

Lesson Twenty: Nahum – The Fall of Assyria

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Briefly review the outlines for the **First Six Books of the Twelve – Crisis is coming**. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

The next section of the book of the Twelve includes the next three books, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, written just **Before the Destruction of Jerusalem**.

Nahum: Judgment on fallen Assyria

- I. Destruction of Nineveh declared (1)
- II. Destruction of Nineveh described (2)
- III. Destruction of Nineveh deserved (3)

I. The Fall of Assyria

What book of the Twelve talked about the salvation of a pagan city? [Jonah prophesied to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria.] When we looked at the book of Jonah we learned that God had been provoked to jealousy because of the sinful idolatry of Israel and Judah. He turned His saving attentions to the nations to make His people jealous (Deut. 32:15-21). With the preaching of Jonah, the “Great City” of Nineveh was saved in about 780 BC.

We learned from Genesis Gen. 10:8-11 that Nineveh was one of the cities that Nimrod built after the flood (the other great city of wickedness was Babel/Babylon). From the time of its founding in about 2230 BC until the period of the kings, Nineveh was the capital city of the small nation of Assyria. But with the preaching of Jonah the whole city was converted from the king to the children. This means that about two generations of Ninevites were believers in Yahweh. When God saves a people, He makes them grow strong, prosperous and powerful. Yahweh did this for Assyria because He intended to use them to judge Israel (Is. 10:5-6).

About 40 years after the Ninevites were converted, Assyria started to build a big empire for the first time. In 745 BC Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria (2 Kings

15:29; 16:7; 1 Chron. 5:6, 26; 2 Chron. 28:20) began Assyria's program of world conquest which lasted until its destruction in 612 BC (about 75 years). Historically we know that about the same time (745 BC) the theology of the Assyrians began to change. Each of the nations around Israel had their own national gods that they worshipped. After the conversion of Nineveh, Jonah probably taught them that Yahweh was the most high God that ruled all of the nations of the world. By the time of Tiglath-Pileser, only about 40 years later, we learn that the Assyrian god Ashur told the king to expand the nation into an empire through military might (so they thought). The Assyrians, who once believed that Yahweh was the universal God over the nations, began to apply this idea to Ashur, thinking that he was the universal god. They believed that since they had grown strong and powerful, it was because Ashur was the most high god, and that he had prospered them to conquer the nations around them. But Ezekiel 31:2f tells us that it was Yahweh who had prospered them and raised them up for His purposes. It was their pride that made them fall, and would cause Yahweh to judge them.

In 722 BC Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and Judah was under their domination and paying tribute (paying taxes, demonstrating they were under their authority). Manasseh of Judah (696-641 BC, 2 Kings 21:1-18) was a very wicked king, overturning the reforms of Hezekiah in Judah (2 Chron. 33:1-9). Toward the end of his life in 648 BC, he was taken captive by the Assyrians and taken off to Babylon, where he repented and was then returned to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 33:10-17). Manasseh sought to bring reformation to Judah by removing all the idols from the land, but the people continued still offered sacrifices on the high places to Yahweh.

It is striking that even though this was the period not long before Judah was sent into exile into Babylon, there is nothing in the book of Nahum about the sins of Judah. This is because the book of Nahum was written during the reforms of Manasseh. Because of this short period of partial repentance, Yahweh turned from his anger against Judah, and condemned Nineveh for her sins of turning from Yahweh, who had previously shown the Assyrians mercy. Just as the book of Jonah demonstrated that Yahweh is the savior of the nations, the book of Nahum shows that He is the judge of the nations, particularly those nations that have experienced the salvation of God. Later, both Babylon and Persia had leaders that became believers, but God judged these nations after they turned from Yahweh.

We know nothing about Nahum, except that his name means, "Comfort." The book of Nahum was written against Nineveh (1:1) to comfort Judah following their repentance. Sadly, because it was not complete, judgment was soon to come for them also.

II. The Destruction of Nineveh Declared Ch. 1

Turn to Nahum 1. The word “burden” means, “an oracle/word from God against” someone, and comes in the form of a “book,” or literary unit written by Nahum for the comfort of Judah. The first part of chapter 1 is an attention getting acrostic poem arranged according to the first half of the Hebrew alphabet (roughly equal to A – K), announcing the vengeance of Yahweh against Nineveh.

A. The Jealous God 1:2-3a

V. 2 says that God is jealous and Yahweh avenges. This is language that makes us think of marriage. It is a good thing for a husband to be jealous for his wife, not wanting some other man to show her improper attention. Assyria had acted improperly to Yahweh’s Bride, Judah; and now He is angry and will take vengeance on Assyria. To jealously take vengeance is to show that God loves His people. Because Yahweh had changed His attitude toward Judah from judgment to salvation (because of the reforms of Manasseh), Assyria would be judged. Because our God loves us – He is terrible in His wrath against our enemies. He was especially angry because Nineveh had at one time repented and was saved. He had built up Assyria in greatness, but because of their sinful pride, which caused them to mistreat Yahweh’s Bride, God would bring His judgments against them. Although He is slow to anger, Yahweh will certainly and with great power condemn the wicked in time. The guilt of Nineveh had become so great that Yahweh would take His vengeance upon her.

B. De-Creation of Nineveh 1:3b-8

When Yahweh comes in His wrath, the whole creation becomes unstable, untrustworthy. He comes in judgment on the wind and storm in His glory cloud chariot. When He draws near, the mountains shake, and the earth shakes at His presence. This figurative language makes clear that the enemies of God are helpless before Him, just as people experience an earthquake and can do nothing except wait it out in hopes that they survive. Who can stand when such judgment comes (v. 6)? Judah does not need to fear this judgment because Yahweh is a stronghold of safety for those who trust in Him. But Nineveh would be literally destroyed by an overflowing flood (as we will see next week). Yahweh would make an utter end of Assyria when He later send the Babylonians against them.

C. Yahweh Ruler over Wicked Men 1:9-13

In vv. 9-13 we see that the Assyrians had conspired against Yahweh. But He would judge them only once. They are described in v. 10 as tangled “thorns,” which is a biblical symbol of wicked men. Genesis three says that thorns and thistles would

grow out of the ground and trouble Adam/men. Adam was made of dust/ground, and for thorns to come out of the ground was a symbol of wicked men, the first of which was Cain. In Judges 9:7-15 we have a parable of Israel seeking a wicked king, who is likened to a thorn/bramble ruling over God's people. Nineveh was a thorn that ruled wickedly, conspiring against the Lord and His people. But Yahweh would cut them down, and break their oppression over the people of God.

D. Assyrian Religion Destroyed – True Religion Restored 1:14-15

When God saves people, they become more accountable to live for Him than they were before. For believers to rebel against the Lord is worse for them than if they had never become believers because they had experienced the love and mercy of the Lord and rejected it. Nineveh, saved just a couple of generations before, had turned the blessings of Yahweh into idolatry. For this reason, Yahweh says that they are vile/contemptible and their name would be cut off forever, and their religion would be destroyed (v. 14).

The goodnews that Yahweh's judgments were coming upon Assyria would produce celebration and feasting by God's people (v. 15). God's peace in history is the establishment of God's order in the world. It means the destruction of God's enemies and the strengthening of His people. This verse is quoted by Paul in Rom. 10:15 (cf. Is. 52:7).

Applications of this lesson:

- God is ruler of judge of the nations. He saves those who trust in Him; and destroys in time those who rebel against Him and wickedly oppress His people.
- Those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good will be more severely judged if they fall away.
- We must be careful to not become proud when the Lord blesses us, using His gifts wickedly.
- We should remember that the Lord knows those who trust in Him (1:7), and will protect us when He judges the wicked.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Nahum.

Lesson Twenty: Nahum – The Fall of Assyria

First Six Books of the Twelve – Crisis is coming.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

The next section of the book of the Twelve includes the next three books, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, written not long **Before the Destruction of Jerusalem.**

Nahum: Judgment on fallen Assyria

- I. Destruction of Nineveh declared (1)
- II. Destruction of Nineveh described (2)
- III. Destruction of Nineveh deserved (3)

I. The Fall of Assyria

Gen. 10:8-11 – Babylon & Nineveh – Great cities of Nimrod

2 Kings 15:29; 16:7; 1 Chron. 5:6, 26; 2 Chron. 28:20

Assyrian theology

Manasseh 696-641 BC, 2 Kings 21:1-18; 2 Chron. 33:1-20

Nahum = “Comfort”

II. The Destruction of Nineveh Declared Ch. 1

A. The Jealous God 1:2-3a

B. De-Creation of Nineveh 1:3b-8

C. Yahweh Ruler over Wicked Men 1:9-13

D. Assyrian Religion Destroyed – True Religion Restored 1:14-15

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Nahum.

Lesson Twenty-One: Nahum – The Fall of Assyria

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Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

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Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Last week we began to look at the book of Nahum, the first of the second section in the book of the Twelve, which includes Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, written not long **Before the Destruction of Jerusalem**.

Nineveh had been saved by Yahweh through the preaching of Jonah in about 780 BC. But over the course of the next couple of generations they rebelled against the Lord and began to use their strength and prosperity in the world to build a world empire based on violence and corruption. The Assyrians were terrible and cruel in their conquests of nations, and were feared and hated by all. In 722 BC, Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and scattered the people throughout the empire. After this time Judah was also largely dominated by Assyria, being forced to pay tribute. In 648 BC the wicked king Manasseh of Judah was taken captive by the Assyrians to Babylon, where he repented before the Lord. Manasseh was returned to Jerusalem and began a program of reforms in Judah, but the people did not submit entirely to the Lord (2 Chron. 33:1-17). It was during this time that Nahum (whose name means “comfort”) wrote his prophecy of comfort to Judah. Interestingly, nothing is said of the sins of Judah in the book of Nahum. It is concerned entirely with the sins and judgment of Nineveh and the empire of Assyria.

Nahum: Judgment on fallen Assyria

- I. Destruction of Nineveh declared (1)
- II. Destruction of Nineveh described (2)
- III. Destruction of Nineveh deserved (3)

Last week we looked at Nahum 1 and the declaration that Nineveh would be destroyed. Yahweh was pictured as the one who comes to take His vengeance upon the people who had rejected Him after He had shown the mercy. He would make their whole world collapse around them, which was good news for Judah.

I. The Destruction of Nineveh Described

Ch. 2

Nahum 2 begins with a call for the Ninevites to defend themselves as God comes in judgment. V. 1: “Man the fort! Watch the road! Strengthen your flanks! Fortify your power mightily!” Why? Because Yahweh is coming to take vengeance on Assyria for taking Israel captive and emptying the land of God’s people a few years before. Nahum describes the scene of Assyria’s downfall in vv. 3-10 in horrifying terms: Their shields are made red with blood. Chariots come flashing like lightning (speed) in a noisy assault. The noblemen and leaders of the city stumble as they make their defense. The leaders call for the soldiers to stand and fight, but they all flee in retreat and fear.

This terrible description of what was to happen to Assyria is also a description of what the Assyrians had done to her enemies. God was exacting the Lex Talionis, the law of retaliation. It is the law of justice that says that the punishment should be equal to the crime, i.e. “An eye for an eye” or like for like (Ex. 21:23-27; Lev. 24:19-20; Deut. 19:21).

Nahum 1:8 declared, “But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place.” 2:6 tells us, “The gates of the rivers are opened, And the palace is dissolved.” From history we learn that toward the end of the three years that the city of Nineveh was besieged, the Babylonians dammed the great Tigris River from entering the Great City. Then when the water rose to a great height they broke the dam and flooded the city. The palace and walls were washed away, allowing the invaders to enter the city and destroy it. The prophecy of Nahum was literally fulfilled by an overflowing flood. Just as the Assyrians were a flood destroying the nations she conquered, so now, the Assyrian empire was washed away by the Babylonians. Just as Assyria had led away captives, now she would be led away captive (2:7). Just as the Assyrians had plundered the many nations of her empire, stealing the wealth of the various kingdoms (“There is no end of treasure or wealth”), now the Assyrians would be plundered, and her silver and gold would be taken from her (2:9).

The result of this terrible invasion is that the Great City is made desolate and waste. The hearts of the inhabitants of the city melt, and their knees shake for fear. There is so much pain and suffering that their faces are drained of color (2:10). The terror of the attack produces mental and emotional distress.

Nineveh is likened to a lion’s den where the lion fed the young lions with the flesh of prey (2:11-12). The prey was the nations she had torn apart in her imperialistic conquests. The lion, Assyria, walked about without fear because none of the nations could stand against it. With the pride of a lion, Assyria went about killing and destroying whomever it wanted. Assyria filled his own lion’s den with the

wealth and strength of the nations he conquered. But Yahweh, the Lord of Hosts/Armies, in 2:13, says that He was against Assyria. Yahweh would bring His armies (the Babylonians) against Nineveh to make an end of the lion's devouring of prey. The sound of Assyria's going forth in conquest would be heard no more.

II. The Destruction of Nineveh Deserved

Ch. 3

Ch. 3 shifts from describing the fall and destruction of Nineveh to explaining what she deserved the judgments of God. The once "Great City" of Nineveh (Jonah 1:2; 3:2; 4:11) is now called the "bloody city." She had been made great to demonstrate God's mercy to the nations, and to execute the justice of God against Israel for her sins. Assyria was formerly righteous by the mercy of God. But in pride and rebellion against God, Assyria had become a city that used her God given strength and prosperity to kill, steal and destroy (3:1-3). Because of the terrible violence done against her victims, her unfaithfulness to Yahweh (harlotry, 3:4) and sorcery (3:4), Yahweh, the Lord of Hosts/Armies is against her.

Because Assyria had acted so shamefully, God would bring her to shame. Yahweh would, figuratively, lift the garments of Assyrians over their faces in shame, exposing their private parts (3:5). Yahweh would show the nations her nakedness and shame. Yahweh would throw filth (from the outhouse) on her to make the harlot Assyria more vile and shameful (3:6). This shaming of an adulterous or woman of harlotry in this way is a common biblical theme (Hos. 2:3; Ezek. 16:37-39; Mal 2:3; 2 Kings 10:27). The result of this shaming of Nineveh and Assyria is that all those nations that see what God had done will flee from her (3:7). No one will help Assyria, nor would anyone come to comfort her. Everyone is glad because of the judgment of God.

3:8-11 talks about the destruction of Thebes (i.e. No Amon) in Egypt at the hands of the Assyrians. Was Assyria better off than Thebes? Assyria was no safer from God's judgment than Thebes was when Assyria destroyed it, even though it was a great city protected by seas and faithful allies (i.e. Ethiopia, Egypt, Put and Lubim, 3:9). Just as the inhabitants were carried away into captivity, her children were treated violently, and the great men were bound in chains so that Thebes was no more, so too, the inhabitants of Nineveh and Assyria would be taken captive and would become hidden among the nations.

Nineveh would be no more secure and safe than ripe figs when shaken from a tree (3:12). The women of the city would be taken and badly treated when the gates of the city were opened to the enemy (v. 13).

God mocks the Ninevites by calling upon them to hopelessly prepare for the battle that is coming (as He did in 2:1): Draw water, fortify the strongholds, make bricks to repair damage done (3:14).

In the final section Nahum compares the coming of the armies of Babylon (Yahweh's army) to locusts, similarly to what we saw in the book of Joel. They are a fire and sword that devours. The stability of Nineveh's merchants and leaders of the Assyrian army are also compared to locusts that settle on a cold day, but depart in every direction when the sun comes out. No one knows where the greedy merchants go to when the invaders overcome Nineveh. They have moved on to more prosperous markets. The commanders of the Assyrian armies, as strong as they were, were nowhere to be found. The shepherds of Assyria would slumber in death. The wound to Assyria would be beyond healing. The end for Nineveh had come, and there would be no recovery. All that heard of her fate would clap their hands with joy because of all the wickedness she had done to those around her.

Applications of this lesson:

- Those whom God has set apart unto judgment can do nothing against His will. He will destroy those whom He is against. No matter how great they had been (economically or militarily), they will be destroyed.
- Nations that reject the mercy of the Lord and play the harlot will be put to shame.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Habakkuk and 2 Kings 23:31-24:7; 2 Chron. 36:1-8.

Lesson Twenty-One: Nahum – The Fall of Assyria

Nahum: Judgment on fallen Assyria

- I. Destruction of Nineveh declared (1)
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I. The Destruction of Nineveh Described Ch. 2

2:1-2 – Call for the Ninevites to defend themselves as God comes in judgment

Lex Talionis, the law of retaliation (Ex. 21:23-27; Lev. 24:19-20; Deut. 19:21)

2: 3-10 – Assyria’s downfall

2:11-13 – Lion’s den

II. The Destruction of Nineveh Deserved Ch. 3

The “Bloody” City

Harlotry of Assyria – Shame, Nakedness and filth
(Hos. 2:3; Ezek. 16:37-39; Mal 2:3; 2 Kings 10:27)

Thebes – *Lex Talionis*

Locusts

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Habakkuk and 2 Kings 23:31-24:7; 2 Chron. 36:1-8.

Lesson Twenty-Two: Habakkuk – The Justice of God

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❖ Review

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Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

In the book of Nahum we see nothing of the sins of Judah because it was written about the time of Manasseh’s brief reforms in Judah. The terrible judgments in Nahum were pronounced against Nineveh, the bloody city (Nah. 3:1). God was enacting the *Lex Talionis*, the law of retaliation (eye for an eye justice) against Assyria because of the violence they performed against their enemies.

Today we begin to study the book of Habakkuk. In this book it becomes clear that Judah is doomed because of her sin. Just as Nineveh was the bloody city and culture, now Israel had become the violent community (Hab. 1:2). It can probably be dated after Nahum and the fall of Assyria in 612 BC, but just before Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians in 605 BC.

We know nothing about the author of the book except his name (1:1; 3:1). Habakkuk means, “embrace,” or “One who embraces.” This is appropriate because Habakkuk clearly struggles throughout the book with what God is doing in history, but in the last lines he embraces God in faith, no matter what happens to his nation.

Habakkuk calls himself “the prophet” which saw a burden (oracle or “the word of Yahweh against something”) from Yahweh. It is important to understand what a prophet was in the Old Testament. The prophets were council members whom Yahweh took into His confidence and deliberated with God over what He would do in history. They were given information about what God intended to do, and invited to give God advice. Amos 3:7 says, “Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” The prophets would then communicate God’s plans for His people. When God planned to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah He went to Abraham, a wise and mature man, and asked his advice (Gen. 18:17-33). After God revealed what He planned to do, Abraham

asked God if He would destroy the city if there were fifty, or forty-five, or forty or thirty or twenty or even 10 righteous people. On the basis of Abraham's questions, God said that He would not destroy the cities if their were ten righteous in it. In Amos 7:1-6 we saw that twice after Yahweh declared His judgment against His people Amos prayed that He would forgive His people, and the Lord relented. The prophets were council members, given opportunity to discuss with the Lord what He planned to do in history, and then declare God's will to His people.

Habakkuk was a prophet that not only heard what God was planning to do, but also asked God to explain His actions in the world. The book is a dialogue/discussion between Habakkuk and Yahweh. It is composed of a series of questions by the prophet, and Yahweh's answers. It is not primarily a message that God is sending to the people, but bringing the complaints of the people (Habakkuk representing

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Judah and Babylon

- A. Habakkuk's 1st complaint about justice (1:1-4)
- B. Yahweh's 1st answer – Babylon (1:5-11)
- C. Habakkuk's 2nd complaint about justice (1:12-2:1)
- D. CENTER: Wait – The righteous will live by faith (2:2-5)
- C. Yahweh's 2nd answer – Justice will be done (2:6-20)
- B' Psalm - Yahweh's final answer – Babylon will be judged (3:1-15)
- A' Psalm - Habakkuk will joyfully wait in faith (3:16-19)

the righteous remnant) to God. By the end of the book, Habakkuk came to understand what God was doing and trusted in the

justice of the Lord. The last chapter is a Psalm intended for singing the praises of the Lord for His righteousness in the world.

The basic question of the book of Habakkuk is, why is there wickedness in the world? Why does God put up with injustice? God's answer is that He will judge wickedness in His own wise time and manner, and will give joy to the righteous.

A. Habakkuk's 1st complaint about justice (1:2-4)

Habakkuk begins his complaint as a representative the righteous remnant (i.e. the few that remain). He said that he had been crying out to God in prayer for a long time about the unrighteousness in the land, but the Lord does not answer. "O Yahweh, how long shall cry, and you will not hear?" There was "Violence" and social injustice in the land, but God was not putting a stop to it. The violence was being perpetrated against the righteous, and Yahweh was not saving them. Habakkuk complains that God is making him (and the rest of the righteous) see the iniquity and trouble all the time. The righteous hate to see men made slaves, and the rich getting favoritism in the courts, and violent men escaping justice. The law of God was being set aside and justice never seemed to be done. The righteous are persecuted and no one does anything about it. Why do you make me look at all of this when it is in your power to change things?

We should feel the same way today when we see wickedness prevail in our land. To see millions of babies being aborted, wicked celebrities and wealthy people committing crimes and not being brought to justice, same-sex marriages being approved, heads of major corporations stealing from people and getting away with it – these things should make us also cry out, “How long O Lord, will you not save?” To make such a complaint is to pray that the will of God would be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is the prophetic work of the Church to come into God’s council and call upon His to come in judgment and salvation.

B. Yahweh’s 1st answer – Babylon (1:5-11)

In vv. 5-11 Yahweh responds to Habakkuk’s righteous concerns. He said that the prophet should look outside of Judah to the nations, because the Lord was going to do something surprising (1:5). We think we understand the world and how things should proceed in history, or how God will act. But the Lord makes clear that His plans are often completely astounding and unbelievable to us. He told Habakkuk to watch what He would do.

Yahweh was raising up the Chaldeans/Babylonians to execute His justice against the unrighteousness of Judah (1:6-11). The description given in these verses of Babylon is horrifying.

- They are a bitter and angry people marching through the world conquering nations and taking land that is not theirs (v. 6).
- They are terrible and dreadful, causing people to fear them (v.7).
- Their judgment (basis of justice) and dignity (glory) come from themselves. They do not even need their gods to direct their lives, they do what they want.
- Their armies are fast and effective in destruction and death (v.8)
- They are motivated by violence and taking captives (v. 9).
- They do not fear kings or mighty men and their fortresses. They are able to easily heap up mounds against the walls of the cities they are attacking and easily and proudly take the city (v. 10).
- They do whatever they want, but God says that they will be held guilty because they trust in their god (v. 11).

To fall into the hands of such a terrible enemy would be a horrifying thing. Judah’s doom is sealed.

C. Habakkuk's 2nd complaint about justice (1:12-2:1)

This word from Yahweh is naturally distressing to Habakkuk. He wanted to know how the holy God could use such instruments of evil. Why would God use a nation even more wicked than Judah to punish His people. He could understand if God would convert and bring in a righteous nation to judge Israel and reform the nation for righteousness sake. But the Babylonians are wicked and cruel. Why would God raise them up to punish Judah. Not only so, the righteous remnant would also suffer in such a terrible judgment. This is the point of Habakkuk's second question.

1:12 says, "Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We [the righteous remnant] shall not die. O Lord, You have appointed them [the wicked in Judah] for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them [the Babylonians] for correction." Habakkuk is arguing in confident faith before Yahweh that because Yahweh is the covenant keeping God, He will not only judge the wicked, but also protect the righteous from being destroyed in the judgment. He knows that what God is doing it just.

But Habakkuk is concerned in v. 13 that the holy and pure God cannot look favorably on evil (or evil men like the Babylonians). Why then do you look to use the Babylonians against people that are more righteous than they are? He asked Yahweh if men are simply like a mass of fish in the sea and creeping things (serpents, like the devil), or does He discriminate between some men and others? In vv. 14-17, Habakkuk likens the Babylonians to a fisherman that catches an abundance of all kinds of fish. He asked Yahweh if He would allow the Babylonians to continue to slay nations (including Judah) without pity/mercy (v. 17). They worship their military power (v. 16). They are worse than we are. Will God allow the righteous remnant in the land to be judged with the wicked?

We would feel the same way today if we knew that God was sending a wicked people like the Muslims to judge us. We could agree that as a nation we are sinful, but we would argue that they are worse. Why would you send them against us Lord?

Because Habakkuk has confidence in the wisdom and justice of the Holy God, in 2:1 he says that he will watch, as Yahweh had said in 1:5. "I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected." In faith, Habakkuk will just wait and see what God will say and do. Next week we will see how God answered him.

Applications of this lesson:

- In the New Covenant, all of God people have been made prophets and given liberty to ask God for explanation for what He is doing in the world. We have His Word and Spirit to help us understand the times in which we live, and to prophetically declare God's message to the world.
- We may not always know what God will do, but we can be confident that God is Holy, just and good. He will not only judge the wicked, but He will save the righteous.
- God may choose to use wicked men for His righteous purposes. Our response should be that of faith, waiting upon the Lord Jesus to subdue His and our enemies. Christ is crushing the head of the serpent in history, but He may use the sin of wicked men to sinlessly establish His kingdom.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Habakkuk

Lesson Twenty-Two: Habakkuk – The Justice of God

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Judah and Babylon

A. Habakkuk’s 1st complaint about justice (1:1-4)

B. Yahweh’s 1st answer – Babylon (1:5-11)

C. Habakkuk’s 2nd complaint about justice (1:12-2:1)

D. CENTER: Wait – The righteous will live by faith (2:2-5)

C’ Yahweh’s 2nd answer – Justice will be done (2:6-20)

B’ Psalm - Yahweh’s final answer – Babylon will be judged (3:1-15)

A’ Psalm - Habakkuk will joyfully wait in faith (3:16-19)

Habakkuk = “embrace,” or “One who embraces”

The “Prophet” – A Council Member Before God (Gen. 18:17-33; Amos 7:1-6)

A. Habakkuk’s 1st complaint about justice (1:2-4)

B. Yahweh’s 1st answer – Babylon (1:5-11)

C. Habakkuk’s 2nd complaint about justice (1:12-2:1)

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Habakkuk

Lesson Twenty-Three: Habakkuk – The Just Will Live By Faith

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

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A. Habakkuk's 1st complaint about justice (1:1-4)

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B' Psalm - Yahweh's final answer – Babylon will be judged (3:1-15)

A' Psalm - Habakkuk will joyfully wait in faith (3:16-19)

In our last lesson we saw “the prophet” Habakkuk in council with Yahweh discussing the justice of God in the world. In his first question Habakkuk asked the Lord why violence and injustice were allowed to continue in the land. This is a subject that is often confusing for God's people. When God formed Israel out of the nations, he was quick to punish the sin of His people. As time went on He allowed more time to pass between the sin and the execution of His justice to show them how sin grows and develops in their lives and the consequences that result from such rebellion. Now Israel was old and had been given time to mature both in righteousness and wickedness. The long-suffering patience of God had come to an end. In Yahweh's first answer to Habakkuk He told the prophet that justice was coming in the form of an invasion by the Babylonians.

This answer was distressing to Habakkuk. He wanted to know how the holy God could use such instruments of evil. Why would God use a nation even more wicked than Judah to punish His people. Habakkuk also wanted to know if the righteous remnant would also suffer in the terrible judgment to come. Habakkuk knew that God has good and holy reasons for everything that He does, so the prophet determined to wait for the answer Yahweh would give him (cf. 1:5; 2:1).

D. Wait – The righteous will live by faith (2:2-5)

In 2:2-5 Yahweh answered the good questions that the prophet asked by helping him (and Judah, and us) to learn how to respond to the hard things God is doing in the world. The Lord told Habakkuk to write the vision of what would be revealed to him in plain, easy to understand language. Write in such a way that whoever reads it can read it quickly with comprehension (v. 2). The vision is for an appointed time – it will certainly come and not delay (v. 3). The language in v. 3 interesting: "...it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." What Yahweh is talking about seems to be a person (only people, not messages from God, speak, tell the truth, etc). This is a reference to a person – the Word of God – the second person of the Trinity, Jesus the Messiah. Verses 3-4 are quoted in Hebrew 10:37-38 [read to classes emphasizing "He"] as referring to the need to be confident in the Lord and have endurance when the Lord would come to judge Jerusalem in 70 AD and save the righteous. Thus, in Habakkuk 2:3-4 we learn that it is God that will come and bring His judgments against **Babylon** ("the proud" one, whose "soul is not upright in him," v, 4). Yahweh confirmed Habakkuk's contention that Babylon was a wicked nation deserving of judgment. But the Lord makes clear to Habakkuk that the faithful person, the one who lives by faith (not trusting in himself or his ability to understand things) will trust the Lord and His might. Yahweh is telling Habakkuk that you will find life if you trust in God – not yourself. This verse is also quoted in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11, 12 to say that believers should not trust in their own goodness and ability to please God by keeping His law, but trust in God Himself and His willingness to justify us and make us righteous before Him.

2:5 contrasts those who live by faith with the proud man (Babylon). He goes out trusting in himself – but he will die (contrasting living by faith with dying in pride). He drinks the wine of pride and does not stay at home. He thinks he can do anything and dreams of world conquest, enlarging his appetite. Death is God's appointed judge. Babylon is like death, appointed by God to judge the nations. But he is never satisfied (like death), and continually gathers nations and peoples to destroy. But his kingdom (the kingdom of Babylon) will not stand forever (just as God will one day destroy death itself by the victory accomplished by Christ, 1 Cor. 15:54).

C' Justice will be done (2:6-20)

What follows in 2:6-20 is a series of five statements of woe against Babylon. A woe is a statement of great lamentation or sadness, a cause for shame. In each of the woes that the Lord pronounces against Babylon is against the foundation and

strength of Babylon. The entire Babylonian house will be pulled down to the foundation.

In the **1st Woe (vv. 6-8)**, the nations are said to take up proverbs and riddles to mock the proud man (Babylon). Woe to him who increases himself by what is not his, by loading himself up with debt. Creditors will rise up to take back what is theirs. Babylon had violently plundered many nations (making themselves in debt to those nations). Those who survived Babylon's bloody invasions will come and collect the debt that is owed to them by Babylon.

2nd Woe (vv. 9-11) denounces the proud man for getting evil gain for his house by cutting off many peoples. Babylon enriched itself so that it could build its kingdom on a high place so that it could stand against any that would attack it. But by doing so in such a wicked way, Babylon was actually sinning against itself. Far from becoming more secure by the way it built its house, the shameful way in which Babylonian kingdom was established was unwise because they did not also secure the support of the people they conquered.

3rd Woe (vv. 12-14) explains why it was shameful and a sin against the very soul of Babylon to cut off many peoples. They built their city by bloodshed and iniquity. Psalm 127 tells us that "unless Yahweh builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." You can't build a civilization on violence. It is a worthless work that will come to nothing. Babylon did not last long, because they did not build it in faith and obedience to the Lord. But the Kingdom of God will grow. 2:14 tells us that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea. (This verse is similar to Isaiah 11:9). God is indeed building His house, and the foolishness of the nations will come to nothing. The Lord will fulfill the Abrahamic promise that the nations will be blessed.

4th Woe (vv. 15-16) accuses Babylon of trying to wickedly steal the glory and authority of the nations. V. 15 says that the proud man gives drink to his neighbor, making him drunk so that the neighbor's nakedness is exposed. This reminds us of the sin of Ham in Genesis 9:20-24, who uncovered the nakedness of his father Noah after he had gone to his tent to rest after drinking wine. Ham wickedly stole Noah's robe of authority for himself, shaming his father. Babylon sought to uncover the nakedness of the nations by getting them drunk, thereby stealing their glory, honor and authority in the world. But Yahweh said in v. 16 that Babylon had been drinking and will be made ashamed with nakedness. Babylon's authority would be removed because of the violence done to the nations.

In the **5th Woe (vv. 18-20)** the worthless gods of the Babylonians are contrasted with Yahweh. The idols are merely images made of wood, stone and metal, and cannot speak (i.e. they are mute). Even though they are overlaid with gold and

silver, they cannot be awakened to speak or teach because they have no breath in them. The Babylonians are stupid for trusting in gods that cannot speak or save. Yahweh is in His holy temple (overlaid with gold and silver), and He has spoken words of destruction against Babylon. Because of the breath of God, all the earth should keep silence before Him – humbly watching what He will do on the earth.

B’ Psalm – Babylon will be judged (3:1-15)

Habakkuk in 2:1 said he would watch to see what Yahweh would say to him, and what he should answer in response. Now that the Lord had spoken, making clear to him that He will bring forth justice in the world, Habakkuk responded with a prayer in the form of a Psalm. [We do not know what the word “Shigionoth” means, but it probably refers to a highly emotional statement.] He begins in v. 2 by saying that he heard what Yahweh has said, and it made him properly fearful. He knows what God has done in history against His enemies and that He is fully able to do it again. He called upon the Lord to act in the midst of history again so that His wrath would bring forth mercy to His people. In this prayer/Psalm, Habakkuk survey’s the history of God’s judgments through Israel’s history. V. 3 recalls the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 33:2 (cf. Judg. 5:4-5; Ps. 68:7-8). V. 5 refers to God’s deliverance of His people in the Exodus. V. 7 reminds us of Yahweh’s deliverance of His people from Cushan and Midian (Judges 3:8, 10 and Judges 6-8). V. 11 calls to mind the stopping of the sun and moon for Joshua (Josh. 10:12-14).

A’ Psalm – Habakkuk will joyfully wait in faith (3:16-19)

Habakkuk concluded the prayer/Psalm and the book by expressing his confidence in Yahweh. Though he should suffer (lack of food and prosperity) when the Lord comes in judgment against His enemies, Habakkuk would rejoice in Yahweh, the God of His salvation. Habakkuk came to the place that he was able to put away his righteous complaints to the Lord because he knew that Yahweh was executing His justice in the world. The result would be the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and the salvation of the righteous. The Lord is the strength of all those who trust in Him, even if they suffer during His judgments. Because Yahweh is a just God who is building a house/kingdom that will endure forever, the faithful will rise up with strength and walk on the high hills. The faithful will wait joyfully for the Lord to establish justice and righteousness on the earth.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zephaniah and 2 King 22:1-23:37; 2 Chron. 34:1-35:27

Lesson Twenty-Three: Habakkuk – The Just Will Live By Faith

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Judah and Babylon

- A. Habakkuk's 1st complaint about justice (1:1-4)
- B. Yahweh's 1st answer – Babylon (1:5-11)
- C. Habakkuk's 2nd complaint about justice (1:12-2:1)
- D. **CENTER: Wait – The righteous will live by faith (2:2-5)**
- C' Yahweh's 2nd answer – Justice will be done (2:6-20)
- B' Psalm - Yahweh's final answer – Babylon will be judged (3:1-15)
- A' Psalm – Habakkuk will joyfully wait in faith (3:16-19)

D. Wait – The righteous will live by faith (2:2-5)
Heb. 10:35-38; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11, 12

C' Justice will be done (2:6-20)

1st Woe (vv. 6-8)

2nd Woe (vv. 9-11)

3rd Woe (vv. 12-14)

4th Woe (vv. 15-16) Gen. 9:20-24

5th Woe (vv. 18-20)

B' Psalm – Babylon will be judged (3:1-15)

V. 3 – Deut. 33:2 (cf. Judg. 5:4-5; Ps. 68:7-8)

V. 5 – The Exodus

V. 7 – Judges 3:8, 10 and Judges 6-8

V. 11 - Josh. 10:12-14

A' Psalm – Habakkuk will joyfully wait in faith (3:16-19)

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zephaniah and 2 King 22:1-23:37; 2 Chron. 34:1-35:27

Lesson Twenty-Four: Zephaniah – Day of Yahweh for Jerusalem

❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism**

❖ **Review**

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

The last half of the Book of the Twelve deals with the events right before for the fall of Jerusalem in 605 BC & the Babylonian exile (Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah), and the prophetic word to those who were returned to the land following the exile (Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi).

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

- A. The coming judgment on the wicked of Jerusalem (1:2-6)
- B. The coming judgment of corrupt leaders (1:7-13)
 - C. Yahweh’s judgments of all nations (1:14-18)
 - D. Center: Call to repentance (2:1-3)
 - C’ Yahweh’s judgment of all nations (2:4-15)
- B’ The coming judgment of corrupt political leaders (3:1-7)
- A’ The restoration of Jerusalem (3:8-20)

Today we begin to study Zephaniah, the 9th book in the Book of the Twelve. Zephaniah’s name means something like, “He whom Yahweh has hidden,” or “Yahweh hides.” Zephaniah 1:1 tells us that the prophet, was a descendant of Hezekiah, king of Judah (2 Chron. 29-32; 2 Kings 18-20).

2 Chron. 33 tells us that after good king Hezekiah died, Manasseh became king and did more evil than the pagan nations, provoking Yahweh to jealousy. Manasseh was taken captive by the Assyrians, after which he repented and rebuilt the city and made reforms to worship. He commanded Judah to serve Yahweh, but the people sacrificed to Yahweh in the high places. After he died, Manasseh’s son Amon became king and did evil, and in two years overturned the reforms of his father. This could have only happened if the people did not want the reforms of his father. Josiah also made significant reforms, showing that God gave the people

better kings than they deserved. Zephaniah probably preached in the beginning of Josiah's reign (Zeph. 1:1; 640-609 BC) to help bring about the reformation. Because Assyria had not been conquered by the Babylonians yet (Zeph. 2:13), the dating of the book of Zephaniah would be about 640-622 BC.

Zephaniah is the ultimate book of judgment – the Day of Yahweh. Zephaniah declares the certain judgment coming upon Jerusalem and all the earth. The day of the Lord theme is more prominent in Zephaniah than in any other book. Although we have seen this theme in other books of the Twelve, what was the other minor prophet that strongly announced the coming of the Day of the Lord? [Joel] As we have noted, the day of Yahweh is a time of judgment at which the wicked are destroyed and the righteous are saved. At the end of the book God promised that there would be a remnant to return to the land and that Yahweh would give them fame and praise among the nations. 500 years later, at the coming of Christ, Israel was still waiting for Yahweh to finally fulfill these promises. Stephan, the first Christian martyr, quoted from the “the book of the Prophets” (Acts 7:42-43), and was stoned by the Jews. Stephan said, in effect, that “the day of the Lord has come” upon them because they had killed the Just One, Jesus Christ, whom the prophets foretold (Acts 7:51-53). The Jews refused to think that the judgments in the Book of the Twelve applied to them.

A. The coming judgment on the wicked of Jerusalem (1:2-6)

Zephaniah 1:2 begins by saying that Yahweh will utterly consume all things. More literally from the Hebrew it reads, “I will gather and sweep away” all things. This same word for “gather” is repeatedly translated that way throughout the book (cf. 3:8, 18). It is also used for the feast of *ingathering* (Ex. 23:14-17; 34:22; Lev. 23:33-43). Yahweh gathers the wicked for destruction (Zeph. 1:2), and gathers the righteous for salvation (Zeph. 3:8).

What follows is the description of the judgment on “all things.” It is a *de-creation*. What was made on the 6th day of creation? [beasts and men] Zeph. 1:3 says that Yahweh will consume men and beasts (notice the reverse order). What was made on the 5th day of creation? [fish and birds] Zeph. 1:3 says that Yahweh will consume the birds and fish (notice the reverse order). What was made on the 4th day of creation? [sun, moon and stars] Zeph. 1:3, 5 says that Yahweh will judge those who worship the hosts of heaven. The end of 1:3 says that Yahweh will “cut off man from the face of the land” (along with all things being swept away from the “face of the land,” 1:2). This is the same language used in Genesis 6:6; 7:4 to describe the flood as a de-creation of the world.

Obviously this is figurative language because God did not sweep away the earth. Why should the whole world suffer such a terrible judgment described in such cosmic terms? Zeph. 1:4-6 tells us that God's people, the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem had turned back from following Yahweh, and have not sought Him, nor inquired of Him (v. 6). The people who were to be a light and blessing to the nations by bringing the word of Yahweh to them had forsaken Him. He would cut off every trace of Baal worship, and the names of those Levitical priests that were idolatrous (v. 4). Judgment was coming because God's people worshipped the hosts of heaven (sun, moon and stars), and those who made oaths (promises) in the name of both Yahweh and Milcom or Molech (v. 5). The worship of Yahweh had become so compromised that the people not only worshipped idols, but also mixed faith in Yahweh with faith in idols.

B. The coming judgment of corrupt leaders (1:7-13)

Through the prophet, the Lord God commanded His people to be silent in His presence because the Day of Yahweh was near at hand. On that day Yahweh would prepare a sacrifice of judgments. He invited His guests – those who would be judged and cut off (vv. 7-8). He would punish the children of the kings of Judah and all that wore the clothing of unbelievers. Num. 15:37-41; Deut. 22:12 tells us that God's people were to wear special clothing that reminded them to keep His commandments. Instead, they wore the clothing of unbelievers. This is further evidence that the people of God were conforming to the world around them.

On that day (the Day of Yahweh) when He makes the great sacrifice of judgment, there would be the sound of mourning throughout Jerusalem. God calls upon the people of Maktesh (i.e. the market area in Jerusalem) to wail (i.e. cry with grief) because the merchants and those who handled money would be cut off. They would not be able to do business, nor buy food they needed to survive. This is an important prophetic theme. In Revelation 18:10-18 speaks against Jerusalem, "that great city, Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come. And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore..." Jerusalem was an important city for trade in the ancient world. With the Day of Yahweh, mourning will be heard because the trading would cease in her.

In vv. 12-13 we are told what will come to pass: Yahweh would search Jerusalem with lamps. The Day of Yahweh is a time of light. You need light to judge things – to make inspection. The Lord sees even the deep darkness of men's hearts to punish them. When God comes in glory and light, sin is exposed. The sin that Yahweh sees is that the people are complacent, they think that the Lord will not judge, v. 12, "Who say in their heart, 'The Lord will not do good, Nor will He do

evil.” Day of the Lord is crisis time because He will indeed judge the wickedness of men. V. 13 says, “Therefore their goods shall become booty, And their houses a desolation; They shall build houses, but not inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine.” This language reminds us of warnings given to the people before God gave them the Promised Land in Deut. 6:10-15:

“So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant— when you have eaten and are full—then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name [only]. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who *are* all around you (for the Lord your God *is* a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.”

The people had forgotten Yahweh and did everything He warned them against. Compare Zeph. 1:13 also with the curses of the covenant threatened in Deuteronomy 28:30, “You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but shall not gather its grapes.” Israel would experience the just judgments of God in the Day of the Lord.

C. Yahweh’s judgments of all nations (1:14-18)

The day of Yahweh quickly coming against all the nations (including Judah) is described in Zeph. 1:14-16 more clearly than in any other passage. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter (over-powering); There the mighty men shall cry out (with fear). The judgment will be...

A day of wrath,	A day of clouds and thick darkness,
A day of trouble and distress,	A day of trumpet and alarm
A day of devastation and desolation,	Against the fortified cities
A day of darkness and gloominess,	And against the high towers.

In vv. 17-18 Yahweh says, “I will...” bring these judgments on the land (lit. “the ground”). All the nations have so offended the Lord that He will pour out their blood like dust (man is made of dust, Gen. 2:7, and his life is in the blood, Gen. 9:4); and their flesh will be like dung. With his fiery jealousy (cf. 3:8) He will make an end of all who dwell on the earth/land.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zephaniah

Lesson Twenty-Four: Zephaniah – Day of Yahweh for Jerusalem

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

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Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

- A. The coming judgment on the wicked of Jerusalem (1:2-6)
- B. The coming judgment of corrupt leaders (1:7-13)
 - C. Yahweh’s judgments of all nations (1:14-18)
 - D. Center: Call to repentance (2:1-3)
 - C’ Yahweh’s judgment of all nations (2:4-15)
- B’ The coming judgment of corrupt political leaders (3:1-7)
- A’ The restoration of Jerusalem (3:8-20)

Zephaniah’s name means, “He whom Yahweh has hidden,” or “Yahweh hides”

Zephaniah was probably written about 640-622 BC

Zephaniah is the ultimate book of judgment – the Day of Yahweh

A. The coming judgment on the wicked of Jerusalem (1:2-6)

“I will gather and sweep away” all things. Feast of ingathering (Ex. 23:14-17; 34:22; Lev. 23:33-43)

De-creation – Genesis 1, 4th, 5th & 6th days of creation

B. The coming judgment of corrupt leaders (1:7-13)

Num. 15:37-41; Deut. 22:12

Revelation 18:10-18

Deut. 6:10-15; 28:30

C. Yahweh’s judgments of all nations (1:14-18)

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zephaniah

Lesson Twenty-Five: Zephaniah – Day of Yahweh for The Nations

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah – The Ultimate book of judgment – The Day of the Lord. Written in the days of Josiah. Speaks of judgment of Jerusalem and then to all the earth. Zephaniah’s name means something like, “He whom Yahweh has hidden,” or “Yahweh hides.” Zephaniah 1:1 tells us that the prophet was a descendant of Hezekiah, king of Judah (2 Chron. 29-32; 2 Kings 18-20). The fact that he was of the royal house may have given him freer access to king Josiah during his ministry.

As we saw last week, Yahweh was telling the people of Jerusalem and Judah through the prophet that He would coming in horrifying judgment not only on them, but the whole world. The Day of the Lord theme declares two things: 1) that God will punish the wickedness of all men because He is the sovereign Lord of all things, and 2) that He will bring salvation to all those who humbly seek Him in faith. The Day of the Lord is a time of light, a time of bad news for sinners, but a time of good news for the righteous. It is a crisis time that interrupts the flow of history when Yahweh will set things right. At this point in history there is no hope for Judah as a nation to avoid the day of Yahweh’s anger – Judgment was certainly coming. But as we will see today, there was hope for the future.

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

- A. The coming judgment on the wicked of Jerusalem (1:2-6)
- B. The coming judgment of corrupt leaders (1:7-13)
 - C. Yahweh’s judgments of all nations (1:14-18)
 - D. Center: Call to repentance (2:1-3)
 - C’ Yahweh’s judgment of all nations (2:4-15)
- B’ The coming judgment of corrupt political leaders (3:1-7)
- A’ The restoration of Jerusalem (3:8-20)

D. Center: Call to repentance (2:1-3)

Turn to Zephaniah 2. As we saw in 1:2, Yahweh said that He would “utterly consume all things.” Literally this reads in the Hebrew that He would “gather and sweep away” all things. In 2:1 Yahweh commands Judah, the undesirable or shameless nation, to gather themselves together as a farmer gathers the wheat for threshing. Threshing is the process of separating the desirable grains of wheat from the undesirable chaff. Before the decree of judgment is issued, before the day when God threshes His people in His fierce anger, in 2:3 Yahweh called upon those who upheld justice and all the meek of the earth to seek Him. For those who seek the Lord during the day of His anger, it may be that they would be “hidden.” Remember, Zephaniah’s name means “Yahweh hides” or “He whom Yahweh has hidden.” The judgment was certainly coming, but those who trusted in the Lord may be saved from the terrible things God would bring against His people. Again, the Day of the Lord is a bad time for the wicked, but a time of salvation for the righteous.

C’ Yahweh’s judgments of all nations (2:4-15)

Those who do not seek the Lord will not be hidden in the day of His anger. What follows in 2:4-15 is a description of the judgment coming upon the nations of the world. With Judah in the center, the prophet shows the judgment of the nations going forth in all four directions. Yahweh describes how He would “gather and sweep away” the nations (1:2).

1. Judgment in the West - Philistines (2:4-7)

He begins in the west against Israel’s great enemy, the Philistines. The four great cities of the Philistines are listed, and v. 5 says that the word of Yahweh was against them, the decree was issued (2:2). Yahweh uses two puns (play on words) to describe what He would do to the Philistines: Gaza (Heb. *Azzah* = “strong”) will be forsaken (Heb. *azubah*), Ekron (Heb. *Ekrown* = “torn up by the roots”) will be uprooted (Heb. *akar* = “uprooted”). Yahweh said that He would destroy them so that there would be no inhabitant left. Yahweh was displacing the Philistines not only as a judgment for their sin, but also because He intended to give their land to Judah when they returned from captivity (2:7). The remnant of the house of Judah were not only those who were left in the land during the exile, but also the returnees from captivity seventy years later. The mercy of God is revealed in His plan to prepare the land for the return of His people from exile.

2. Judgment in the East – Moab & Ammon (2:8-11)

To the east of Judah was the land of Moab and Ammon. Moab and Ammon were the descendents of Lot following his rescue by the Lord from the judgment on

Sodom. They were a people that had been saved by the grace of God from the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. But instead of living righteously as brothers of Israel, 2:8 tells us that they reproached God's people and made arrogant threats against their borders. Because of their sin, they had become another Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 9). Once again, their land would be given to Yahweh's people, the remnant, when they returned to the land. Because of their pride and because they wickedly reproached Israel, the people of Yahweh of hosts (armies), Yahweh would be awesome (making them afraid by His judgments) to them and reduce their gods to nothing (lit. in Heb. "starving" them). By destroying the worshippers, the gods of Moab and Ammon would have no sacrifices.

3. Judgment in the South –Ethiopia (2:12)

Yahweh continued His description of His judgments against the nations by turning His attentions to the south, to Ethiopia (which is in Africa, not too far from Egypt). He declared that they too would be slain by the sword. This happened in the 38th year of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 568 BC.

4. Judgment in the North –Assyria (2:13-15)

Finally, is the judgment of the Assyrian to the north. What book of the Twelve dealt with the judgment of Assyria? [Nahum. The Lord had shown Assyria mercy under the ministry of Jonah but had turn from Him and did very wickedly by building a violent empire, making Nineveh the "bloody city."] The final pronouncement against Assyria in the prophets here in Zephaniah is particularly severe. Nineveh would become a desolation (everyone having left or driven out), a dry wilderness where only the animals would dwell. When people would pass by, they would hiss and shake their fists in derision. The reason that this would happen, as we said before, is that Assyria had become filled with pride, thinking that they could never be destroyed. She dwelt securely, thinking in her heart, "I am it, and there is none beside me" (2:15).

B' The coming judgment of corrupt political leaders (3:1-7)

Having pronounced the judgments on the nations, Zephaniah returned to the wicked leaders of Judah in chapter 3. He began by announcing woe on the rebellious, polluting and oppressing city. What city was this? [Jerusalem]. What is the primary sins of Jerusalem in 3:2? [Not obeying the Lord, or receiving correction or trusting in or drawing near to her God. Rather, she trusted in herself to keep herself safe from her enemies, and did that which was right in her own eyes.] This was manifested primarily in her leaders. Judah's princes (i.e. royal leaders) were like lions devouring the people, and the judges perverted justice (probably by taking bribes) (3:3). Her false prophets and priests were treacherous by not declaring the word of God to the people, leading them away from Yahweh.

Whenever a people cease obeying the Lord, receiving correction or trusting in and drawing near to Him, it is because the prophets and priest have turned away from Him first, as biblical history repeatedly shows. Because of this, the sanctuary or temple is polluted, and the law is no more obeyed.

What makes the sin of Judah so bad is that the righteous Yahweh was in her midst with His unfailing justice. He taught them His word, and never failed them, but the unjust knew no shame. Throughout the history of Israel Yahweh showed them how He judged the nations, but they still did not learn to fear Him or receive instruction. His people were eager to corrupt themselves, rising up early to do evil. Judah would surely be judged along with the nations.

A' The restoration of Jerusalem (3:8-20)

The book of Zephaniah concludes with a word of hope for Judah. After describing the Day of Yahweh as a time of judgment, the prophet shows that it is a judgment that will bring salvation to His people in the end. 3:8 says that the righteous remnant should wait for the Lord in faith as He gathers the nations to pour out His fierce anger upon. This is the same language used in 1:2, where all the earth would be gathered and swept away.

The result of this judgment is given in 3:9: Converting the nations by restoring to the people a pure language (lit. in Heb. = “lip”) to call on the name of Yahweh. This reminds us of Babel in Genesis 11, where the people of the earth had one religion or confession of faith (same word, “lip”) which was not in submission to God. Now the judgment of Babel would be reversed and people all over the world would become worshippers of Yahweh. Israel would no longer be ashamed because of her deeds (cf. 2:1; 3:5). They would become a meek and humble people, trusting in the Lord (cf. 2:3; 3:1-5). They would no longer be proud on the holy mountain, the sanctuary (cf. 3:4). They will no longer do unrighteousness and speak lies, but would be safe and prosperous because the Lord will take care of them.

Because of this great salvation that would come after the judgments of Yahweh, the prophets call upon Israel to sing joyfully because He has taken away the judgments against her. Yahweh is the King of Israel in her midst, and she shall see disaster no more. In 1:15-16 we saw a terrible list of judgments that would come on the “great day of the Lord.” Now we see in 3:16-17 a list of things that will be said to Jerusalem: No fear, strong hands, Yahweh God the mighty One will be in her midst, He will save and rejoice over them, He will quiet (comfort) them with His love, and will rejoice with singing over them. Instead of gathering to sweep away His people in judgment, Yahweh will gather them back into the land from captivity and make them have fame and praise among the nations.

Next week we will begin to study the last three books of the Twelve. These deal with events following the captivity when Yahweh had brought His people back into the land. The promises at the end of Zephaniah were indeed brought to pass in history. Just as He brought about the judgments threatened in the day of the Lord, so too, Israel was returned to the land. But it was not until the coming of Jesus the Messiah that the day of the Lord was truly fulfilled.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Ezra and Haggai

Lesson Twenty-Five: Zephaniah – Day of Yahweh for The Nations

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

- A. The coming judgment on the wicked of Jerusalem (1:2-6)
- B. The coming judgment of corrupt leaders (1:7-13)
 - C. Yahweh’s judgments of all nations (1:14-18)
 - D. Center: Call to repentance (2:1-3)
 - C’ Yahweh’s judgment of all nations (2:4-15)
- B’ The coming judgment of corrupt political leaders (3:1-7)
- A’ The restoration of Jerusalem (3:8-20)

D. Center: Call to repentance (2:1-3)

C’ Yahweh’s judgments of all nations (2:4-15)

- 1. Judgment in the West - Philistines (2:4-7)**
- 2. Judgment in the East – Moab & Ammon (2:8-11)**
- 3. Judgment in the South –Ethiopia (2:12)**
- 4. Judgment in the North –Assyria (2:13-15)**

B’ The coming judgment of corrupt political leaders (3:1-7)

A’ The restoration of Jerusalem (3:8-20)

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Ezra and Haggai

Lesson Twenty-Six: Haggai & The Restoration Covenant

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom's Fall and Judah's Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

Restoration Covenant – Focus on Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Historical background to the restoration period

We have completed our study of the first nine books of the Book of the Twelve, describing and warning God's people about the coming of the Great Tribulation, the crisis, the judgement that God would enact against Israel and Judah. Zephaniah was the last of the Minor Prophets that we studied, and he ministered during the reign of King Josiah of Judah. He said that there was no longer any hope that Judah would avoid Yahweh's wrath and judgment. 2 Kings 24-25 and 2 Chronicles 36 describe the evil done by the last kings of Judah, and in 605 BC Yahweh sent the Babylonians to destroy the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, and to carry off most of the Jews into captivity. They also took the gold, silver and bronze utensils used for worship in the Temple. During this time Daniel and Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon. For seventy years the Jews were in exile and captivity, but as God promised, they were returned to the land after the Persians conquered the Babylonians in 538 BC (2 Chron. 36:21; Jer. 25:11-12; Dan. 9:1-3). The events of the book of Esther take place during this time.

Remember that the sins of God's people were both idolatry and social injustices, including keeping their brothers in perpetual slavery in violation of God's law. Israel had become like Egypt. God not only judged His people by sending them into exile, but also delivered those oppressed by perpetual slavery. This second exodus from Egypt/Jerusalem was necessary because Israel had defiled the land by becoming like those whom they had expelled when they first conquered the land. With this second exodus, the people were sent out of the land of bondage and

idolatry to wander in the wilderness of exile in Babylon and Persia until God determined to bring them back to re-conquer the land (Is. 11:15-16; 43:14-21).

Cyrus the Persian

Isaiah 44 promised that God would remember Israel while she was in exile (vv. 21-23), and would bring her back into the land (vv. 24-27). Isaiah 44:28-45:1 says:

Who [Yahweh] says of **Cyrus**, ‘*He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,” And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”*’ “Thus says the LORD to **His anointed, To Cyrus**, whose right hand I have held—To subdue nations before him.

Cyrus, King of Persia, is said in this text to be the servant of Yahweh to do His will to restore the House of Israel. What is significant about this is that this prophecy was written before the exile began and before Cyrus was even born. He is said to be the Lord’s “Anointed,” (literally Messiah or Christ), and is a picture of the great Messianic world ruler to come, Jesus Christ. We know that Daniel served Cyrus (Dan. 1:21; 6:28), and probably instructed him in the biblical faith and the prophecy concerning him. Imagine being Cyrus and having Daniel tell you that God had revealed this about him over seventy years before! The book of Ezra-Nehemiah (one book with 1 Chron. 36:22-23) tells the story of the people returning to the land with the help of Cyrus and other Persian kings to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem. Turn to Ezra 1:1-4 where we see that God stirred the spirit of Cyrus to faith and to take seriously the prophecies of Jeremiah (Jer. 25:12-14; 29:10; 33:7-13) and Isaiah and worked to fulfill his role as the servant of God. His proclamation is full of faith in God and the wellbeing of Yahweh’s people Israel.

Second Exodus

There are a number of similarities between the first exodus out of Egypt and first conquest of the Promised Land, and the return of the exiles into the land. As the Israelites left Babylon they are encouraged by the Gentiles around them, who give them gifts of silver, gold, livestock and other precious things (Ezra 1:6). This is what happened when Israel left Egypt during the first exodus (Ex. 11:2-3; 12:35-36). Whereas Israel plundered the Egyptians, the plunder of the Persians was a freewill offering (Ezra 1:6). Not only so, Cyrus returned the gold and silver articles of the House of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon (Ezra 1:7-11; 5:14-15; 6:5). The riches of Babylon and Persia were going to be used to build the House of God, just as the plunder of the Egyptians was used to construct the tabernacle. Additionally, Ezra 2 lists the various tribes and families that returned to the land and the numbers of each. This reminds us of the book of Numbers, but in this case instead of there being 600,000 men of fighting age, Ezra 2:64 tells us that

there were only 42,360 that returned from Babylon. Some Jews remained behind in Babylon, and some never left the land.

Just as the Hebrews had to conquer the Promised Land following their deliverance from Egypt and their wilderness wanderings, so too, now, the returnees from the captivity in Babylon would have to re-conquer the land. While the people were in the wilderness of exile in Babylon, the Lord purified them so that when the new generation of faithful Israelites entered the land there would be a new conquest of the land. Just as in the first exodus and conquest, so now, in the second exodus and conquest, Israel would go out of exile with the goal of setting up the Lord's house in the land and to establish true worship. They would bring the land to rest and build the place where the Lord's name would dwell. Just as the people met with opposition in the first conquest, so too, Israel again faced opposition. They had to contend with the "people of the land," whom they must overcome. Even some of the names are similar; Joshua led Israel during the first conquest, and the High Priest who leads the people after the return from Babylon is also named Joshua.

There are also some differences between the first exodus and the return of Israel from their exile in Babylon. Pharaoh released the Israelites to go free only after suffering greatly under the plagues sent by God. But Cyrus let the people go as soon as he took over Babylon, and encouraged them with gifts and gave them permission to rebuild the Lord's House (Ezra 1:1-4). Because the Jews had repented of their hostility to the Gentile Empire (as seen in Daniel and Esther), there are good relations between Israel and the Gentiles. Additionally, there are almost no miracles or signs in this second exodus. Although Isaiah prophesied that the sea would be divided to provide entrance back into the land (Is. 11:15-16), we see nothing of this in Ezra-Nehemiah. There is no pillar of cloud and fire to lead the people. When the Temple is rebuilt (in Ezra 6:16-18), the glory of the Lord does not appear in the Most Holy Place (cf. Ex. 40; 1 Kings 8). This is not because God was not with His people in the land, but because He was beginning to lead them in a different way. Yahweh guides His people less by visions, miracles and signs, and more by the written word and through the teachers of Israel.

This is the beginning of the "New Covenant" promised by Jeremiah, the **Restoration Covenant**. Jeremiah 31:31-34

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and

every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

As we will see in the next several weeks, Ezra-Nehemiah and Haggai and Zechariah are concerned with the restoration of the people of God as the House of God. *The House of Israel is the House of God*. The Temple and Jerusalem are pictures of the people of God gathered around the throne of God. The Lord dwells in the midst of Israel (the people), not just in the Temple. Because of this, it is not only the Temple (representing the worshipping community), but also the city of Jerusalem (and surrounding area) that needed to be rebuilt. Rebuilding the walls represents rebuilding the house of God, because the whole nation had been restored as the House of God. The Holy City, with the Temple, represents the people of God. The New Covenant, the **Restoration Covenant**, is the restoration of God's people to a proper relationship with Himself and the world around them. Ezra-Nehemiah are concerned with not only the rebuilding of the Temple and walls of Jerusalem, but the covenant purity of the people. It was the desecration of the Temple by the priesthood, and the sinfulness of the people generally, that caused God to desolate His sanctuary and leave. When He left, He took the people with Him into exile. But now we see that God is returning with His people to His Temple and the Holy City.

Ezra 1:5 says that there were certain groups of people that were also stirred in their spirits to go up to Jerusalem to help rebuild the house of God. These were the heads of the houses of Judah, Benjamin and the Levites. Why do you think these three tribes of Israel are mentioned? [Judah = David; Benjamin = Saul; Levites – the priesthood.] All of these together are the old lines of authority in Israel – all are together united to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem. When the people came into the land to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem they began well by building an altar in order to begin offering sacrifices and celebrating the feasts of Israel (Ezra 3:1-3) under the leadership of Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel (a descendant of David). Following this they began rebuilding the Temple. They encountered considerable opposition from the people dwelling in the land who sent letters to the Persian king warning him that the Jews had a history of being rebellious. They said that if the Jews were allowed to rebuild the Temple and the city of Jerusalem they would again become rebellious. The emperor stopped the work on the Temple and the Jews spent their time building homes and businesses for themselves.

Post-Exilic Prophets: Haggai (“Festive”) & Zechariah

The work of rebuilding the Temple does not begin again until God used the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people again a few years later (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Haggai, whose name means “My Feast,” told them that the reason they

were not prospering was because they had stopped working on Yahweh's house. The people were living in paneled (well-built and beautiful) houses, but the Lord's house was still in ruins. This demonstrated that they thought more of their own homes and comforts than the Temple. The message of Haggai to the people was to begin again the rebuilding of the Temple, and that the Lord would be with them and establish them in the land. As a result of the prophecy of Haggai in 520 BC (Hag. 1:1-11), Zerubbabel and Joshua began again the work of rebuilding the Temple 24 days later (Hag. 1:12-15). After the Temple was completed in 516 BC, many of the people were discouraged by the fact that it was not as glorious as the first Temple had been. But Yahweh encouraged the people through Haggai saying that He was with them, and that the glory of this second Temple would be greater than it was at that time because Yahweh would give them peace. The book of Haggai concludes with the promise of future blessings and the establishment of the Davidic Kingdom.

In the next two weeks we will study in detail the prophecy of Haggai, and learn that God wants us to place His glory and worship above our own comforts and prosperity. If we have our priorities properly set, and work for the establishment of His Kingdom first, He will bless us as His people. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ, the descendant of David and Zerubbabel, is to be more important to us than anything else in our lives. As we worship Him and live in holiness and obedience, He will shake up the world and make His Kingdom grow so that we will rule with Him on the earth.

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

- I. Complete the 2nd Temple (1)
- II. The Glory of the 2nd Temple (2:1-9)
- III. Present blessings of obedience (2:10-19)
- IV. Future blessings through promise (2:20-23)

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Nehemiah and Haggai

Lesson Twenty-Six: Haggai & The Restoration Covenant

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom's Fall and Judah's Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

- I. Complete the 2nd Temple (1)
- II. The Glory of the 2nd Temple (2:1-9)
- III. Present blessings of obedience (2:10-19)
- IV. Future blessings through promise (2:20-23)

Historical background to the restoration period

2 Kings 24-25 and 2 Chronicles 36; 2 Chron. 36:21; Jer. 25:11-12; Dan. 9:1-3

Cyrus the Persian

Is. 44:28-45:1 (cf. Is. 44:21-27); Ezra 1:1-4 (cf. 2 Chron. 36:22-23)

Second Exodus

Restoration Covenant

Jer. 31:31-34

Post-Exilic Prophets: Haggai (“Festive”) & Zechariah – Ezra 5:1; 6:14

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Nehemiah and Haggai

Lesson Twenty-Seven: Haggai – Rebuild the 2nd Temple

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom's Fall and Judah's Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

Restoration Covenant – Focus on Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

- I. Complete the 2nd Temple (1)
- II. The Glory of the 2nd Temple (2:1-9)
- III. Present blessings of obedience (2:10-19)
- IV. Future blessings through promise (2:20-23)

Haggai means “My Feast,” and his prophecy has to do with various feasts and festivals that were present or shortly to arise in Israel. The first prophecy happens on the new moon, a monthly festival. The second prophecy occurred at the end of the feast of Tabernacles. Haggai is concerned with the reconstitution of the people of God in the restoration period, an era we’ve called the Restoration Covenant (from the time of the return of the captives from Babylon to the time of Christ).

As we saw last week, Ezra-Nehemiah is the historical book that provides the background to Haggai. In Ezra 1, in the first year after the Persians conquered the Babylonians, we learn that Cyrus the King released the remnant to return to Jerusalem for the specific purpose of rebuilding temple. This was the first work of the people. Ezra 2:1 lists those who came out of the “captivity.” Just as the Hebrews were delivered from their captivity in Egypt and came out with the riches of Egypt, so now in the return from Babylon we have another exodus, carrying with them riches from their captors. This includes the articles of silver and gold taken by Nebuchadnezzar from the House of God so that it could be rebuilt and the worship of Yahweh restored. The list of people that returned in Ezra 2 includes not only a general list of people (vv.2-35), but also a lists the priests (vv. 36-39), and the Levites (v. 40), the singers (v. 41), the gatekeepers (v. 42), the Nethinim, or the

Temple servants/slaves who were the descendants of the of the foreigners who were taken in as servants/slaves for service in the Temple (vv. 43-54), and the sons of Solomon's servants/slaves (vv. 55-58). Finally, in vv. 59-63, we see some comments about others returnees that could not be identified as Levitical descendants, and were excluded from the priesthood. They were not allowed to serve as priests until a priest could consult with God by means of the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21). Notice that an importance is placed on those who serve in the temple. This list in Ezra 2 categorized the returning remnant according to their position with regard to the Temple of God. The importance of who came back and who is connected with the House of God demonstrates that there is a centrality to the temple and the worship of Yahweh in the return of the exiles. In Haggai, what is most important to the people as they return to the land is the worship of the Lord, rather than social and cultural development apart from worship. Certainly it is important also to build houses, develop the economy, establish businesses, maintain the civil government of the people, develop the arts and so on, but of first importance to the people of God is the worship of God. This is what set us apart from all other people.

In Ezra 3, in the seventh month (the month of the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles – Lev. 16:20; 23:24, 27-44; Num. 29:1-40), the people built the altar and began offering sacrifices. They did this even though they were terrified of the people of the land (v. 3). They celebrated the feast of tabernacles, and offered the number of sacrifices prescribed by the law, a total of 70 bulls for the 70 nations of the world (v. 4). After this they offered the regular offerings prescribed in the law, including the various festivals (v. 5). V. 6 tells us that they began offering sacrifices, but the foundation of the temple of Yahweh had not been laid. Ezra 3:8 tells us that in the second year following their return to the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel (the Davidic leader) and Joshua (the High Priest) led the Priests and Levites and all the people who returned from captivity to begin work on the rebuilding the house of Yahweh. When the foundation was laid, the priests led the people to joyfully praise Yahweh in song, according to the singing organized by David according to the word of Yahweh (1 Chron. 28:19; cf. 1 Chron. 6:31; 16:4-6; 25:6; 2 Chron. 29:25-30). The shouts of joy were mixed with the noise of weeping because those who were old and could remember the glory of the first temple were saddened because the second temple was not as glorious as the first (3:12-13). Clearly, God's people began well.

Ezra 4 tells us that when the enemies of the people of God heard that the remnant of the captivity was rebuilding the temple they opposed the work and discouraged the people and made them afraid. These enemies were people that were brought into the land from other conquered lands when they Assyrians conquered the

Northern Kingdom of Israel. These people intermarried with poor Israelites that were left in the land, and these people became known as the Samaritans. They were part Israelite and part pagan (half-breeds), and had a mixed religion of both paganism (worship of the gods they brought with them from wherever they came from) and Yahweh worship. These people worked very hard to get the rebuilding project stopped and succeeded as we see in the rest of Ezra 4 (v. 24). For 17 years the people were not allowed to work on rebuilding the temple. Instead, they built their own homes, businesses, the government and general culture.

Ezra 5:1-2 (cf. 6:14) tells us that Haggai and Zechariah were the prophets sent by God to motivate the people to begin again to rebuild the temple. 17 years went by before they were given permission by a new king of Persia to rebuild the temple (Babylonian empire fell in 538 BC and the permission to rebuild the temple was given again in 520 BC). But after permission was given, more than a year went by and the people did not begin the work of rebuilding the temple.

I. Complete the 2nd Temple

Turn to Haggai 1. The word of Yahweh came to Haggai on the first day of the month. This is the time of the monthly New Moon festival, and on this day a larger than normal sacrifice of worship was offered as the people gathered to worship and to hear the word of God from the Levites. In Haggai's special prophetic word from Yahweh they heard that He was displeased with them for neglecting the rebuilding of the Lord's house. The message is delivered both to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah (whose name means, "born in Babylon") and Joshua, the High Priest (whose name means, "Yahweh Saves"). Zerubbabel and Joshua were the leaders of the civil government and church government. Later in the book of Haggai there is a message addressed only to the church, and then another message only to Zerubbabel, the leader of the state. Here, the first prophecy is directed to the leaders of both the civil government and the church government.

Haggai 1:2 says that "This people [notice, it doesn't say my people – they are acting like those who are not the people of God] says, 'The time has not come that Yahweh's house should be built.'" The Lord reasoned with them, saying, "Now therefore, says the Lord of Hosts, 'Consider your ways!' You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat but do not have enough, You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You cloth yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put them into a bag with holes" (1:6). The people experienced drought (cf. vv. 9-11) and economic hardship from the Lord because they had not finished rebuilding the temple. The reason was that they were more concerned with building their own houses and their new social order. But God sent Haggai and Zechariah to get the work going again (Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14). Haggai again

tells them in 1:7 to “Consider your ways!” It is not going well for you, therefore, you need to ask yourselves why. The reason is that you have your priorities wrong. As the people of God, first of all we need to be gathered around the throne of God in worship. For the people of that time, it meant getting the temple rebuilt. For us, it means making sure that we consider the worship of God as the foundation for every other good work that we do. We must never think that worship is optional, or not the most important thing we do.

Interestingly, the name for God, the Lord of Hosts, is repeatedly used in Haggai and is especially important in the period following the captivity (cf. 1:2, 5, 7, 14; 2:4, 11, 23). A host is an army or gathering of people or angels. In Genesis 2:1, God is said to have completed the creation of the heavens and earth, and all their *hosts*, meaning all of the angelic hosts and all the armies or assemblies of men and living creatures organized around the throne of God for His purposes. The Lord is first addressed this way in 1 Samuel 1:3, who is enthroned above the cherubim of the ark, ruling over the angelic armies of God. The reference is to both worship and military might. Throughout the Old Testament, Yahweh is revealed as the Lord of the angelic hosts who fights for His faithful people. God’s people should not fear the enemies around them because Yahweh of armies is their God, giving them protection and victory. This would be especially important for the small group of returnees, the remnant, that had returned in the midst of their Samaritan enemies. Haggai 1:13 says, “I am with you, says Yahweh.”

Because Yahweh is the Lord of Hosts, the people of God need to begin again the work of rebuilding the temple so that they can be organized around the throne of God as the human host of God. Once the temple is rebuilt, the reconstituted people of God around the throne of God will conquer the world. The book of Haggai ends with the promise that Yahweh will conquer the world, with Zerubbabel as the chosen Davidic leader of the people.

As a result of the prophetic ministries of Haggai and Zechariah (Haggai 1:12-15), Zerubbabel and Joshua led the people to complete the work on the temple in 516 BC, four years after they began for the second time to rebuild it. What follows in chapter 2 of Haggai is an explanation of the importance of the temple for the history of God’s people in the Restoration Covenant period. There is reason for the people of God to be festive, as Haggai’s name implies – My Festival.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Haggai

Lesson Twenty-Seven: Haggai – Rebuild the 2nd Temple

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

- I. Complete the 2nd Temple (1)
- II. The Glory of the 2nd Temple (2:1-9)
- III. Present blessings of obedience (2:10-19)
- IV. Future blessings through promise (2:20-23)

Haggai means “My Feast”

Ezra 1 – Cyrus the King released the remnant to return to Jerusalem for the specific purpose of rebuilding temple (538 BC).

Ezra 2:1 lists those who came out of the “captivity.”

Ezra 3, in the seventh month (the month of the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles – Lev. 16:20; 23:24, 27-44; Num. 29:1-40), the people built the altar and began offering sacrifices.

Ezra 4 – the opposition of the people of the land to the rebuilding the temple.

Ezra 5:1-2 (cf. 6:14) Haggai and Zechariah, prophets sent by God to motivate the people to begin again to rebuild the temple after 17 years (520 BC). The work completed on the temple (516 BC).

I. Complete the 2nd Temple

Haggai 1 – Zerubbabel and Joshua – “Consider your ways!”

The Lord of Hosts – Haggai 1:2, 5, 7, 14; 2:4, 11, 23

Keep your priorities right!

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Haggai

Lesson Twenty-Eight: Haggai – The Importance of the 2nd Temple

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom's Fall and Judah's Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

- I. Complete the 2nd Temple (1)
- II. The Glory of the 2nd Temple (2:1-9)
- III. Present blessings of obedience (2:10-19)
- IV. Future blessings through promise (2:20-23)

What Old Testament historical books deal with the time period following the exile? [2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Esther and Ezra-Nehemiah]

How does the book of Ezra help us to understand the book of Haggai?

Ezra informs us that Cyrus King of Persia proclaimed that God had commanded him to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, and he released the Jewish captives to return to the land of Judah. He sent with them the articles of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar has taken from the house of God, as well as other gifts from the Persian Empire (Ezra 1). The returnees were organized according to their position with regard to the temple of God (Ezra 2). God was reestablishing His people around His throne in the temple. In Ezra 3, they built the altar and began to offer sacrifices and celebrated the feast of Tabernacles. Shortly after they began to lay the foundation of the temple, and the people responded with a mixture of shouting for joy and the loud weeping (because the 2nd temple was not as great as the first) (Ezra 3). They faced opposition from the unbelievers of the land (Samaritans), the rebuilding of the temple was stopped for 17 years (Ezra 4). Haggai and Zechariah were prophets send by the Lord to motivate the people to begin again to rebuild the temple. With a change of Persian kings, the returnees were allowed to continue rebuilding the temple after 17 years. Instead, the people worked on building their

own house and the culture, neglecting the rebuilding of the temple, the house of God. Yahweh sent Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people to begin again to rebuild the temple (Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14). We see in Haggai 1:12-15 that they obeyed Yahweh and began rebuilding three weeks later.

The first prophecy of Haggai (Ch. 1) was given to cause the people to see their present economic struggle in terms of a covenant curse from Yahweh for not making the rebuilding of the house of God their first priority. What is most important to the people as they return to the land is the worship of the Lord, rather than social and cultural development apart from worship.

II. The Glory of the 2nd Temple (2:1-9)

The second prophecy of Haggai was given in the seventh month during the feast of Tabernacles (seventh day of the feast of tabernacles). Read Hag. 2:1-9, which is addressed to the leaders of both the state (Zerubbabel) and church (Joshua).

This section begins with a question about the glory of this latter temple. ‘Doesn’t it appear as nothing in your eyes?’ You recall that it caused weeping by those who could remember the first temple when they first began to rebuild it 17 years earlier (Ezra 3:12-13). What follows is Yahweh’s explanation of the glory of this latter temple will be greater than the former temple (2:9).

V. 4 commands Zerubbabel and Joshua (and all the people) to be strong - **I am with you**. Once again we see the use of “Lord of Hosts” to give confidence that Yahweh was going to be with them through His angelic army. This would be important to Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people considering all the difficulty and opposition they had from the people of the land.

In v. 5 the Lord tells them that He will help them as He had done when they came out of Egypt, made covenant with them at Sinai. Yahweh promised that His Spirit would remain among them, therefore, **do not fear**. In order to understand what this promise was, we need to understand the connection between the house of God and Sabbath/feasts (seventh day of the feast of tabernacles in Sabbath month) as given in the law. When God’s people faithfully worship Yahweh, they are placing their trust in Him for blessing. They are resting from their labors, and by faith, trusting that the God who is in their midst will be faithful to His covenant promises. Haggai reminds the people that their situation is similar to the way it was when they were brought out of Egypt. Moses did not contend with Pharaoh because they were slaves or for some other political reason, but so that they could worship Yahweh. Pharaoh could not allow this because they would serve Yahweh not Pharaoh. God shakes the nations and they give His people wealth to go and build the house of God (Egypt & Babylon). The promise (as they went out of Egypt) was that they would worship the Lord, and things would change for them.

To worship they needed to build the house of God. They were given the Spirit to enable them to build the house of God. Now, in Haggai, God was telling them to rebuild the house of God, and that He would give them the Spirit to enable them, just as He did in Moses' time.

In Exodus 25-31, instructions were given on how the tabernacle was to be built. In Ch. 25, the Lord commanded the people to bring gifts of materials for building. In Exodus 31 – Bezalel filled with the Spirit of God (vv. 2-3) for workmanship (/w Aholiab, v. 6). Sabbaths (Ex. 31:12-17) important connection. [Ex. 35-39 Moses repeats what God says about building in reverse order. Ex. 35:2-3 repeats Sabbath and vv. 4f repeats the offering, etc.] There is a strong worship and Sabbath/feasts connection. There is also a strong connection between the house of God (tabernacle) and the feast of tabernacles (dwelling in symbolic houses around the house of God). This is important to Haggai because there is the connection between the houses that the people were dwelling in and the neglect of God's house. In Leviticus 23:34-38 instructions are given for the feast of tabernacles (7th month). It is a holy gathering of the people, no labor (Sabbath). Vv. 39-43, feast of tabernacles (booths/tents of palm branches, trees) and Sabbath rest. They are to rest and trust God in faith to bless them. Cultural flows from worship and faith.

In Numbers 29 the Lord gives further explanation of the feasts of the seventh month. During the feast of tabernacles various offerings of bulls are prescribed – totaling 70 bulls. Why 70 bulls? Israel is a mediator for the nations, to pray for them and to be witnesses until Christ comes. This is important background for Haggai 2:609.

Finally, in Nehemiah 8:13-18 we see how the feast of tabernacles was celebrated in the Restoration Covenant period. Interestingly, v. 17 says that from the time of Joshua, Israel had never kept the law of the feast of tabernacles. These feasts were Bible conferences (Deut. 31:9-13), every seven years (Sabbath year) at the feast of tabernacles, there was to be a regular covenant renewal where the law was read.

Summary

The second prophecy in Haggai 2 was given at the end of the feast of tabernacles. This is a few days after the first prophecy. The people still alive from the exile could remember that the former glory of the first temple was more glorious than the 2nd temple. The people were expecting something very large and glorious to be built based on the words of the prophets. Ezekiel 40-48 prophesied that it would be (symbolically) the size of a mountain. These prophecies foretold the glory of the final temple: Jesus Christ and the church. This 2nd temple would be adequate, but not outwardly glorious.

The message was: take courage (Zerubbabel and Joshua and people) because I am with you (Immanuel) (they were fearful) and work. Just as the Spirit was abiding in their midst when they came out of Egypt, so too, the Spirit would be with them now to rebuild the temple. Ex. 3:11-12, the sign/promise is that God would be with them, and they would go out to serve/worship Him on Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex. 29:45-46; 33:12-14). Just as in the prescribed feast of tabernacles the people were to build symbolic houses around the house of God, so too, now, the people were to rebuild the house of God and dwell with Yahweh in their midst. It was appropriate from them to have houses, but their houses must be viewed as secondary to the house of God, who dwells in their midst.

The prophecy goes on in Haggai 2:6, literally says, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts, It is yet, only a little while and I am going to be shaking (continuous action) the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.” [Not, “I will shake...” as if only one shaking.] In about 400 years the shaking would really begin with the coming of Christ (extending until the Second Coming). Sun, moon and stars falling in New Covenant is the shaking. At this time, God will cause the nations to desire God, and will fill the temple with glory (v. 7). The glory will be greater – and God will give peace. The nations will give wealth for the temple. In 4 months from this time, this is fulfilled in a small way. Zechariah 6:9- (4 months after Haggai’s prophecy) the silver and gold being brought for the temple as a fulfillment of Haggai 2:8. Right away, the nations begin to bring in their wealth. This is fulfilled more fully in the New Covenant (Heb. 12:25-28). But primarily, this is about the New Covenant age.

Take courage because I am with you. Where God is, the temple begins to form around Him because the Spirit is there with them. It will be more glorious in its final form than the old temple. In this form, it didn’t look like much. But the immediately given gifts are tokens of the greatness to come. Herod’s temple was greater, but Jesus would tear it down to establish the greater temple, His body, the Church.

III. Present blessings of obedience (2:10-19)

In the third prophecy of Haggai (two months after the second prophecy), Yahweh addressed the priests/Church. In this section, Yahweh of hosts/armies asked the priests questions about holiness (2:11-13). Can holy food (food set apart and offered as sacrifice) make other foods holy (2:12)? The answer is no. The reason is that in the old covenant system, holiness does not spread to other things merely by touching them. They had to be made ritually/symbolically holy through priestly actions. God has to make or declare something holy.

The second question asks (2:13), can someone that is unclean because he has touched a dead body make the foods referred to in 2:12 unclean by touching them? The answer is yes. Uncleanness does spread to other things. Uncleanness is a symbol of the sinfulness of the heart that flows out of them. When a person (or thing) is unclean, he is disqualified from being in worship. He has to be ritually cleansed in order to come to worship. Yahweh is saying to the people that they are unclean because they have not rebuilt the temple. The worship system is not in place to deal with their sin problem. Thus, everything they touch is unclean until they rebuild the temple. For this reason, everything they tried to do was under the judgment of God and unprofitable for them. This takes up again the idea of the economic judgements brought against them referred to by Haggai in 1:6-11.

But the Lord says in Haggai 2:18-19 that once they begin to rebuild the temple He will again begin to bless them. They will no longer be unclean. What they set their hands to do will be blessed by the Lord, and He will make them prosper.

IV. Future Blessing through promise (2:20-23)

The third prophecy also was addressed to Zerubbabel/civil ruler in Haggai 2:20-23. Here we have the promise that Zerubbabel, the Davidic ruler, would be given the authority to rule over God's people. Associated with this is the shaking of the nations. As we saw earlier in the second prophecy (2:6-8) and later in Zechariah, when Yahweh shakes the nations, He will not only establish His temple (with the gifts given by the nations), but will bring the nations into His Kingdom. The rebuilt temple will be a house of prayer for the nations, and they will come to desire the Lord and He will bring glory to the new temple by their presence among His people. The nations will be brought down in their opposition to God and His people by saving them. This is the prophetic expectation that God expected His people to have on into the future. The temple was completed four years later (cf. Haggai 1:15 & Ezra 6:15).

When Jesus came on to the scene four hundred years later, the Jews were expecting the Gentile nations to be destroyed (as it says in 2:22). But they failed to understand that the descendent of Zerubbabel, Jesus, the Christ/Messiah, would cause the nations to come into the new temple with His people. When Jesus came, they rejected His message because they had previously rejected God's plan to save the world through Him. But God's righteousness (i.e. His covenant faithfulness) is revealed in Jesus Christ, and people from every tribe, tongue and nation are now part of His new temple, the people of God. He has been given the signet ring of Zerubbabel by His resurrection (2:23), and rules all things for the sake of His chosen people. The gospel/goodness is the proclamation that Jesus the Messiah has

come to bring the nations (i.e. Jews and Gentiles) into the new temple of God, the Church.

Revelation 5:9-13 says:

And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.” Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power *Be* to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zechariah. How many visions are there in the book?

Lesson Twenty-Eight: Haggai – The Importance of the 2nd Temple

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

- I. Complete the 2nd Temple (1)
- II. The Glory of the 2nd Temple (2:1-9)
- III. Present blessings of obedience (2:10-19)
- IV. Future blessings through promise (2:20-23)

II. The Glory of the 2nd Temple (2:1-9)

V. 5 “According to my word of covenant...so My Spirit remains among you; Do not fear!”

Ex. 25-31

Lev. 23:34-43

Num. 29

Neh. 8:13-18

“I will shake all the nations...and I will fill this temple with glory”

III. Present blessings of obedience (2:10-19)

IV. Future Blessing through promise (2:20-23)

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zechariah. How many visions are there in the book?

Lesson Twenty-Nine: Zechariah – Call to Repentance (1:1-6)

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom's Fall and Judah's Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

After the return of the exiles in 538 BC, God's people began to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3). After a short time they encountered opposition from the Samaritans, the people of the land that the Assyrians had brought to settle in Palestine. They successfully stopped the building project, and the Jews left the temple unfinished for more than 17 years. After this time, a new king in Persia allowed them to continue the temple, but they were so concerned to build and live in their own house and to establish their community life that they did not begin again to rebuild the temple. As we saw in the book of Haggai, in 520 BC two prophets were sent to stir up the people of God to rebuild the temple. What were the names of these prophets? [Haggai and Zechariah]

This week we begin to study the book of Zechariah. It is one of the most difficult books of the Bible to understand because it is filled with symbolic prophecies that apply not only to their contemporary time, but also to a much later time when Jesus would come fulfill and complete the restoration covenant. Zechariah is very important for properly understanding the book of Revelation because John (the author of Revelation) uses Zechariah's symbolic images to show what the Lord Jesus was doing in the first century history with His people.

A. The Prophet – The Priest

Zechariah 1:1 gives us some information about the prophet Zechariah. He is called the son of Berechiah, the son (or grandson) of Iddo (Ezra 5:1-2). His connection with Iddo is important because, in the list of Priests and Levites who return to the

land with Zerubbabel and Joshua (Neh. 12:4), Iddo is mentioned. Zechariah is named as the head of Iddo's house (Neh. 12:16), making him one of the Chief Priests, as well as a prophet. This explains why a good deal of the prophecy uses symbolic imagery from the temple, being one of the priests allowed to minister in the temple.

The name Zechariah means, "Yahweh remembers." Berechiah means, "Yahweh blesses." Zechariah will tell the people that Yahweh has remembered them in their affliction and going to keep His covenant to bless them.

B. Haggai and Zechariah

The book of Zechariah was written at the same time that Haggai wrote as these two prophets proclaimed the words of the Lord (Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14).

Second year of Darius

Hag. 1:1, 15 – Sixth month

Hag. 2:1 – Seventh month

Zech. 1:1 – Eighth month

Hag. 2:10, 18-20 – Ninth month

Zech 1:7 – Eleventh month

Fourth year of Darius

Zech. 7:1 – Ninth month

Haggai began to prophesy in the sixth month, and the people began to rebuild the temple about a month later. Zechariah began his prophecy about a month later. It is likely because of the fear that God's people had about the opposition around them (Hag. 2:4-5), their enthusiasm and motivation was low. By adding his voice to the prophecies of Haggai, Zechariah also encouraged the people to move ahead on the building project. As Ezra 5:1-2 says, both Haggai and Zechariah were with Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people "...helping them." The result of the encouragement of the prophets is that the temple was completed four years later in 516 BC (Ezra 6:15). The theme of the book of Zechariah is: God returns to dwell with His people – Build the Temple!

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

- I. Call the repentance (1:1-6)
- II. 8 night visions (1:7-6: 8)
- III. Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)
- IV. Message about fasting (7-8)
- V. Israel's future restoration (9-14)

C. Call to Repentance (1:1-6)

The book of Zechariah begins with a call to repentance. [Read Zech. 1:1-6] Zechariah used the word “return” (v.3, 6) or “turn” (v. 4) (the same Hebrew word) to emphasize the importance of their relationship to Yahweh Himself. The problem they were having was not merely that the temple had not been rebuilt. They needed to turn their hearts to the Lord as well. Zechariah called upon the people to repent and return to the Lord of Hosts. The prophet reminded the people of the rebellion of their forefathers. The **former prophets** had warned their forefathers (1:4-6; 7:7), but their fathers did not listen to the prophets. The former prophets were those whom God had sent time after time through their history to call upon the people of God to repent of their sins and return to the Lord. 2 Chronicles 36:14-17 says:

Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the Lord which He had consecrated in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand.

V.4 says that they should not be like their fathers who did not repent when the prophets were sent to them. What happened to the fathers, v. 5 asks. The words of the prophets came true, and God judged them because they refused to return to Yahweh. V. 6 tells us that the curses of the covenant overtook them. Deuteronomy 28 describes the kinds of covenant curse that Yahweh would send upon His people if they turned from Him, overtaking them because they did not obey the voice of the Lord to keep His commandments and statutes which He commanded. But Deuteronomy 30:1-10 tells us that if God’s people return to the Lord and obey His voice He will bring them back from captivity and have compassion on them and bless them. Zechariah is reminding the people of God’s covenant with them to remove the curse of their fathers if they would only repent and turn to the Lord with their whole hearts.

They had been carried off into captivity and exile because of their sins of idolatry and social injustices. Now that the people were in the land, Zechariah tells them that they too, unlike their forefathers, need to repent and return to the Lord in faithfulness. But what was it that Zechariah was calling upon the people to repent of? After all, they were already working to rebuild the second temple. Zechariah was saying that although they had started building God’s house again, something was still not right. They had not returned to the Lord Himself with their whole

heart and mind and soul. Building the temple by itself wouldn't guarantee that the Lord would bless them. Their fathers believed that the temple of the Lord would protect them, no matter how they lived. Jeremiah said that the false prophets caused the people to feel safe from their enemies without living according to God's word, saying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these" (Jer. 7:4). Zechariah wants the people avoid falling into the same sin of thinking that God would bless them simply because they had the temple. After all, Judah had the temple when Yahweh sent His prophets to warn the about the judgment to come, and when they did not repent, they were overcome with the curses of the covenant. They needed to return to Yahweh, not merely to His house. They needed to live holy lives, trusting in Yahweh, the Lord of Hosts. Only this kind of turning will bring the people the blessings promised. The only thing that will bring Yahweh back among them is a change of heart.

The example of the fathers is not only a warning, but also a promise of salvation. Even though the fathers refused to listen to the word of the Lord, and even though their sins brought curses on Israel, Yahweh has not rejected Israel. He invited the new Israel, the returnees from exile, to turn to Him with the promise that He will return to them (v.3).

Applications of this lesson:

- Yahweh our God has given us His word by the prophets, His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Bible. We must remain faithful to Him by keeping His word. He we do, He will continue to bless us.
- In many regards, the Church of our day has been unfaithful to Him. Zechariah assures us that if we return to Him, He will return to us and be in our midst to bless us. The unfaithfulness of many of our forefathers should be a warning to us to remain faithful to the Lord according to His word.
- We cannot trust merely in our church buildings or our attendance at church. Rather, God calls upon us to love Him with our whole hearts, minds and strength in all that we do, say and think. He is not satisfied with merely external expressions of Christianity – He wants us to dedicate our whole lives to Him and His service.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zechariah.

Lesson Twenty-Nine: Zechariah – Call to Repentance (1:1-6)

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom's Fall and Judah's Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

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Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

- I. Call the repentance (1:1-6)
- II. 8 night visions (1:7-6: 8)
- III. Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)
- IV. Message about fasting (7-8)
- V. Israel's future restoration (9-14)

A. The Prophet – The Priest

The name Zechariah means, "Yahweh remembers."

Berechiah means, "Yahweh blesses."

B. Haggai and Zechariah

Second year of Darius

Hag. 1:1, 15 – Sixth month

Hag. 2:1 – Seventh month

Zech. 1:1 – Eighth month

Hag. 2:10, 18-20 – Ninth month

Zech 1:7 – Eleventh month

Fourth year of Darius

Zech. 7:1 – Ninth month

The theme of the book of Zechariah is: God returns to dwell with His people – Build the Temple!

C. Call to Repentance (1:1-6)

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zechariah.

Lesson Thirty: Zechariah – The Night Visions (1:7-6: 8)

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

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Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

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Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

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Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

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| I. Call the repentance (1:1-6) |
| II. 8 night visions (1:7-6: 8) |
| III. Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15) |
| IV. Message about fasting (7-8) |
| V. Israel's future restoration (9-14) |

We have seen from the books of Ezra-Nehemiah and Haggai that after the Jews returned to the land from the exile they began well by setting up the altar for offering sacrifices, celebrated the feast of Tabernacles and started to rebuild the temple. But after they faced opposition from the Samaritans the temple project was stopped for about 17 years. After they were permitted to continue rebuilding the temple, they failed to do so for about a year. Ezra 5:1-2 tells us that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were raised up to motivate the people to build God's house, specifically Zerubbabel (the Davidic leader) and Joshua (the High Priest). Ezra tells us that the prophets were "...with the people, helping them." Last week we saw in Zechariah 1 that God called on the people to return to Yahweh and He would return to them, not merely because they were rebuilding the temple, but also by repenting of their sins and living holy lives before the Lord.

Today we come to a series of eight night visions that Zechariah had that demonstrated to the people that God was with them and that He was moving throughout the world to reverse the curses He as placed upon them – and would at the same time deal with the nations. The scene of these visions includes a man that

talks to Zechariah to explain what God was doing in the world. This man is also called an angel, the *Angel of the Lord*, an appearance of the Lord Jesus. We have seen in the Twelve that God is the Lord of Hosts, the Lord of the angelic armies. In these visions the work of Yahweh in the world is revealed as coming about through angels. Of central concern is the return of Yahweh to His people, dwelling among them in His temple. All of these vision come to us in symbolic language, so that all of what Zechariah saw are symbols that would have been generally understood by him and applied to history with biblical ideas in mind. Remember that Zechariah was a priest, and most of the symbols come from the tabernacle-temple imagery.

**A. Visions 1 & 2: Four Horses, Horns and Craftsmen (Man in Myrtles)
– Patrolling the earth God visits the earth, His land is at rest – God judges the nations, expels them, & builds His house (1:7-21)**

[Read Zech. 1:7-21] In this vision Zechariah saw a man on a red horse in a grove a myrtle trees, with other horse behind Him of various colors (natural horse colors). In addition the Angel of Yahweh there is another angel that spoke with Zechariah. After Zechariah asked for an explanation he was told that these four horses had patrolled the earth and had returned to report that the earth is at rest. This is not good news because Haggai 2:6-7 had said that God would be shaking the nations to restore the glory to Jerusalem, not leaving them in peace. In vv. 12-17 we see that the Angel of the Lord (the preincarnate Jesus) prayed and asked how long it would be before God had mercy on Jerusalem after His seventy years of anger with her (Jer. 25:11; 29:10). Jesus did not need to ask this question for Himself, but did so for Zechariah's benefit. The answer is that God would begin at that to restore Jerusalem, and that He was returning to her (remember that He said that He would return to them if they returned to Him – meaning the people were repenting and returning).

The visions go on to reveal four horns and four craftsmen. Horns represent in the Bible strength and power (like the strength and power of large/strong animals like bulls, elephants, etc). Also, there were horns on the bronze altar, representing the strength and power of God to save and to judge His people. The vision is explained to mean that the powers that had scattered God's people (Assyria, Babylon, Media & Persia) would no longer have power over Jerusalem. The craftsmen that Zechariah saw were coming to undo what the power of the nations had done to scatter the people. The word used for "craftsmen" is repeatedly used in the Old Testament to refer to skilled workers and artists in wood, metal, stone, cloth, etc. for the building of the tabernacle and temple. These are Spirit empowered craftsmen sent to rebuild the temple (Joshua, Zerubbabel, Ezra & Nehemiah). This vision assures the people that the temple would be rebuilt, and that God again

would dwell with His people – destroying the power of the nations/horns to keep the house of God from being built.

B. Vision 3: Measuring Line – Yahweh measures the city, multiplies His people, & defends them, exiles should leave Babylon, return to Jerusalem (2:1-13)

[Read Zech. 2:1-5] In the third vision, Zechariah saw a man with a measuring line used to survey/measure large areas (not just parts of a city, but the countryside as well.). The young man going out to measure the city is told that Jerusalem cannot simply be measured as a city with walls, but would be inhabited as a city without walls with a multitude of people and animals in it. Yahweh Himself would be a wall of fire to protect her, and would be the glory in the midst of her. Because of God’s presence the glory of Jerusalem would be so great that it will not be contained in the city. It will go out into the world. 2:11 tells us that when the people return to the land, many nations will also be joined to the Lord and become part of God’s people. And Yahweh will dwell in the midst of this great city.

The list of returnees given to us in Ezra and Nehemiah includes a small number of people. Many who had been scattered abroad were now living comfortably two generations later among the nations. The Lord is calling on His people to return to Jerusalem to dwell with the Lord in her midst. He is saying that the exile is now over, return from dwelling with the people of Babylon to dwell with the Yahweh and His people in the holy land.

C. Vision 4: High Priest (Joshua) – God cleanses His priests so they may build His house – sin of the land removed (3)

The reason that the people went into exile into Babylon and the temple was destroyed was because of their sins of idolatry and social injustices. The Lord could not merely forget their sins, but needed to purify them so that their sacrifices would be acceptable to Him, and He would be able to dwell in their midst. Satan knows this, and stood as an accuser of God’s people, represented in the fourth vision by Joshua the High Priest. In the sacrificial system, the sins of the people were put onto the priests (particularly the High Priest). They needed to be purified so that the people would be ceremonially pure. Satan opposed the rebuilding of the temple because Joshua was wearing “filthy garments” (sweaty dirt garments – sweat is symbolic of the curse in Gen. 3) which symbolically represented the sins of the people. In this condition he was unfit to offer acceptable sacrifices for the people. The Lord rebuked Satan for opposing the work of God through Joshua, and had clean garments put on him. The priesthood would be cleansed and made acceptable for service.

It was Solomon, the son of David that built the first temple. This third vision ends with a promise that God will send His servant “the Branch” (cf. Zech. 6:12; Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). This One named Branch was to be a descendant of David who would reign with justice and protect the people of God. This name is symbolic of the Davidic kingship that had been uprooted, but would return again to reign. Now, in Zerubbabel, the Davidic line is restored as a leader of the building of the second temple. Ultimately this is fulfilled in the person of Jesus when He became the King over God’s people, and establish the final heavenly temple made up of the people of God.

D. CENTER – Vision 5: Lampstands & Trees - God anoints & sustains His ministers; they minister His presence to the world by building the temple (Zerubbabel; also Joshua) (4)

The fifth and central vision of Zechariah gives the people assurance that the temple will be rebuilt. In Zechariah 4 Yahweh strengthens the image of Zerubbabel and Joshua by calling them the “two anointed ones.” In Zechariah’s vision, he had fallen asleep and was awakened by an angel. When he awoke he saw a lampstand with seven lamps on it. On the right and left are olive trees that drip olive oil into the lamp. The seven lamps are described as representing the eyes of Yahweh that look throughout the earth, making it possible for God to work justly. The meaning of this vision is that Joshua (the High Priest) and Zerubbabel (the Davidic ruler) are set apart by the Lord to accomplish His purposes. The ceremonial/worship and civil leaders are given assurance that the temple will be rebuilt.

In the last vision the importance of Joshua was highlighted, with the need to be purified for the temple work he would do. Here, in the fourth vision, the work of Zerubbabel is highlighted. Despite all of the political difficulties faced by Zerubbabel and the people, God will use Zerubbabel to finish the temple. It will not be accomplished “by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of Hosts” to Zerubbabel (4:6). He needed to trust the Lord, not his ability to organize the people to fight and build, nor his political abilities. When the temple is finished under the leadership of Zerubbabel, it will become known that Yahweh, the Lord of hosts had spoken. They should not be discouraged nor despise the day of small things. God is working among His people through the leaders He put over them.

Next week we will finish the last three visions a move on into the next section of the book.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zechariah.

Lesson Thirty: Zechariah – The Night Visions (1:7-6: 8)

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

- I. Call the repentance (1:1-6)
- II. 8 night visions (1:7-6: 8)
- III. Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)
- IV. Message about fasting (7-8)
- V. Israel's future restoration (9-14)

A. Visions 1 & 2: Four Horses, Horns and Craftsmen (Man in Myrtles) – Patrolling the earth God visits the earth, His land is at rest – God judges the nations, expels them, & builds His house (1:7-21)

B. Vision 3: Measuring Line – Yahweh measures the city, multiplies His people, & defends them, exiles should leave Babylon, return to Jerusalem (2:1-13)

C. Vision 4: High Priest (Joshua) – God cleanses His priests so they may build His house – sin of the land removed (3)

D. CENTER – Vision 5: Lampstands & Trees - God anoints & sustains His ministers; they minister His presence to the world by building the temple (Zerubbabel; also Joshua) (4)

C' Vision 6: Flying Scroll – God expels wicked men, His curse goes to sinners houses/dwellings (5:1-4)

B' Vision 7: Woman in Basket – God measures out wickedness & wicked men exiled back to Babylon (5:5-11)

A' Vision 8: Four Chariots – Yahweh patrols the earth, His spirit is at rest because of His judgments (6:1-8)

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zechariah.

Lesson Thirty-One: Zechariah – The Night Visions Continued(1:7-6: 8) and Crowning Of Joshua (6:9-15)

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C. **Vision 4: High Priest (Joshua) – God cleanses His priests so they may build His house – sin of the land removed (3)**

D. **CENTER – Vision 5: Lampstands & Trees - God anoints & sustains His ministers; they minister His presence to the world by building the temple (Zerubbabel; also Joshua) (4)**

Last week we began to study the night visions of Zechariah. Many of the exiles had returned to the land of Judah and Jerusalem, and after a delay of many years the temple was being rebuilt. Haggai and Zechariah were with the people, encouraging and motivating them to build. The importance of the rebuilding in the temple is seen in the night visions because the whole world would be affected. In the first five visions we learned that the Lord had sent His angels to patrol the earth

and found that the world was at peace and rest. This was not a good thing since God intended to shake up the nations for the purpose of providing money for the rebuilding project and bringing the nations into the kingdom. When God judges the nations he would expel the wicked from the land so that His house could be rebuilt. We also saw that there was to be another exodus from Babylon bringing more of the captives back to Jerusalem. As the holy city grew it would become a city so large and prosperous (encompassing the whole world) that God would protect it by being a wall of fire around it, with His glory in the midst of it. Next we saw that in order for the temple to function Joshua (the High Priest) and the priesthood had to be purified, cleansing the land of impurity. Finally, we saw that Zerubbabel was anointed as the Davidic ruler, and assured that he would complete the rebuilding of the Temple.

C' Vision 6: Flying Scroll – God expels wicked men, His curse goes to sinners houses/dwellings (5:1-4)

In the sixth vision Zechariah saw a very large flying scroll with writing on both sides. The size of this scroll (i.e. about 24' by 12') is the same size as the Holy of Holies in the Temple and represents God measuring and evaluating the land in terms of the law of the covenant. This vision corresponds to the fourth vision where the sins of the people were purified by the purification of the priesthood. Once the priesthood and people are purified the Temple can be rebuilt as a holy house.

It must be remembered that the only time anyone went into the Holy of Holies was once per year on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest went in to make atonement for the secret sins of the people of God. All other sins were covered by the other sacrifices. Here, the sins listed in 5:3 are theft and lying (hypocrisy, saying that one is faithful in his words when he is not) – both are sins that are often only known by God. God's judgment is that He will curse the secret sins of His people and cast them out of the land. The sins of God's people pollute the Temple, and God is saying that the curse of people's secret sins will cause their own houses to become polluted and judged (5:4). What is interesting about this curse is that it "goes out over the face of the whole earth" (5:3). God will not only purify His land and the Temple being built, but the new Temple built by Christ would send the word of God into the whole earth to purify it.

B' Vision 7: Woman in Basket – God measures out wickedness & wicked men exiled back to Babylon (5:5-11)

The theme of purification of the people and the land continues in the seventh vision, and corresponds to the third vision where God's people are called back to Jerusalem from Babylon.

Zechariah sees a basket (about 7 gallons) with a woman in it who is called "wickedness." There is a lead (heavy metal) disc that is put over the top of the basket, and two angelic winged women (the only biblical reference to angels in the feminine) lifted the basket and carried it to Babylon.

To understand this vision it is helpful to keep in mind the Ark of the Covenant. It was a box with a lid, having two winged angels on the top. This is similar to the basket with the lead disc carried by the two winged angels. The people of God must be faithful to worship only Yahweh, who dwells above the Ark of the Covenant. Any idolatrous worship (or some combination of true and false worship) that may have been brought back from Babylon to the Holy Land must be rejected, and is symbolically returned to Babylon, its place of origin. The new community must not pollute the Temple being built with any hint of false worship.

It is interesting that "Wickedness" is represented by a woman. In the years that followed the rebuilding of the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem, we learn in Nehemiah (13:23-27) that the people of God began to marry unbelieving women. It is important that believers not intermarry with unbelievers because their hearts will be turned from the Lord. After Nehemiah made his reforms, he said, "Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan..." (Neh. 13:30).

A' Vision 8: Four Chariots – Yahweh patrols the earth, His spirit is at rest because of His judgments (6:1-8)

Just as there were four horses, horns and craftsmen in the first two visions, with angels patrolling the earth finding rest – so too, in the eighth, the last of the night visions, there are four horses and chariots patrolling the earth, with the Spirit of God at rest because of His judgments. In the first vision the four horses go out for the purpose of stirring up judgment against all the nations. Now in the last vision the four chariots go forth from the two bronze mountains representing the two bronze pillars in the first Temple, and find that God has judged the nations and His Spirit is at rest. God has dealt with the wickedness of the north country by casting the wickedness from His people and the holy land.

The Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)

The series of night visions concludes with an oracle in which Joshua the High Priest is crowned. Zechariah is told to receive the gift of silver and gold from certain people from Babylon (whom we know nothing specifically of). In Zechariah 2:6-10 we are told that when Yahweh brings His people back from captivity in Babylon (another exodus), He would shake the nations and the spoil/plunder that they took from Jerusalem would be returned. By this the people of God would know that God was working on their behalf. This would be a sign that God was coming to them and was in their midst. The result of this would be that many nations would be joined to the Lord and become His people (Zech. 2:10-13). Zechariah, in 6:9f is told that when it is fulfilled that the plunder of silver and gold are brought to him, he is to make an elaborate crown and place it on the head of Joshua the High Priest.

This will also be a sign that “Branch” will complete the rebuilding of the Temple. Who is this “Branch”? Remember we saw in Zech. 3:8 that Zerubbabel was called this. He was a descendant of David and would rule the people in righteousness, cf. Jer. 23:5, 33. Just as Solomon the first Temple builder was a son of David, so too, Zerubbabel, the descendant of David, would be the builder of the second Temple. Zechariah 6:12-13 says that this “Branch” would build the Temple, and would bear the glory of one who rules on a throne. These verse are confusing because it seems to combine the idea of priest (Joshua) and David kingship (Zerubbabel). What is interesting is that the line of Zerubbabel mysteriously seems to disappear after this time. The answer to the confusion is that it is fulfilled in Christ when He comes to take the crown as the King who builds the final Temple, the Church, and Himself becomes the of the new people of God.

It is important to conclude our study of these night visions as making sure that we understand that there were both near and far fulfillments of them. Because God was returning to His people and land with glory, Zerubbabel really would rebuild the Second Temple, and the priesthood was reestablished under Joshua. The captivity was finished and God began to shake the nations so that many nations were beginning to be influenced by the word of the Lord. The people were not only brought back into the land, but were purified of many of their previous sins. But all of these thing were only partial fulfillments. At the time of Christ the Jews were still waiting for the final fulfillment of them. It was not until Jesus came and announced the true fulfillment of these things that they happened through Him. He is the One who fulfilled them by establishing the Church, the final Temple.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zechariah.

Lesson Thirty-One: Zechariah – The Night Visions Continued(1:7-6: 8)
and Crowning Of Joshua (6:9-15)

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

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- A. Visions 1 & 2: **Four Horses, Horns and Craftsmen (Man in Myrtles) – Patrolling the earth** God visits the earth, His land is at rest – God judges the nations, expels them, & builds His house (1:7-21)
- B. Vision 3: Measuring Line – Yahweh measures the city, multiplies His people, & defends them, exiles should leave **Babylon**, return to Jerusalem (2:1-13)
 - C. Vision 4: High Priest (Joshua) – God cleanses His priests so they may build His house – **sin** of the land removed (3)
 - D. CENTER – Vision 5: Lampstands & Trees - God anoints & sustains His ministers; they minister His presence to the world by **building the temple** (Zerubbabel; also Joshua) (4)

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A' Vision 8: Four Chariots – Yahweh patrols the earth, His spirit is at rest because of His judgments (6:1-8)

The Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)

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Lesson Thirty-Two: Zechariah – Message About Fasting (7-8)

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The captives were allowed to return to the land in 538 BC and began rebuilding the temple. Because of opposition by the people of the land (the Samaritans), they were forced to stop for about 17 years. In 520 BC (i.e. the second year of Darius) the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent by Yahweh to encourage the people to begin again to rebuild the temple. Haggai motivated the people by telling them that they were not prospering because they lived in paneled homes while the temple remained in ruins. If they rebuilt the temple Yahweh would return to them in glory and blessing, and the nations would be shaken. Zechariah reminded the people of the reasons they were sent into exile (i.e. not listening to the prophets and doing evil) and called upon them to repent and return to the Lord. He then was given a series of night visions in which Yahweh showed the people that He would shake the nations and return to His house when it was built. Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the Davidic ruler would be used by the Lord to lead the people in righteousness to rebuild the temple. These prophecies would have a near fulfillment in the rebuilding of the temple, but referred ultimately to the work of Christ when He would return to Jerusalem as the Priest-King of His people.

A. People from Bethel come to the house of God to pray (7:1-3a)

Now in Zechariah 7-8, two years later, the people are rebuilding the temple and have questions about how they are to live before the Lord. Some commentators think that these men came from Bethel, which means “house of God,” v. 2). This section corresponds to 8:20-23 where peoples from many nation will come and pray to the Lord.

B. Fasting: Condemnation for fasting selfishly (7:3b-6)

Specifically, they ask if they should continue fasting as they have done for so many years in the fifth month (cf. 8:19 that lists other fasts they kept). The law of God only required on day of fasting per year on the Day of Atonement. Fasting had become a custom among the Jews to remind them of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in the fifth month of 605 BC (2 Kings 25:8-9; Jer. 52:12-14), and the death of Gedaliah, the governor, in the seventh month (Jer. 25:25).

Yahweh answered their prayers and questions to the priests in the house of Yahweh by saying that their fasts should have led them to greater obedience. The Lord asked them a series of questions to get them thinking about their everyday lives, not just their religious observances (which He had not commanded).

‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *months* during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me? (v. 5)

When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink *for yourselves*? (v. 6)
Should you not *have obeyed* the words which the Lord proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the Lowland were inhabited?’” (V. 7).

This question about fasting is answered in the corresponding section in 8:18-19 where Yahweh says that the fasts will be turned to feasts of joy.

C. Past call to righteousness and justice (7:7-14)

The people were fasting merely to express their mourning over the calamities that had befallen them, not to draw near to the Lord in obedience. It was proper for them to fast (i.e. afflict ones soul) and draw near to the Lord (read Is. 58:1-12). But such fasting should produce righteousness and justice. This was the message of the former prophets (there are many other passages in the prophets that talk about fasting). As Zechariah has already said in 1:3-6, their fathers did not obey Yahweh as He spoke to them through the prophets. Zechariah is calling upon the people of this time to be live more faithfully than their fathers had (see 7:11-14). The way to live in a way that pleases the Lord is not fasting, but doing what He says in 7:9-10:

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion Everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, The alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart Against his brother.’”

This section corresponds to 8:14-17 where Yahweh says that He will do good to His people as they live in righteousness and justice.

D. Center: Rebuild the Temple (8:1-13)

In the center of this section we see the blessing of the Lord returning to the people. It proclaims that Jerusalem will again become a faithful city (“the City of Truth”) and the mountain of Yahweh will again be called “the Holy Mountain.” Just as the Lord had said in 1:14-17, He repeats that He is zealous for Zion, the holy city. Yahweh will again dwell in Jerusalem among His people, and there will be peace and prosperity. Old men and women will sit safely in the streets, and children will play in the streets (8:4-5). In 8:7 the Lord of Hosts will bring back those who remained in Babylon and other places of exile. It is God alone who brings His people back to the land, not the Persian king. The covenant relationship with God will be renewed, “I will be your God, and you will be my people” (8:8 cf. Zech. 13:9; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38-39). With these words of encouragement, Yahweh tells the people to have strong hands to rebuild the temple (8:9-10). Previously there had been difficulty financially, but now there will be prosperity and blessing that will enable them to accomplish the rebuilding of the temple.

C’ Present call to righteousness and justice (8:14-17)

Recalling again the failure of the fathers to live in righteousness and justice, leading to punishment and exile, now Yahweh is determined to do good to Jerusalem. Knowing that the Lord wanted to bless them and be with them should cause them to not be fearful, even if their enemies come against them.

8:16-17 lists what God wants them to do:

Speak each man the truth to his neighbor;

Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;

Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor;

And do not love a false oath. For all these *are things* that I hate,’ Says the Lord.”

If they did these things, obeying the Lord in their relationships with each other, He would bless them. He would not judge them as He had their fathers.

B’ Fasting: Fasts will be turned to feasts of joy (8:18-19)

This section answers the question about fasting (7:3). To the two fasts that were already mentioned, two others are referred to: The fast of the tenth month commemorating the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem (Jer. 52:4), and the fast remembering the opening of the wall that resulted in the defeat of the king and his sons (2 Kings 25:1-4; Jer. 39:2; 52:6-7). The rebuilding of the temple, corresponding to a change of heart in the people, means that it would no longer be necessary to fast because of the disasters of the past. Rather, it would be a time of

joy in which to celebrate the actions of God who now blesses and restores His people. The people would now be characterized by loving truth and peace.

A' People from many cities will come to Jerusalem to pray (8:20-23)

The section is concluded with a promise that other nations will seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and pray to Him. They will desire the Lord because they see that He is will His people to bless them. They will grasp on to the corners of the garments of the Jewish man and ask to go with him to worship, and live faithfully before the Lord.

In the time when Jesus came, the expectation was that Yahweh would come as King to Jerusalem to dwell with His people. At that time, they expected the nations to submit to their Messianic King, and to live according to the Jewish customs. But when Jesus, the true King, did come, He was rejected by the Jews because He will willing to eat and drink and fellowship with sinners. They failed to see that when sinners, Samaritans and Gentiles sought after God, they did not need to become Jews to faithfully worship the Lord. The temple in Jerusalem was no longer the true temple, the Church was. The customs of the Jews were not the way to seek the Lord, but faithfully living for Jesus was the way. The result was the temple and the Jewish customs were rejected and judged by the Lord in 70 AD. But the Church of Christ has continued to grow and men from every nation are being brought to Him.

Applications from this lesson:

- 1) Religious actions, no matter how good, are no substitute before God for righteous living.
- 2) The past sins of our fathers are important for us to remember so that we do not repeat them. We must be willing to break with our past so that we can move into the future with blessing.
- 3) God blesses us so that we can become a blessing to the world. Unbelievers will see what God has done for us and seek the Lord with us. We must living in such a way that unbelievers desire our God – we are a living testimony to the world. We must be willing to help seekers of the Lord, even if they are different than ourselves.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zechariah.

Lesson Thirty-Two: Zechariah – Message About Fasting (7-8)

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

- I. Call the repentance (1:1-6)
- II. 8 night visions (1:7-6: 8)
- III. Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)
- IV. Message about fasting (7-8)
- V. Israel's future restoration (9-14)

A. People from Bethel come to the house of God to pray (7:1-3a)

B. Fasting: Condemnation for fasting selfishly (7:3b-6)

2 Kings 25:8-9; Jer. 52:12-14; 25:25

C. Past call to righteousness and justice (7:7-14)

Is. 58:1-12

D. Center: Rebuild the Temple (8:1-13)

8:8 cf. Zech. 13:9; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38-39

C' Present call to righteousness and justice (8:14-17)

B' Fasting: Fasts will be turned to feasts of joy (8:18-19)

2 Kings 25:1-4; Jer. 39:2; 52:6-7

A' People from many cities will come to Jerusalem to pray (8:20-23)

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Zechariah.

Lesson Thirty-Three: Zechariah – Israel’s Future Restoration (9-14)

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

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| I. Call the repentance (1:1-6) |
| II. 8 night visions (1:7-6: 8) |
| III. Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15) |
| IV. Message about fasting (7-8) |
| V. Israel’s future restoration (9-14) |

Zechariah’s name means “Yahweh remembers.” Through Zechariah the Lord called upon His people repeatedly to repent by remembering the former prophets and the failures of their forefathers to listen to them. His was a message of encouragement to the people following the exile to not only rebuild the temple, but to know that the Lord would return to them and judge (shake) the nations so that they too would repent and worship Him. The focus of the first part of the book of Zechariah (1-8) is on the need for the people to live faithfully before Him as they rebuild the temple.

In the last section of the book of Zechariah we see that Yahweh will fully restore His people when He returns to them. This section is future oriented and designed to give the people hope and faith in the coming Messiah. In this section Zechariah receives two oracles or burdens from the Lord (9:1 & 12:1).

Last week we saw that the people asked the Lord if they needed to continue to fast at various times. The answer was that the fast days would be turned to feasting, and that many peoples would also pray to Yahweh and would go with the Jews to

worship. The Jews would naturally wonder how it is that the peoples of the nations would come to desire the Lord since they were at that time opposing the Jews.

I. First Burden: The Coming of Messiah the King (9-11)

A. Judgment on surrounding nations (9:1-7)

9:1 tells us that those nations that were troubling God's people would be judged, and the reason given is that "all the eyes of men, and all the tribes of Israel are on Yahweh (meaning that they are looking to the Lord in faith for salvation from the nations).

B. The Yahweh will return to His temple and reign over the earth (9:8-10:12)

9:8 tells us that the Lord would camp around His house to protect it because of an army that would go through the land. In 333 BC Alexander the Great conquered the nations around Israel, but spared Jerusalem in fulfillment of this prophecy. Although Israel eventually rebelled against the Greeks and was scattered by them, Jerusalem was preserved for the coming of the Messiah. 9:9-10 tells us that Messiah the King would come to the Jerusalem, and it would be cause for shouts of rejoicing. "He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey." This was literally fulfilled in the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem before His death, burial and resurrection, where this verse is quoted (Matt. 21:1-10; Mk. 11:1-11; Lk. 19:28-40; Jn. 12:12-19). The result of His coming would be peace for His people and dominion over the world (v. 10).

9:11-10:12 tells us that (in the time of Zechariah and following) Yahweh would save His people and return from captivity those who remained in Babylon (9:11-12). He would save Israel because they are His flock. They had been sheep without a shepherd (10:2, "shepherd" is a figure of speech used as a symbol for Israel's leaders). Israel had shepherds that led Yahweh's sheep astray by their worship of idols, following fortunetellers and false prophets (9:16-10:3). But Yahweh is a good shepherd that will bring His people back from their captivity, just as they were brought into the land after exodus from Egypt (10:6-11). He will strengthen them as they walk in His name (10:12).

C. The good and bad shepherds (11:1-17)

The theme of Israel's bad shepherds continues in 11:1-17. The bad shepherds do not care for the sheep, but merely feed them for the slaughter. Beginning in 11:7, the prophet says that he fed the flock, particularly the poor. Then he took two staves (sticks used in shepherding) and called them "graciousness" (beauty) and "unity" (bonds), and then cut off three of the bad shepherds. The two staves were broken to

show that the bad shepherds had broken covenant with the Lord and mistreated God's flock. The prophet (symbolizing the bad shepherds) is given 30 pieces of silver, but it is cast to the potter. The prophet is finally ordered to become the worthless shepherd who is in the end stripped of his tools and punished.

Remember that this prophecy concerns the coming of the Messiah, Jesus the King, and how He will deal with Israel. In Matthew 9:35-36 Jesus went around the cities and villages of Israel teaching and preaching about the coming of the Kingdom of God and healing people. When He saw the multitudes that came to Him, "He was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd." Jesus was saying that the leaders of the Jews (Pharisees, Chief Priests, Scribes) were bad shepherds and made the people weary and in need of godly leadership. Jesus, the good shepherd, was betrayed by Judas, being paid 30 pieces of silver. He later cast the silver back into the temple and hanged himself. The money was used to purchase the potters field (Matt. 26:15; 27:3-17; Acts 1:16-19). This prophecy was fulfilled in coming of the Jesus, the good shepherd of God's people.

II. Second Burden: The Reign of the King (12-14)

The next section begins again by introducing another oracle/burden of the prophet. In this section we see the glorious reign of Jesus the Messiah, and again we see the Day of the Lord theme.

A. All the nations of the earth will gather against Jerusalem, but Yahweh will defeat them (12:1-4)

In Zechariah 8 the Lord said that peoples from many nations would come with the Jews to pray and worship the Lord. But they must first be humbled and defeated. Now in 12:1-4 we see that all the nations of the earth will gather against Jerusalem, but Yahweh will defeat them. This would later happen through Messiah the King.

B. Judah's leaders will be strengthened (12:5-9)

No longer would Judah have bad shepherds, but Yahweh will strengthen the rulers of the people. The Lord will defend His people, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will become like David. The house of David will be restored in the person of Jesus the Messiah.

C. Repentance of the house of David and the people (12:10-14)

The faithful people of God will look upon the Lord whom they have pierced and mourn. They will repent of killing the Messiah. 12:10 is quoted in John 19:37 as being fulfilled in the crucifixion of the Jesus.

D. Cleansing from sin and uncleanness (13:1-2)

The result of the death of Jesus would be the cleansing of God's people of their sin and uncleanness. It is described as a fountain of cleansing. The idols, false prophets and unclean spirits would be cut off.

C' Repentance of prophets (13:3-6)

The false prophets (teachers of Israel during Jesus' time) will repent of their former sins. The true church will be established.

B' Judah's King will be struck and the sheep scattered (13:7-9)

13:7-9 describes the striking of the good shepherd, Jesus and the scattering of His sheep. When Jesus was crucified, the disciples were scattered (Matt. 26:31; Mk. 14:27 quotes this verse, cf. Matt. 26:56; Mk. 14:50; Jn. 16:32). Although the disciples were persecuted, 13:9 says, "They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is my people'; and each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.'" The striking of the good shepherd will not defeat His people, but they will be established as the true church.

A' All the nations will gather, Yahweh will defeat them and become their king (14:1-21)

Again Yahweh says that He will gather the nations to battle against Jerusalem and the city will be taken. Half the city will be taken captive, but the remnant (the faithful portion of God's people) will not be cut off. They will be saved. This happened in 70 AD. God's faithful people will be saved because Yahweh will fight against those nations that would destroy God's people. They will be saved because they will flee to the mountains before the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus Himself also prophesied about this (Matt. 24:16; Lk. 21:21-22).

The book ends with the glorious prophecy that the nations will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts and keep the feast of Tabernacles. Those who do not go up to worship the Lord will not be blessed. Holiness will be so characteristic of God's people that "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" will be engraved even on the bells of horses. In that day, the great Day of the Lord, our Day, the church will be composed of only those who are faithful to the Lord.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Malachi.

Lesson Thirty-Three: Zechariah – Israel’s Future Restoration (9-14)

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

- I. Call the repentance (1:1-6)
- II. 8 night visions (1:7-6: 8)
- III. Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)
- IV. Message about fasting (7-8)
- V. Israel’s future restoration (9-14)

I. First Burden: The Coming of Messiah the King (9-11)

- A. Judgment on surrounding nations (9:1-7)
Matt. 21:1-10; Mk. 11:1-11; Lk. 19:28-40; Jn. 12:12-19
- B. The Yahweh will return to His temple and reign over the earth (9:8-10:12)
- C. The good and bad shepherds (11:1-17)
Matt. 26:15; 27:3-17; Acts 1:16-19

II. Second Burden: The Reign of the King (12-14)

- A. All the nations of the earth will gather against Jerusalem, but Yahweh will defeat them (12:1-4)
- E. Judah’s leaders will be strengthened (12:5-9)
- F. Repentance of the house of David and the people (12:10-14) Zech. 12:10, cf. John 19:37
- G. Cleansing from sin and uncleanness (13:1-2)
- C’ Repentance of prophets (13:3-6)
- B’ Judah’s King will be struck and the sheep scattered (13:7-9)
Matt. 26:31; Mk. 14:27 quotes 13:7, cf. Matt. 26:56; Mk. 14:50; Jn. 16:32
- A’ All the nations will gather, Yahweh will defeat them and become their king (14:1-21)
Matt. 24:16; Lk. 21:21-22

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Malachi.

Lesson Thirty-Four: Malachi – Condemnation of Unfaithful Israel

❖ Westminster Shorter Catechism

❖ Review

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom's Fall and Judah's Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

After the return of the exiles to Jerusalem in 538 BC, God's people began to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3). After a short time they encountered opposition from the Samaritans, the people of the land that the Assyrians had brought to settle in Palestine. They successfully stopped the building project, and the Jews left the temple unfinished for more than 17 years. After this time, a new king in Persia allowed them to continue the temple, but they were so concerned to build and live in their own house and to establish their community life that they did not begin again to rebuild the temple. Two prophets were sent to stir up the people of God to rebuild the temple in 520 BC (Ezra 5:1-2; Hag. 1:1). What were the names of these prophets? [Haggai and Zechariah] The temple was completed in 516 BC (Ezra 6:15).

In order for the people of God to be fully restored after the exile, in addition to the rebuilding of the temple, the city of Jerusalem needed to be restored. Nehemiah returned from Persia in 444 BC to rebuild the walls of the city, and to govern the people according to the law of God. This was 13 years after the reforms of Ezra (Ezra 7-10). Nehemiah returned to Persia for 7 years (432 BC through 425 BC), and returned to deal with the sins of Israel described in the book of Malachi. These included: Corruption of the Priests and Levites (Mal. 1:6-2:9 – Neh. 13:1-9); failure to pay tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:7-12 – Neh. 13:10-13); and intermarriage with pagan wives (Mal. 2:10-16 – Neh. 13:23-28). It is likely that Malachi prophesied while Nehemiah was absent, almost 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah.

We know nothing about Malachi the prophet, except that his name means, “My Messenger.” This name is important because God makes “My messenger” an important theme in the book (1:1; 2:7; 3:1). Apparently, after the initial enthusiasm that characterized the people during the time of Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra had died out, they became discouraged because Yahweh the King had not returned, and the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah had not yet been fulfilled. The time of prosperity had not come. They continued to have problems with the nations around them and suffered because of drought and bad crops. Many people began to wonder if Yahweh really loved Israel. They had the attitude that it may not be worth serving God faithfully because the wicked prospered and it did not seem like Yahweh cared about them.

Malachi is written in a unique style among the prophets. It is a series of questions and answers. God repeatedly asserts things about the people of Israel, and they repeatedly respond with a question: How has God loved us? (1:2-5); How have we (priests) despised God’s name? (1:6-2:9); How have we (people) broken covenant? (2:10-16); How have we wearied God? (2:17-3:6); How have we robbed God” (3:7-12); How have we spoken against God? (3:13-15). Then God explains His statements with additional facts and illustrations. In this way the prophet explains that God is calling the people back to faithfulness with the assurance that the Messiah would come on the great and dreadful DAY OF YAHWEH to purify His people.

Malachi: Be Faithful! The Day is coming!

- A. Yahweh is Just – He loves Israel (1:1-5)
- B. Priests and people have cheated Yahweh in offerings (1:6-14)
- C. Past Levi served in righteousness (2:1-9)
- D. CENTER: Stop being unfaithful to Yahweh and wives (2:10-16)
- C’ Future Levite will come as Yahweh’s messenger (2:17-3:6)
- B’ People have robbed Yahweh of tithes and offerings (3:7-12)
- A’ Yahweh is Just – He will reward the righteous and judge the wicked (3:13-4:3)
- Conclusion: Day of Yahweh (4:4-6)

On your outline you can see that Malachi is arranged chiastically. The first and last sections make the point that Yahweh rewards faithfulness and punishes wickedness. Section B and B’ make the point that the priests and people have robbed God. Section C and C’ highlight the importance of the religious life of the people before the Lord. The central section calls the people to repentance if they are to receive forgiveness and blessing from the Lord. The first four sections condemn Israel for unfaithfulness, while the last three sections offer words of hope and promise. The phrase, “Yahweh of Hosts,” is used 24 times in Malachi to remind the people that God has the ability to care for and protect His people. The

Day of Yahweh theme is also important to Malachi, announcing that the Lord will indeed come to His people to bless the righteous/faithful and destroy the wicked.

A. Yahweh is Just – He loves Israel (1:1-5)

Turn now to Malachi 1:1-5. Clearly we see that the people of Israel had begun to doubt that Yahweh loves them. “I have loved you,” says the Lord. “Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’ Whenever people begin to doubt the love of God they begin to live unfaithfully. The Lord begins by assuring them of His love so that they know that the accusations He makes throughout the rest of Malachi is designed to bring them back into relationship with Him, not to condemn them.

Yahweh says that His love for them is illustrated by contrasting the history of Edom and Israel. Esau and Jacob were the twin brothers of the covenant. Esau despised Yahweh’s covenant, while Jacob was faithful to the covenant. God chose Jacob over Esau, loving Jacob (later called Israel) and hating Esau. Which of the Minor Prophets dealt with Edom? [Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise] It is important to remember that God had declared in Obadiah that Edom would be judged because of their long history of sinning against Israel. Edom had already been partially judged during this period of history, and Malachi 1:4 tells us that although they thought they would rise again from judgment (as Israel had), God tells His people that they will see that Edom will be judged forever. This was not wholly fulfilled until after Jesus and the Apostles do final battle with the Edomite Herods in the gospels and the book of Acts. Thus, Yahweh showed Israel that He lovingly chose Israel so that they will see that “The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel” (1:5). This section corresponds to A’ on the outline, which says that the Lord will bless the righteous and judge the wicked.

B. Priests and people have cheated Yahweh in offerings (1:6-14)

In the next section we see that the priests have cheated Yahweh by offering polluted food on His altar (1:7) by offering defective animals (1:8, 13-14, cf. Deut. 15:21; Lev. 22:20-24). The priests were palace servants that served at the table of Yahweh. They would receive from the people offerings that represented the people themselves, so that the people would be symbolically offered as food for God. The unacceptable offerings were symbolic of the fact that the people themselves were unacceptable to God by the way they lived their lives. The priests, as the palace servants, should have rejected the unacceptable offerings presented by the people. By offering the defective sacrifices, the priests despised God’s name. Yahweh challenged the people to see if the governor would accept such defective and unacceptable gifts (1:8), implying that even human rulers would expect more than they were offering to Yahweh. In vv. 9-14 Yahweh goes on to say that it would be better if the doors of the temple were shut so that such unacceptable offerings

could not be made. A curse is on the man that offers a defective sacrifice (1:14) because there can be no peace between God and one who dishonors God. The way the people come to God in worship will be seen by the nations. The great King, whose name is to be feared among the nations (1:11, 14), should not be dishonored by His own people. By despising God's name in worship, the priests diminished the name of God among the nations. This section corresponds to B' where the people are accused of robbing God by not paying tithes.

C. Past Levi served in righteousness (2:1-9)

The theme of the sins of the priests and Levites continues into the third section. If they do not hear the words of this prophecy, and give glory to God's name, Yahweh of Hosts would curse them (2:1-2), bringing shame on them and their descendents (2:3). Vv. 4-7 provides an explanation for why God would curse the priests: Yahweh had made a special covenant with Levi (Ex. 32:25-29; Num. 25; Deut. 33:8-11) to be both teachers of the people and preparers of the holy food for God in worship. Vv. 7-9 goes on to explain that the people do not respect the Priests and Levites because they had become corrupt. The Levites are described as "the messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (v. 7). They should be the ones to speak to the people the Word of Yahweh, helping them to live for the Lord. But they had departed from the Lord, and cause many of the people to stumble by their bad example. This section corresponds to C' where we see that Yahweh will purify the Levites in the future with the coming of the great Messenger(s), John the Baptist and Jesus in the Day of the Lord.

D. CENTER: Stop being unfaithful to Yahweh and wives (2:10-16)

The unfaithfulness of the Levites caused the people to become unfaithful as well. Unfaithfulness in the sanctuary leads to unfaithfulness in the culture. This became evident among the people as they began to divorce their wives so that they could marry pagan women. This problem was dealt with previously by both Ezra (Ezra 9) and Nehemiah (Neh. 13) as a breaking of the covenant they made with the Lord (Neh. 9-10). Malachi 2:10 says that God is their Father, and that He is the "Mighty One" that created them. But they dealt treacherously with Him by marrying the daughters of a foreign "mighty one" (2:11). By divorcing their wives and intermarrying with foreign women, they were demonstrating their unfaithfulness to Yahweh. They had broken covenant with God – which resulted in breaking covenant with the wife of their youth. The result of such covenant breaking would be not only broken homes, but also the brokenness of the whole society of God's people. God brings a man and woman together in the covenant of marriage so that they can raise godly children (2:15).

The point of this central section is to demonstrate that not only have the priests/people been robbing God of acceptable sacrifices (as well as tithes and offerings) and divorcing their wives unbiblically, they have been unfaithful as a covenant people. He is calling them to repentance not only for dealing treacherously with their wives by divorcing them, but because they have forsaken their covenant God.

We live in a society in which most marriages end in divorce. This is an indicator that our culture has broken covenant with the Lord. The call of God here is for us to repent as well of our failure to remember that God loves us, to worship Him faithfully and biblically, and to remain faithful to Him in our homes. As we keep covenant with the Lord in worship and in our homes, He will bless us.

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Malachi – Prepare for the final Student Evaluation for the book of the Twelve. Of particular importance will be the memorization of the title lines for each of the books.

Lesson Thirty-Four: Malachi – Condemnation of Unfaithful Israel

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

Malachi: Be Faithful – The Day is Coming!

Malachi: Be Faithful – The Day is coming!

A. Yahweh is Just – He loves Israel (1:1-5)

B. Priests and people have cheated Yahweh in offerings (1:6-14)

C. Past Levi served in righteousness (2:1-9)

D. CENTER: Stop being unfaithful to Yahweh and wives (2:10-16)

C’ Future Levite will come as Yahweh’s messenger (2:17-3:6)

B’ People have robbed Yahweh of tithes and offerings (3:7-12)

A’ Yahweh is Just – He will reward the righteous and judge the wicked (3:13-4:3)

Conclusion: Day of Yahweh (4:4-6)

Corruption of the Priests and Levites (Mal. 1:6-2:9 – Neh. 13:1-9); failure to pay tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:7-12 – Neh. 13:10-13); and intermarriage with pagan wives (Mal. 2:10-16 – Neh. 13:23-28). Malachi = “My messenger”

A. Yahweh is Just – He loves Israel (1:1-5)

Obadiah

B. Priests and people have cheated Yahweh in offerings (1:6-14)

Deut. 15:21; Lev. 22:20-24

C. Past Levi served in righteousness (2:1-9)

Ex. 32:25-29; Num. 25; Deut. 33:8-11

D. CENTER: Stop being unfaithful to Yahweh and wives (2:10-16)

Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9-10, 13

Homework assignment: Read the whole book of Malachi – Prepare for the final Student Evaluation for the book of the Twelve. Of particular importance will be the memorization of the title lines for each of the books.

Lesson Thirty-Five: Malachi – The Day of Yahweh’s Coming

❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism**

❖ **Review**

Crisis is coming. Focus on the sins of both Israel and Judah.

Hosea: Come Home, Unfaithful Israel

Joel: The Day of the Lord for Judah

Amos: Yahweh roars against Israel

Obadiah: Edom’s Fall and Judah’s Rise

Jonah: Yahweh – Savior of the Nations

Micah: Judgment and Restoration for Judah

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Focus on Judah

Nahum: Judgment On Fallen Assyria

Habakkuk: The Justice of God Against Babylon and Judah

Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is Near

Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile. (Ezra-Nehemiah)

Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His people

Malachi: Be Faithful – The Day is coming!

A. Yahweh is Just – He loves Israel (1:1-5)

B. Priests and people have cheated Yahweh in offerings (1:6-14)

C. Past Levi served in righteousness (2:1-9)

D. CENTER: Stop being unfaithful to Yahweh and wives (2:10-16)

C’ Future Levite will come as Yahweh’s messenger (2:17-3:6)

B’ People have robbed Yahweh of tithes and offerings (3:7-12)

A’ Yahweh is Just – He will reward the righteous and judge the wicked (3:13-4:3)

Conclusion: Day of Yahweh (4:4-6)

In order for the people of God to be fully restored after the exile, in addition to the rebuilding of the temple, the city of Jerusalem needed to be restored. Nehemiah returned from Persia in 444 BC to rebuild the walls of the city, and to govern the people according to the law of God. This was 13 years after the reforms of Ezra (Ezra 7-10). Nehemiah returned to Persia for 7 years (432 BC through 425 BC), and returned to deal with the sins of Israel described in the book of Malachi. These included: Corruption of the Priests and Levites (Mal. 1:6-2:9 – Neh. 13:1-9); failure to pay tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:7-12 – Neh. 13:10-13); and intermarriage with pagan wives (Mal. 2:10-16 – Neh. 13:23-28). It is likely that Malachi prophesied while Nehemiah was absent, almost 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah.

We know nothing about Malachi the prophet, except that his name means, “My Messenger.” This name is important because God makes “My messenger” an important theme in the book (1:1; 2:7; 3:1). Apparently, after the initial enthusiasm

that characterized the people during the time of Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra had died out, they became discouraged because Yahweh the King had not returned, and the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah had not yet been fulfilled. The time of prosperity had not come. They continued to have problems with the nations around them and suffered because of drought and bad crops. Many people began to wonder if Yahweh really loved Israel. They had the attitude that it may not be worth serving God faithfully because the wicked prospered and it did not seem like Yahweh cared about them.

Malachi (“the messenger”) uses a question and answer format to communicate Yahweh’s message to His people. Jesus used a similar method in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-6, “You have heard it said....But I say to you...”). It is structured chiasmically so that we are able to clearly see a progression of thought, from condemnation to hope. It is important to notice that Israel is not condemned for idolatry, as they were by the other prophets before the exile. Theirs was the sin of hypocrisy: Israel was going through the religious motions of worship and religion, but in their hearts they are despising Yahweh and His Word (as you recall from last week by denying that God loved them, corruption among the priests and Levites, and unfaithfulness to Yahweh and their wives). This is important because hypocrisy is the primary sin that Jesus addressed repeatedly in the Gospels (e.g. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites,” cf. Matt. 23). Like the religious people of Jesus’ day, the people that Malachi wrote to had the appearance of propriety and religiosity, but their hearts were far from Yahweh. In this way, they committed a form of spiritual adultery. They had begun to become unfaithful to the Lord, which took the form of improper worship and putting away faithful daughters of Yahweh and married the daughters of foreign gods. As we see in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah and here in Malachi, it was the Levites (the spiritual leaders) that were leading the people into these sins. The central section is a call to the people to return to being faithful to the Lord, symbolized by putting an end to the horrific sin of inter-marriage. If they failed to repent, the godly seed would not be produced and the people of God would fall away into the old patterns of idolatry and judgment. Historically, over the next 400 years, the people were not faithful to the message of Malachi. It was not until the coming of the Day of the Lord Jesus that these sins were dealt with in a meaningful and lasting way.

C’ Future Levite will come as Yahweh’s messenger (2:17-3:6)

Following the call to repentance for their sins of unfaithfulness, Yahweh accused the people of wearying the Lord with their words (2:17). They called into question the justice and goodness of Yahweh, thinking that the Lord delighted in evil. Malachi (“the messenger”) goes on to answer this charge by saying that instead of delighting in evil, He will do something about it. 3:1-6 says that Yahweh will send

His “messenger to prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight (sarcasm). Behold, He is coming...” They claim to be looking forward to the Day of the Lord when He will set things right. But it will be a Day of Judgment as well as salvation. Yahweh will purify not only the Levites, but also the people (3:3-5).

Who is the messenger that is spoken of in 3:1? [It is Malachi = “Messenger”, but also John the Baptist and Jesus Himself.] Jesus specifically refers to this verse and says that it is fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10; Mk. 1:2-3; Lk. 7:26-27; cf. Jn. 1:23; Is. 40:3). Four hundred years after Malachi wrote this prophecy, the last prophetic words before the coming of the Messenger of the covenant, John the Baptist began his ministry by the Jordan river. He called upon Israel to repent and prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah (Matt. 3; Mk. 1; Lk. 3; Jn. 1). John was a Levitical priest who had been purified by the Lord, in fulfillment of 3:3.

B’ People have robbed Yahweh of tithes and offerings (3:7-12)

Malachi goes on in 3:7-12 to repeat the accusations found in section B of the outline, that Yahweh had been robbed. In 1:6-14 it was the priests who had robbed God by offering defective sacrifices. Now the focus is on the people who had robbed Him by not paying their tithes (Lev. 27:30f; Num. 18:21-32; Duet. 12:6-7) and required offerings (Deut. 12:6, 11, 17). This was the problem that Nehemiah dealt with as well (Neh. 10:36-39; 12:44; 13:5). The result of this robbery is that they would be cursed. But if they repented and brought the tithes and offerings to the storehouse, they would be blessed with abundance. The result of God’s blessing would be that the nations will call them blessed, which corresponds in second section (1:6-14, cf. v. 11) where the name of the Lord will be considered great among the Gentiles. Obeying the Lord results in blessing that the nations see.

A’ Yahweh is Just – He will reward the righteous and judge the wicked (3:13-4:3)

In the last section the people say that it is vain to serve the Lord, again questioning the goodness and justice of God (3:13-15). He responds (3:16-4:3) by saying that when the Day of Yahweh comes, He will reward the righteous and judge the wicked. The Day of Yahweh is a time of light and evaluation. He perfectly sees and remembers all the works of men. The book of memorial/remembrance written before Him will be the book of justice desired by the faithful. On the coming Day of the Lord, His salvation and judgment will be perfectly administered. This section corresponds to the first section of the book were God said that He is the one who loves His people and chose them as His special covenant people.

Conclusion: Day of Yahweh (4:4-6)

The book concludes with a promise that Yahweh will set all things right. Malachi began with the Law of Moses by reminding Israel that He loved them and would judge them for their failure to obey His law. At the end of the book Yahweh not only reminded Israel to obey the Law of Moses, but also gave them the promise that He would send the messenger (Elijah-John the Baptist) before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of Yahweh. The result would be the restoration of all things (exemplified in family relations). If the Lord did not do so, the earth would be stuck with the curse of utter destruction. Since the Lord had so often promised future blessing – not utter destruction – they could be assured that Yahweh would fulfill all His Word to them.

There was a prophetic silence for 400 years after this prophecy. But the fulfillment of Malachi was fully manifested in the coming of Jesus the Messiah, who was the true Messenger of the covenant. The great and dreadful day of Yahweh came, not only while He walked the earth, but also when He came in judgment on Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. These judgments are explained in more detail in the book of Revelation.

Lesson Thirty-Five: Malachi – The Day of Yahweh’s Coming

Malachi: Be Faithful – The Day is coming!

- A. Yahweh is Just – He loves Israel (1:1-5)
 - B. Priests and people have cheated Yahweh in offerings (1:6-14)
 - C. Past Levi served in righteousness (2:1-9)
 - D. CENTER: Stop being unfaithful to Yahweh and wives (2:10-16)
 - C’ Future Levite will come as Yahweh’s messenger (2:17-3:6)
 - B’ People have robbed Yahweh of tithes and offerings (3:7-12)
- A’ Yahweh is Just – He will reward the righteous and judge the wicked (3:13-4:3)
 - Conclusion: Day of Yahweh (4:4-6)

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C’ Future Levite will come as Yahweh’s messenger (2:17-3:6)

Matt. 11:10; Mk. 1:2-3; Lk. 7:26-27; cf. Jn. 1:23; Is. 40:3

B’ People have robbed Yahweh of tithes and offerings (3:7-12)

Tithes (Lev. 27:30f; Num. 18:21-32; Duet. 12:6-7) and required offerings (Deut. 12:6, 11, 17); cf. Neh. 10:36-39; 12:44; 13:5

A’ Yahweh is Just – He will reward the righteous and judge the wicked (3:13-4:3)

Conclusion: Day of Yahweh (4:4-6)

The Book of the Twelve Final Student Evaluation

Student Name _____ Date _____

The two major sins of Israel and Judah during the kingdom period:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

The “Former Days”: From _____ to the period of the _____

The “Later Days”: From the _____ to the coming of _____

The First Six Books of the Twelve focus on the sins of _____ and _____

Match the letter to the right on the correct line that corresponds to it.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 1) Northern Kingdom _____ | A. Nineveh |
| 2) Edom _____ | B. Idumaeans |
| 3) Capital City of Judah _____ | C. Judah |
| 4) Southern Kingdom _____ | D. Samaria |
| 5) Capital City of Assyria _____ | E. Israel |
| 6) Capital City of Israel _____ | F. Jerusalem |

A Crisis is coming

- 1) **Hosea: Come Home,** _____
- 2) **Joel: The _____ of the Lord for _____**
- 3) **Amos: Yahweh roars against _____**
- 4) **Obadiah: _____’s Fall and _____’s Rise**
- 5) **Jonah: Yahweh – _____ of the _____**
- 6) **Micah: Judgment and Restoration for _____**

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem

7) Nahum: _____ on fallen _____

8) Habakkuk: The _____ God against _____ and _____

9) Zephaniah: The _____ of the _____ is near

Restoration Covenant – Returnees from exile

10) Haggai: _____ the _____

11) Zechariah: _____ the _____ to return to _____

12) Malachi: Be _____! The _____ is coming

What two historical books are important for understanding Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi? _____ - _____

Put the following in the order they happened in history:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| A) The fall of Assyria | E) the Exodus |
| B) the four hundred silent years | F) the rebuilding of the temple |
| C) the Kingdom period | G) the Return of Yahweh (Messiah) to Jerusalem |
| D) the exile into Babylon | |

Which of the Minor Prophets helps us to understand the book of Revelation?

After the exile, the sins of Israel were primarily:

- A) Idolatry and social injustices

B) Intermarriage, polluted worship and failure to tithe and keep Sabbath

The Book of the Twelve Final Student Evaluation Answer Key

The two major sins of Israel and Judah during the kingdom period:

- 1) **Idolatry**
- 2) **Social Injustices**

The “Former Days”: From **Exodus/Sinai** through the period of the **Kings**

The “Later Days”: From the **Exile** to the coming of **Christ**

The First Six Books of the Twelve focus on the sins of **Israel** and **Judah**

Match the letter to the right on the correct line that corresponds to it.

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1) Northern Kingdom (E) <u>Israel</u> | A. Nineveh |
| 2) Edom (B) <u>Idumaeans</u> | B. Idumaeans |
| 3) Capital City of Judah (F) <u>Jerusalem</u> | C. Judah |
| 4) Southern Kingdom (C) <u>Judah</u> | D. Samaria |
| 5) Capital City of Assyria (A) <u>Nineveh</u> | E. Israel |
| 6) Capital City of Israel (D) <u>Samaria</u> | F. Jerusalem |

A Crisis is coming

- 1) Hosea: Come Home, **Unfaithful Israel**
- 2) Joel: The **Day** of the Lord for **Judah**
- 3) Amos: Yahweh roars against **Israel**
- 4) Obadiah: **Edom**’s Fall and **Judah**’s Rise
- 5) Jonah: Yahweh – **Savior** of the **Nations**
- 6) Micah: Judgment and Restoration for **Judah**

Before the Destruction of Jerusalem

- 7) Nahum: Judgment on fallen Assyria
- 8) Habakkuk: The Justice God against Judah and Babylon
- 9) Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is near

Restoration Covenant – Return from exile

- 10) Haggai: Rebuild the Temple
- 11) Zechariah: Yahweh the King to return to His People
- 12) Malachi: Be Faithful! The Day is coming

What two historical books are important for understanding Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi? **Ezra - Nehemiah**

Put the following in the order they happened in history:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| A) the fall of Assyria | E) the Exodus |
| B) the four hundred silent years | F) the rebuilding of the temple |
| C) the Kingdom period | G) the Return of Yahweh (Messiah) to Jerusalem |
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- E) the Exodus**
- C) the Kingdom period**
- A) the fall of Assyria**
- D) the exile into Babylon**
- F) the rebuilding of the temple**
- B) the four hundred silent years**
- G) the return of Yahweh Messiah to Jerusalem**

Which of the Minor Prophets helps us to understand the book of Revelation?
Zechariah

After the exile, the sins of Israel were primarily:

- A) Idolatry and social injustices
- B) Intermarriage, polluted worship and failure to tithe and keep the Sabbath**