15:21). The men of Judah were dealing with the wives of their youth treacherously and wondering why God would not accept their sacrifices. Also, people were not tithing like they should of (Leviticus 27:30, 32).

Practical Application: God is not pleased when we do not obey His commands. He will repay those who disregard Him. As for God hating divorce (2:16), God takes the covenant of marriage seriously and He does not want it broken. We are to stay true to the spouse of our youth for a lifetime. God sees our hearts so He knows what our intentions are, nothing can be hidden from Him. He will return and He will be the judge. But if we return to Him, He will return to us (Malachi 3:6).

Brief Outline of Malachi

- I. The Wickedness of Unfaithful Priests (Ch. 1)
- II. Challenging the Priests to Repent (Ch. 2)
- III. God's People Robbing God (Ch. 3)
- IV. The Coming Day of the Lord (Ch. 4)