

**ACT**  
JUSTLY

**WALK**  
HUMBLY

**LOVE**  
MERCY

Studying the Book of the Twelve

Material prepared by Seth Mauldin  
for use in studying the Holy Bible.

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## **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS**

The prophetic writings of the Old Testament scriptures are largely divided into two sections. The books of greater length, (*Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel*), are often referred to as the Major Prophets. The other less lengthy books are grouped together as the Minor Prophets or, perhaps more preferably, The Book of the Twelve.

The oracles contained in these twelve prophecies are delivered through a wide variety of messengers, and while the majority of the messages are meant for an Israelite audience, the recipients were actually quite diverse. Edom and Assyria are among other nations who are addressed directly by prophets, not to mention those nations who are mentioned in passing as being targets of coming judgment.

### **WHAT MAKES A PROPHET?**

Prophets were not called according to any specific level of ability or any one background. God made use of men who were a part of nobility and those who held positions as religious leaders. He called those who could be considered to have held positions of prestige as well as those who were simple farmers. The most important requirement was a willingness to obey and a determination to deliver the message with a “*thus says the LORD.*” These were men who knew that they were not out to gain fortune or glory, but to bring the message of God to the people. It was not a life of glamour or the mysticism envisioned by writers of fiction.

## THEIR TIME OF WRITING

The timeframe for these books covers a period of multiple centuries. Attempts to date some of these men can be difficult, and as such all dates provided are approximate at best. Each chapter will contain further information on the timeframe for each prophet, but the chart below represents the general dating system that will be used for this study. \*

9 <sup>th</sup> Century	8 <sup>th</sup> Century	7 <sup>th</sup> Century	6 <sup>th</sup> /Exile	5 <sup>th</sup> /Post Exile
Obadiah	Amos	Zephaniah	<i>Ezekiel</i>	Haggai
Joel	Hosea	Nahum	<i>Daniel</i>	Zechariah
	Micah	Habakkuk		Malachi
	Jonah	<i>Jeremiah</i>		
	<i>Isaiah</i>			

\* *Major prophets are included in bold font.*

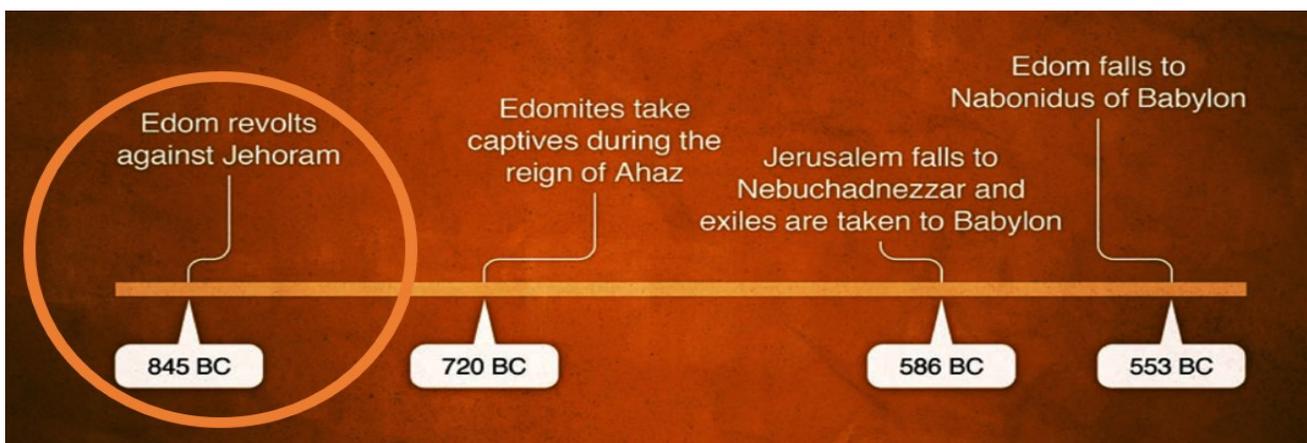
# OBADIAH

## THE MAN:

Sometimes we are given nothing more about an author other than their name. While some have speculated about when and where he may have lived, the text offers us up no such clues. We will have to settle for his name alone.

## THE DATE:

There are generally two dates that are offered up for Obadiah's prophecy. The earlier option is that of **845 BC**. Following the death of Jehoshaphat, Edom rebelled against Judah in full force and took advantage of others who came in as part of God's punishment (II Kings 8:20-22). The later option is **586 BC** or somewhere thereabouts during the Babylonian invasion. The language of the text does not seem to support the full-scale destruction that was seen when Jerusalem finally fell. Largely for that reason, this study will favor **845 BC**.



# OBADIAH

## THE BACKGROUND:

The history of Jacob and Esau began as one of turmoil (Genesis 25:23). The lives of these men were defined by conflict until late in life when they were able to make peace. Sadly, this unification did not extend to their descendants. After Israel grew into the great nation promised to Abraham, Edom was among the peoples



who sought to thwart them from the start. They denied them passage after their exodus (Numbers 20) and were in a state of almost constant warfare (II Samuel 8:13-14, II Kings 8,14, II Chronicles 20:1-2, and II Chronicles 38:17).

After they broke free from serving Judah, they imagined that they were once again a great nation—a real contender among world powers. In reality they were mostly opportunists who joined forces or rode the wake of other nations who came in to invade. They had become increasingly cruel toward their brethren and had come to believe that they were out of God's reach. Obadiah's message was intended to bring them back down to earth.

# OBADIAH

## OBADIAH SUMMARIZED:

### *Verses 1-4*

The nation of Edom is called to prepare themselves for judgment. Their fortified mountain dwellings would not help them escape the punishment of the LORD. Their pride and misplaced trust would fail them in the end.

### *Verses 5-9*

The destruction sent by the LORD would leave nothing behind. Unlike thieves and farmers who may leave something behind, God will remove everything until they were nothing more than a memory.

### *Verses 10-14*

Edom was being judged chiefly because of their wickedness toward Jacob (Judah and Israel). They had rejoiced in the opportunity to cause misfortune to Judah when they were at their most vulnerable. Because of this, they would be shown no mercy.

### *Verses 15-21*

Edom will reap exactly what they've sown. On the Day of the LORD they, along with other such nations, will find out how powerful they really are. In contrast to the fading star of Edom, Mt. Zion is held up to be a victorious place of peace and prosperity.

# OBADIAH

## CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:

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## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Obadiah today?

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2. What portions of Obadiah's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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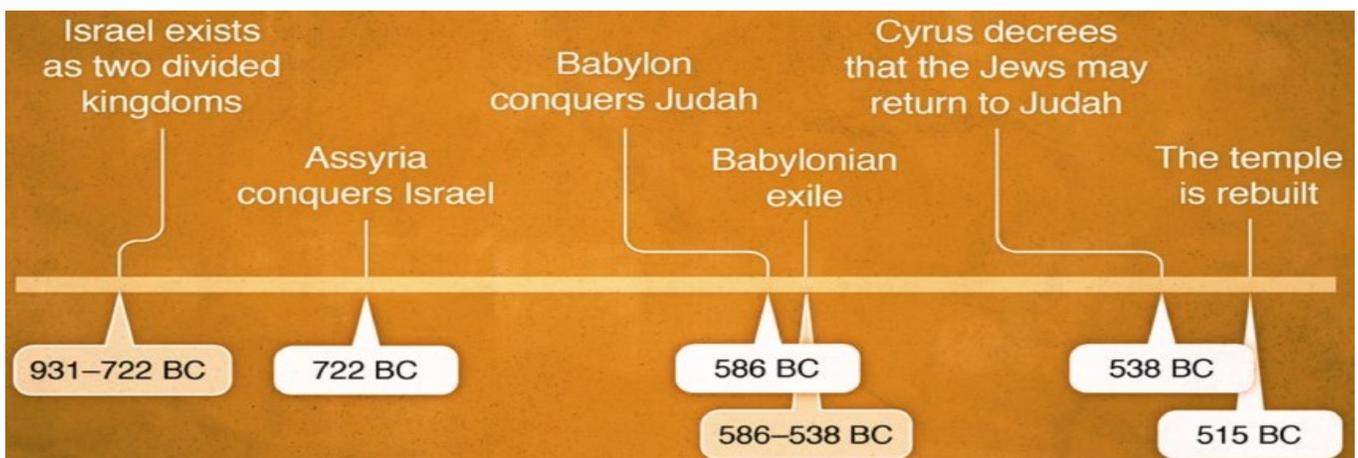
# JOEL

## THE MAN:

Like his contemporary Obadiah, we have little biblical information on this prophet. We are given the name of his father in 1:1, Pethuel, and his own name means YHWH is God. Based on some of the information conveyed in the text, some have speculated that he possibly held the position of priest, but this is mostly guesswork.

## THE DATE:

Joel is another of the prophets that is difficult to date based on textual evidence alone. Like with Obadiah, there are arguments made for two ends of the spectrum: the early date of the 9th century, and those who contend for a post-exilic dating. While the land of Judah was certainly devastated in post-captivity days, the picture presented in Joel describes a land that had been devastated, but would face an even worse fate should they fail to repent. The Babylonian invasion then, still seems to be a future event. This study will accept the date offered by many students of **830 B.C.**

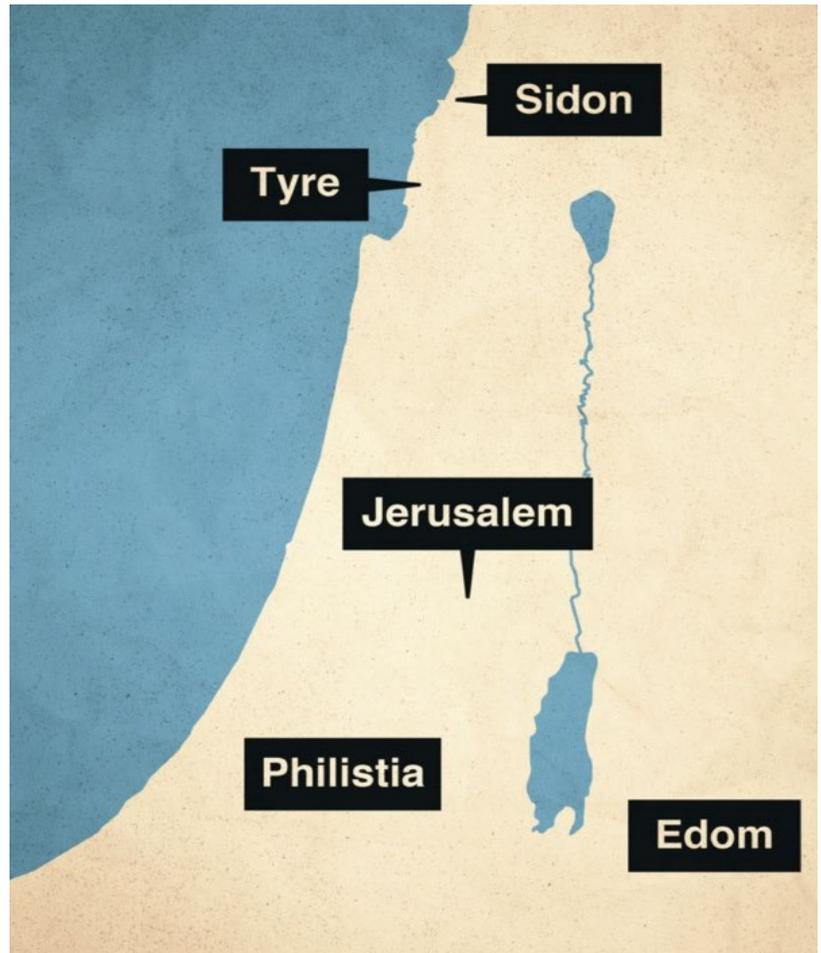


## THE BACKGROUND:

Joel delivers a message that has application for both Judah and Israel, but seems especially targeted at the southern kingdom (*see 2:1, 3:1*).

Joel speaks of a terrible natural disaster that had ruined the land. He calls on the people to national repentance in order to avoid future punishment.

Starting in Chapter 2:18, YHWH speaks directly with assurance of the blessings that will follow, culminating in the outpouring of His Spirit. In contrast to the bright future that was being promised to those who'd return, God would also vow to bring about judgment on the nations.



## JOEL SUMMARIZED:

### *Chapter 1:1-12*

Joel calls the people (starting with the elders) to consider the great devastation of the land because of the locusts. Had there ever been anything quite like it? The absolute ruin had cut off all rejoicing from every class of citizen. Surely an event of this magnitude could only be sent by YHWH as a call for repentance.

### *1:13-20*

Yes, this was a warning from God. The day of the LORD was coming (v 15) and only a true turning back to God would bring mercy. Until that time, they would continue to experience natural disaster.

### *Chapter 2:1-11*

Joel now pictures a second invasion, whether more locusts or an army of men is unclear. What is understandable is that this greater round of destruction carries with it a manifestation of YHWH and His irresistible power.

### *2:12-17*

But this day can be avoided. If the people come with a genuine repentance that is based in the heart and not an outward front, God would gladly receive them back. No one must refrain—young and old; commoner and priest; everyone must fast before YHWH.

## ***2:18-27***

If God's people would return with a whole heart, the blessings that He would pour out on them would far outweigh the punishment they had experienced. The bounty would soon cause them to forget the famine.

## ***2:28-32***

Now the LORD promises much more than a physical restoration or a defeat to any earthly enemy. When God's people are truly ready to return, it will be a time when God pours out His own Spirit on men (*See Acts 2*).

## ***Chapter 3:1-21***

God calls on the defiant armies of the nations to come and be judged before Him (v12). All of Israel's enemies will be defeated and God's people who have been scattered will be reclaimed. This judgment ultimately looks forward to the time of the Kingdom when God's victory would be declared, and all those who are truly His people will find safety in Mt. Zion.

## CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:

**Chapter 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Joel today?

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2. What portions of Joel's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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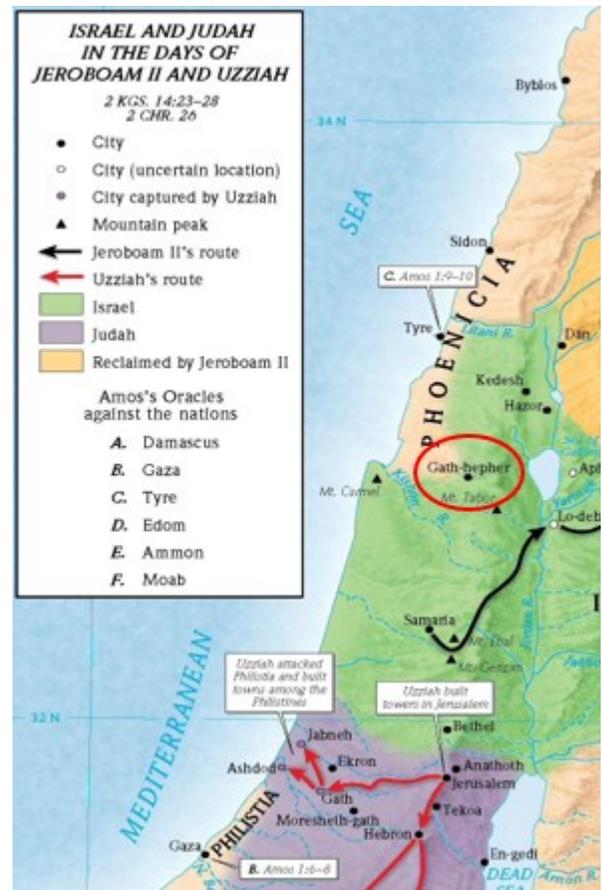
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# JONAH

## THE MAN:

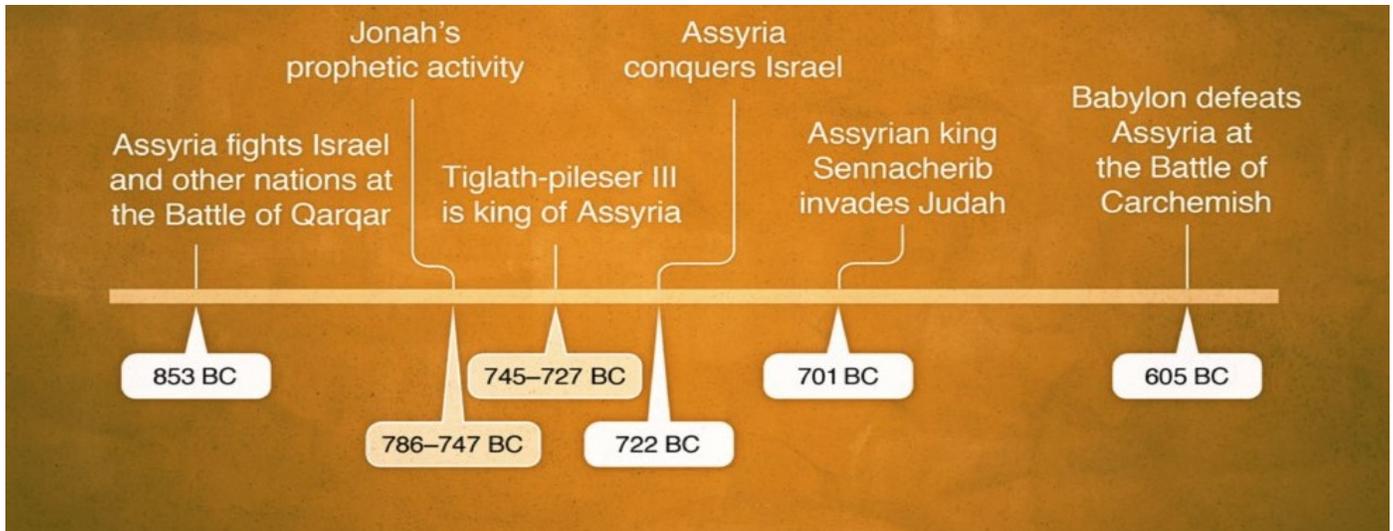
The book of Jonah deals with this prophet's most famous exploits, but his time as a prophet extends far beyond these four short chapters. Jonah (who's name means "dove") is identified as the son of Amittai from the city of Gath-hepher in northern Israel near the sea of Galilee. Nationally, Jonah would have most likely been seen as something of a heroic figure. He is identified as being the prophet who foretold about the restoration of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II (II Kings 14:23-25). The fact that he saw Israel be restored to such great lengths in his day no doubt had some influence on his refusal to bring the LORD's message to the wicked nation of Assyria who stood as the most serious threat to Israel's national security.



Holman Bible Atlas: Map 65; Page 135

## THE DATE:

Although there are those who try to place Jonah at some other point than the 8th century, it seems contradictory to try and use any other timeframe that what is established by the mention of Jonah in II Kings 14. If Jeroboam II began his rule in 786 B.C., then any date shortly thereafter seems to be a reasonable fit. Taking other world events into account, a date of c. 780 B.C. will be used.



## THE BACKGROUND:

For some time the most formidable opponent for Israel had been the nation of Syria. While that enemy had been a thorn in Israel's side during the reign of Ahab and some time after, they had taken a sharp decline. The Assyrians had come in from the East and waged a massive military campaign. In 875 B.C. Ashurnasirpal II began to drive into Syrian territory, an effort that was continued by his son Shalmaneser III. In 853 B.C., Shalmaneser won a great victory over a coalition of kings (including Ahab). However, this victory was followed by a lengthy period of Assyrian weakness. They were unable to continue their efforts, and in the ensuing years Israel and Judah were both able to regain much of their former territory. It is during this time that Jonah seems to have been sent to the capital city of Nineveh. Although this nation would be used to punish Israel in the near future, God was still concerned with showing mercy to all peoples, not just the Israelites. At a perfect time, God send His prophet with a needed message. How would the Assyrians respond?

## JONAH SUMMARIZED:

### *Chapter 1:1-6*

Jonah flees from God's call to take His message to the city of Nineveh, boarding a ship to Tarshish. God responds by send an enormous storm on the sea.

### *1: 7-17*

After deducing that Jonah had angered the LORD, the sailors reluctantly throw the prophet overboard. God prepared a great fish to save Jonah from drowning by carrying him in its belly for 3 days and nights.

### *Chapter 2:1-10*

While in the belly of the fish, Jonah offers up a prayer to the LORD. Jonah recounts his surrounds as well as his near death experience; twice testifying that these experiences drove him to look to God for undeserved mercy. The chapter ends with Jonah vowing obedience and the fish depositing the prophet on the dry land.

### *Chapter 3:1-4*

Taking around three days to complete his route, Jonah walks the entire city with a warning that they have 40 days to repent before God came in judgment.

## *3:5-10*

Responding to Jonah's message, the entire city from the king to the cattle took part in a fast, throwing themselves on the mercy of the LORD. After seeing their heartfelt repentance, God relents of the judgment He had planned.

## *Chapter 4:1-5*

Upset that God has spared the city, Jonah goes off to find a place to sulk in hopes that God might change His mind and send some punishment on the people.

## *4:6-11*

In order to teach Jonah some compassion, God sends and takes away a plant to provide Jonah with shade. Addressing Jonah in his state of self-pity, God cuts off any further discussion by putting Jonah in his place.

# JONAH

**CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:**

**Chapter 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 4:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# JONAH

## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Jonah today?

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2. What portions of Jonah's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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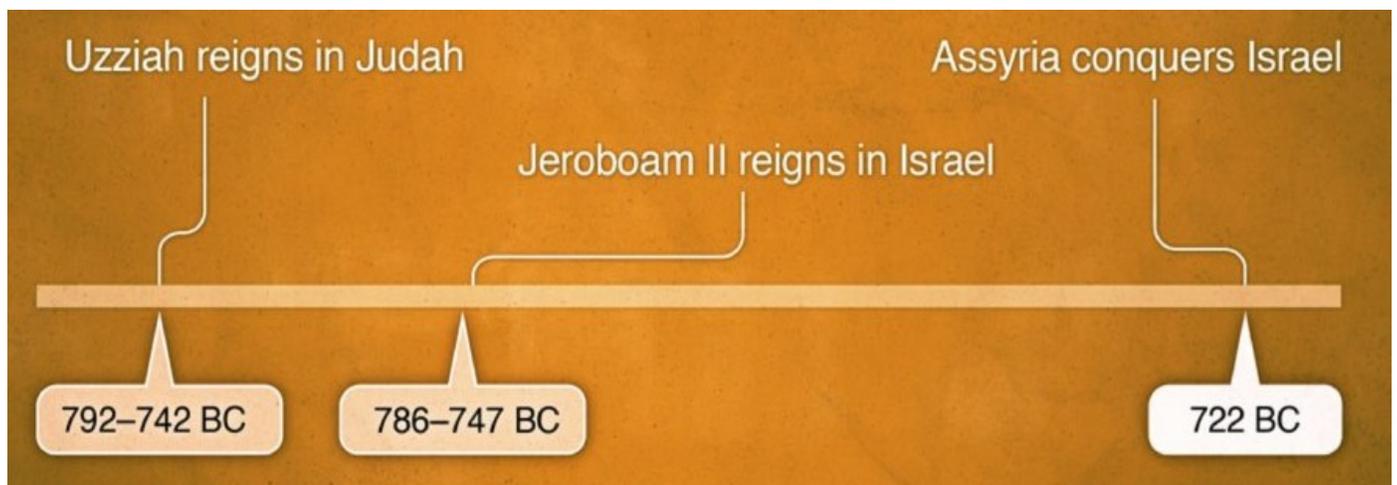
# AMOS

## THE MAN:

If it were not for the specific comparisons to Elijah, readers would be forgiven for assuming that John the immerser was really the second coming of Amos. Hailing from the rugged southern town of Tekoa, Amos was a rough hewn prophet who pulled no punches. His name means “burden-bearer” and he was well suited to the task of handing down the LORD’s message. Amos was called from the work of tending sheep and dressing sycamore trees to invade the northern tribes with a message of impending doom.

## THE DATE:

There is very little debate on the dating of Amos. The text places his ministry during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II. Each of these men began reigning in the area of 793-791 B.C. with reigns of 50 and around 40 years respectively. Amos seems to have prophesied near the end of Jeroboam the II’s reign with a date of around 755 B.C..



## THE BACKGROUND:

As with Jonah, Amos' prophecy takes place against the backdrop of prosperity and expansion in Israel. While Jonah was sent off to warn the future invaders, Amos was sent to Israel who had failed to recognize the source of their new found wealth and power. God had given them a respite from the world powers, but they had grown more wicked. The wealthy lived luxurious lives at the expense of others and religious corruption was the norm. Amos came armed with a message of doom.

## AMOS SUMMARIZED:

### *Chapter 1:1-2:3*

Before Amos begins his message for Israel the prophet begins with a word of judgment toward the nations bordering the land. Because of they had delighted in perverse cruelty toward Israel, they were called to stand before the LORD. Damascus (v3), Gaza (v6), Tyre (v9), Edom (v11), Ammon (v13), and Moab (2:1) are each called out in turn for what we'd call war crimes and crimes against humanity.

### *Chapter 2:4-16*

First addressing Judah and then turning to Israel, now Amos begins his prophecy in earnest. God charges Israel with having forgotten who had won their victories, and with corrupting the morals of the people (causing Nazirites to stumble and forbidding prophets to prophecy).

## ***Chapter 3:1-8***

Amos reminds Israel that their unique position as God's people brought with it a responsibility that they had failed to live up to. As such they would bear a greater punishment. Using a series of illustrations, Amos confirms that his message was indeed given to him from God and would surely come to pass.

## ***3:9-4:3***

Amos now turns his attention to the wealthy elites who had oppressed all beneath them. God calls on other nations (Egypt and Ashnod) to witness the wickedness of Samaria, thereby implicating Samaria as having exceeded the wickedness of her neighbors. All those culpable (including the women in 4:1-3) would be brought to justice.

## ***Chapter 4:4-13***

Amos recounts at least five occasions where God had attempted to chastise the people in order to bring them back around. On each occasion they showed their hearts to be hard as they refused to return to Him.

## ***Chapter 5:1-15***

God calls the people to genuine religious reform: They must reject the idolatry of Bethel and seek God instead. Unfortunately this would not come to pass because the people could not stand the voice of those who spoke truth and righteousness.

## *Chapter 5:16-27*

God calls on the people to cast aside their empty gestures. He was not impressed by their false wailing or their feasts and festivals. It was nothing but an offense to God; all their actions continued to carry the stench of idolatry. If they wanted the day of the LORD to be a day of rejoicing and not punishment then they must “let justice roll down like waters”.

## *Chapter 6:1-14*

There were many among the rich who thought themselves to be safe and secure. God calls on them to remember other cities greater and more powerful than they, and see what had become of them. Just as they had been destroyed, God would cast Israel off their luxury beds and see that there was no trace that remained.

## *Chapter 7:1- 9*

At first Amos is shown two visions: a terrible swarm of locusts and an awful devastating fire. Because of Amos’ intervention, God says that He will relent on sending them. But He would still pass through the land with a measuring line, demonstrating how crooked they’d become, and bring judgment on their places of idol worship.

## *7:10-17*

Amos accused of conspiracy by the false from Amaziah. Jeroboam II believes the lies and renounces the prophet. Amos responds by stating that he may not have the physical

bonafides which Amaziah had, but he had the LORD in his corner. Amaziah would die on foreign soil and see his wife turn into a harlot.

## ***Chapter 8:1-14***

Focusing once again on the rich, Amos is showing a basket of ripe fruit—Israel is ripe for judgment. They cared not for observing God's Law, only when the next opportunity would come to gain more wealth. Soon they would lose not only their wealth, but the most precious resource of the LORD. While they may have currently been rejecting God's messages, there would come a time when they'd search for it but could not find.

## ***Chapter 9:1-6***

In a final vision Amos sees the LORD standing by the altar pronouncing inescapable judgment. They cannot climb high enough or dig low enough to escape the God who dwells in the heavens.

## ***9:7-15***

The prophecy ends with a word of hope for the future. God would not bring about a complete end. Amos speaks of the day when the kingdom of God will be established, and both Jew and Gentile will seek the LORD and they will find Him.

## CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:

**Chapter 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 4:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:

**Chapter 5:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 6:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 7:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 8:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:

Chapter 9: \_\_\_\_\_

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## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Amos today?

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2. What portions of Amos's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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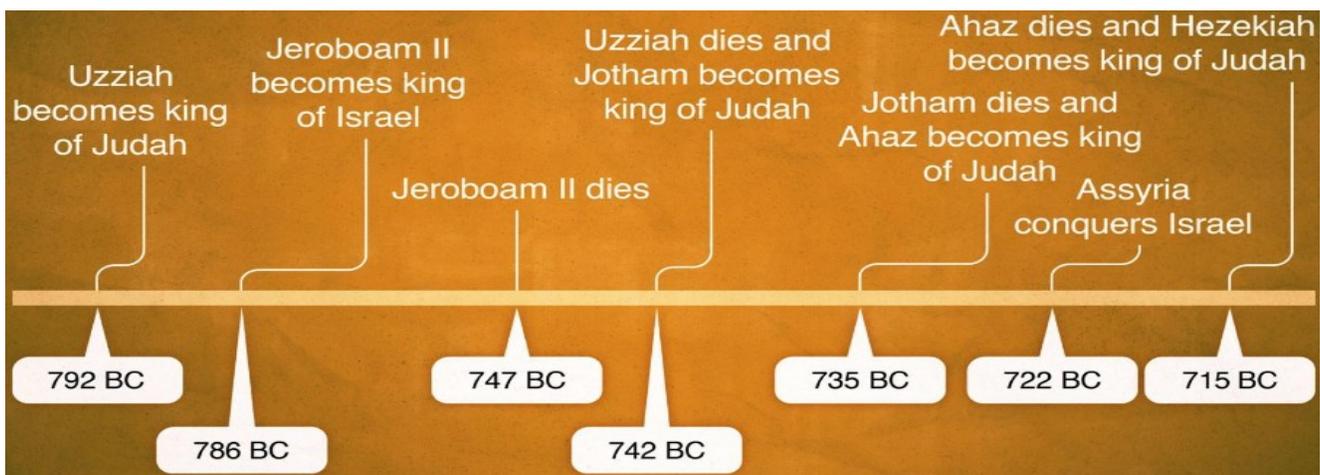
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# HOSEA

## THE MAN:

It was not uncommon for God to co-opt the lives of the men whom He called to prophecy. He enlisted them to participate or stage elaborate demonstrations, often at great personal cost, in order to thematically make a point to Israel. But while men like Jeremiah and Zechariah had intense experiences, it is hard to say that anyone surpassed Hosea. This prophet takes the principle of “*here am I; send me!*” to an entirely new level. Readers of this book are immediately thrown into this prophet’s life as he is called to enter into a doomed marriage where heartache is guaranteed.

Other details about Hosea seem mundane by comparison, and perhaps that is why there is such a lack of them in the text. His name means “salvation”, which is ironic as Israel is now facing certain judgment. In contrast to Amos he seems to be a native of the land, speaking with both compassion and insight about the local scene.



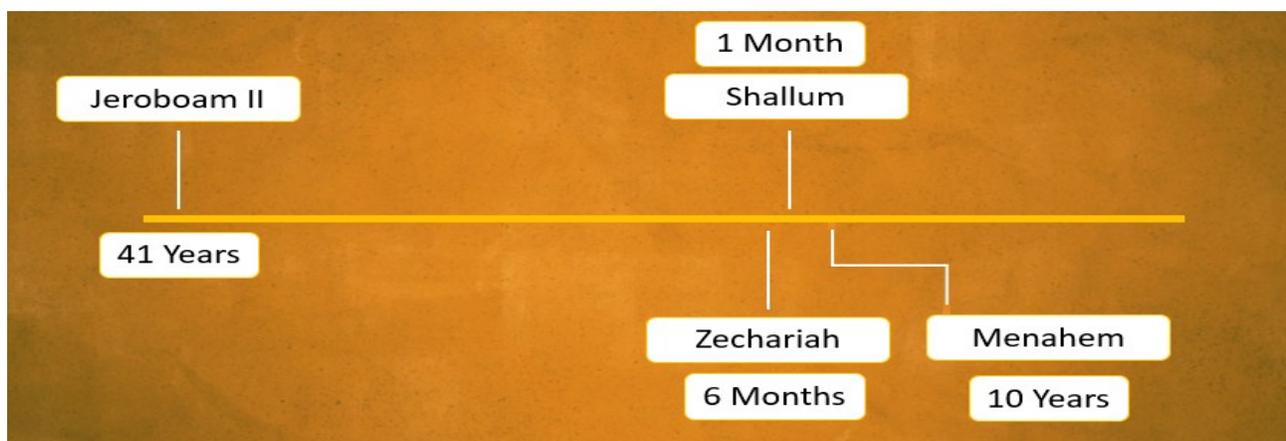
# HOSEA

## THE DATE:

Hosea's prophecy seems intended to compliment that of Amos and a date shortly after the book of Amos seems to work well. Hosea clearly establishes who reigned as king in both nations as he prophesied in 1:1, helping to narrow the window. Taking into account the sequence of events following Jeroboam II's reign, it makes sense to put Hosea toward the end of his reign, 750 B.C. or shortly thereafter.

## THE BACKGROUND:

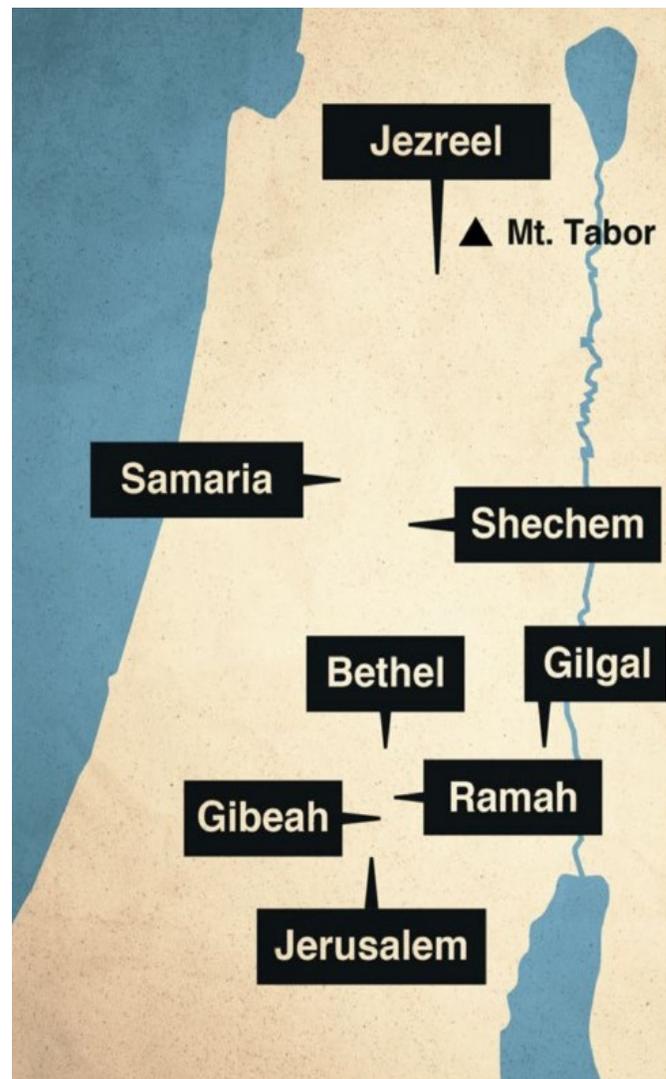
From an historical standpoint, Hosea living in a virtual countdown to Israel's captivity. While Jeroboam II enjoyed a period of peace, after his death the nation would be thrown into complete chaos. His son Zechariah was murdered by the usurper Shallum after a reign of only six months. His murderer fared no better, being killed himself by Menahem (*See II Kings 15:8ff*). Menahem's reign was stabilized in part by Assyrian intervention, as Israel had essentially become an Assyrian province at this point. The political scene would continue to spiral under successive kings until Shalmaneser of Assyria finally put Samaria under siege.



# HOSEA

The value in emphasizing this chaos comes in underscoring how tragic it was that the people refused to bring God back into their thinking. Their morals were nonexistent, their leaders were beyond corrupt, and society was falling to the ground around them. Yet, even in the most desperate of times they were unwilling to renew their covenant to God.

From a thematic standpoint, Hosea offers the reader another part of the picture that isn't emphasized by the prophet Amos. Amos delivered a prophecy that didn't mince words. Israel was about to receive punishment and they deserved all of it and more. Amos emphasized the justice of God and the righteousness of His wrath. Those points are not excluded from Hosea's message, but the focus is shifted to the incredible heartache that God experienced in having to pour out His judgment and wrath on His own people.



*Pertinent cities in the book of Hosea*

## HOSEA SUMMARIZED:

### *Chapter 1: 1-11*

Hosea is commanded to go and marry a woman who was a product of the land in which they lived. This woman would inevitably go down a path of unfaithfulness to her husband and eventually play the harlot. In this way Hosea would demonstrate how Israel had been unfaithful to the LORD. His first child is named Jezreel, which means to scatter. The second child was called Lo-ruhamah. This indicated that God would show “no mercy” to Israel in judgment. The final child was called Lo-ammi. The name “not my people” was both indicative of God’s rejection of Israel and child’s questionable parentage. After this bleak series of events, the chapter ends in vs 10-11 with a promise of restoration.

### *Chapter 2:1-13*

Using Hosea’s family as an example, the LORD contends with Israel as having been a shamefully unfaithful spouse. Israel had rejected God’s goodness in favor of running after other lovers. God promises to shame Israel in the sight of those she pursued, and make it to where she would be unable to further pursue spiritual adultery.

### *2:14-23*

God envisions a time where, after her punishment is over, He would court Israel once again. This time their marriage would be a lasting covenant. He would own them forever as His people, and they would always see Him as their God.

## *Chapter 3:1-5*

At this point, the immorality of Hosea's spouse has driven her to a life of slavery. Whether as a result of her harlotry or some other means, she has wound up a slave. Illustrating what God had promised in 2:14ff, Hosea pays her redemption price for her freedom. However, to illustrate the time that Israel would go without a ruler, Hosea and his restored wife would abstain from sexual intimacy.

## *Chapter 4:1-10*

Using the scene of a court room, God brings charges against His people. They are accused of violating their covenant and of having abandoned their morals. The root cause is said to be a lack of knowledge perpetuated by faithless priests who sought to profit from the people's increased sacrifices for their increased sins.

### *4:11-19*

Instead of pursuing the pure worship of the LORD, they had been enticed by the fleshliness of idol worship. Judah is warned to take notice and not follow Israel's example.

## *Chapter 5:1-7*

Just as the priests are condemned earlier, now the kings and princes are called out. Hosea continues to emphasize that the corruption went to the top.

## *Chapter 5:8-15*

Judgment is promised on Israel as well as Judah. Special attention is given to acts of dishonesty and hypocrisy. Both nations are said to have realized that they were sick in some way, but sought out the help and commandments of men instead of turning to the LORD. God says that He will distance Himself from them until their sickness reaches a point that they are willing to seek His help.

## *Chapter 6:1-11*

The chapter begins with high hopes. It seems like Israel is ready to turn back with their hearts, only to have their words revealed as empty. God reminds them that He desires genuine loyalty to God's covenant rather than heartless obedience. In answer to their empty call to repentance, God accuses them of carrying on the same faithlessness that began with Adam in the garden.

## *Chapter 7:1-7*

God describes Israel as being so spiritually sick that as soon as one spot is healed, another wound reveals itself. Yet they believe God does not see. Like a body consumed with fever, they are consumed with hatred and anger. They do not see they are destroying themselves from the inside out.

## ***Chapter 7:8-16***

Israel had become good for nothing. They were like a cake burnt on one side and raw on the other. Any resources they had were being taken by their predatory allies. Neither alliance could be counted on because they'd vacillated between the two competing nations of Egypt and Assyria. They were willing to call on anyone except God for help. Their only pretense of mourning came like a child throwing a tantrum when they've had their toys taken away.

## ***Chapter 8:1-14***

Once again Hosea emphasizes the false religion of Israel. They make claims to know God (v2) and have numerous places of worship (v11,13). None of these are from the mind of God (v4). Because they've relied on a man-made god and the strength of other nations, they will see their idols all destroyed and their allies betray them.

## ***Chapter 9:1-9***

God says that judgment must come (v7). Even though they might feign worship in an attempt to avoid destruction, it would not be enough to hide their spiritual harlotry. Their immorality had become too great to hide; it had gotten just as bad as the awful story of the Levite's concubine (*Judges 19*) and the near elimination of the tribe of Benjamin (v9).

## *Chapter 9:10-17*

God uses two pictures to describe how He'd seen the nation of Israel; early fruit in the wilderness, and a well planted tree. They were full of potential, but God brings two reminders of how they had rejected Him. First, they had joined in the sexual idolatry at Peor (*see Numbers 25*). Second, they had turned an historical site of renewal and repentance into just another place for idols (v15). For these and other reasons, God describes an absolutely devastating punishment in their future.

## *Chapter 10:1-8*

God had richly blessed the land of Israel. Even when the people had not kept their covenant, He had still allowed it to flourish (as in the days of Jeroboam II). Hosea highlights that instead of seeing these as blessings from God, they used their wealth to build more idols. All the idols they'd set up for themselves would soon be destroyed and taken away as the spoils of war.

## *Chapter 10:9-15*

Hosea continues to connect the wickedness of his day to a long tradition of Israel rejecting God. The prophet calls on the people to repent before it's too late, but this is a plea that is made with little expectation.

## *Chapter 11:1-12*

God builds on His sense of betrayal by using another illustration of family. Israel was also His beloved son, one whom He'd rescued and raised from youth. Even though God had rescued Israel from Egypt, historically they'd continually tried make alliances with the very people who'd enslaved them. God promises punishment from Assyria as the result. The chapter ends with a two fold picture: God cannot bear to watch this happen to Israel and thus promises a day of mercy and restoration. But this is mixed with a reminder of their bleak present state.

## *Chapter 12:1-14*

God calls on the people to remember their forefather Jacob. Although a man with faults, Jacob had learned to rely on God and was made strong because of it. The appeal is to return to the God of Jacob and find real strength. Instead, they had become like the people they'd displaced—dishonest and merciless. But God promises that through His punishment and providence, the people would be guided back to following the Law.

## *Chapter 13:1-16*

Hosea predicts the imminent fall of Israel and emphasizes the cause (idols) and the source (God). They had insisted on appointing their own king (v10) and now that king would be helpless to defend them against their terrible fate (v16).

# HOSEA

## *Chapter 14:1-9*

Hosea ends on a final appeal. Repentance must involve a full return to God and a full rejection of both idols and other nations. Then they can be healed and experience God's blessings again. The wise and understanding will follow the prophet's exhortation, but the foolish will ignore them to their own hurt.

### **CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:**

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Chapter 13: \_\_\_\_\_

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Chapter 14: \_\_\_\_\_

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## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Amos today?

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2. What portions of Amos's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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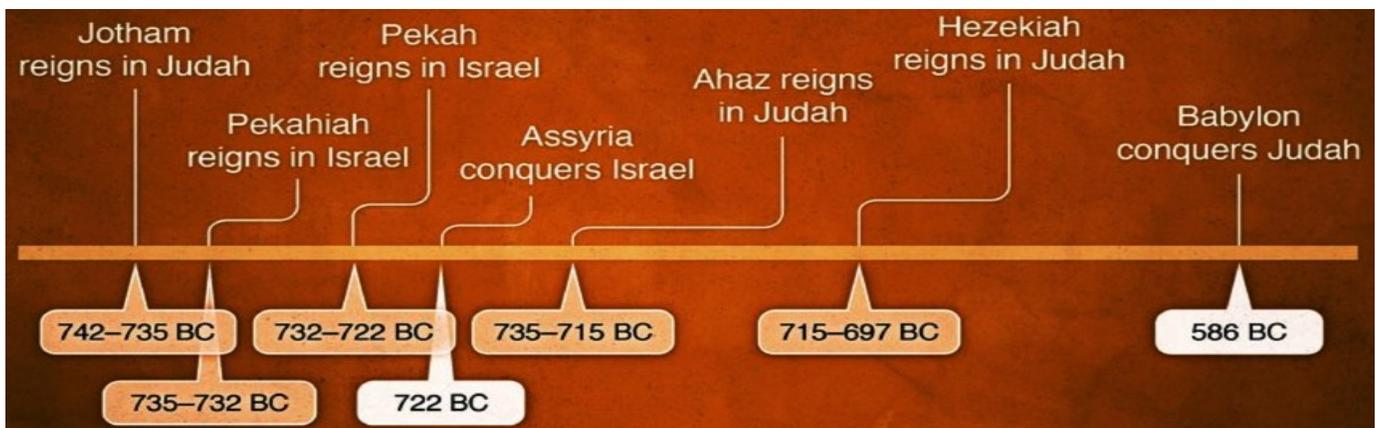
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## THE MAN:

The prophet Micah's name states a question that demands an answer: "Who is like Yahweh?" If his audience had taken more time to dwell on the answer (7:18) they would have found themselves in a much better position. Micah identifies himself as being from the city of Moresheth in 1:1 (Moresheth-gath in 1:14), a city which was on the border of Philistine territory. This is not notable because of any threat from that nation, but because he was far removed enough from the city center of Jerusalem to be something of an outsider. Like Amos he was free from any sense of obligation or connection to his audience. This provided something of a contrast to his near contemporary Isaiah who would also be active in the days of Hezekiah. Some have described Micah as a blend between Amos and Hosea; having the former's sense of zeal for justice, and the latter's devotion to compassion. His preaching hit the mark both with the king and with the people. He is mentioned in Jeremiah 26:17-19 as having helped to delay the judgment of Judah.

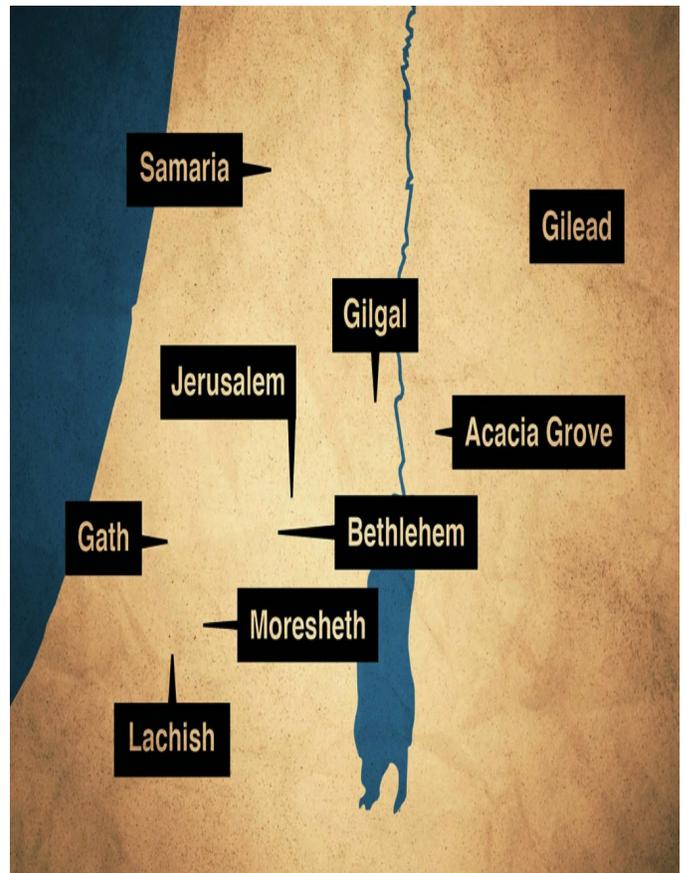
## THE DATE:

With a ministry that began in the days of Jotham and continued into Hezekiah's reign, most place Micah's prophecy to have taken place around 735 BC to 700 BC.



## THE BACKGROUND:

Micah technically speaks to both Israel and Judah, but there is only one prophecy spoken against Samaria. This because their time is over. In perhaps a short a time as seven years into Micah's ministry, Assyria would have taken over the kingdom of Israel. The majority of the book is addressed to Judah. Just as Israel had flourished under Jeroboam II, the southern tribes had experienced stability and growth under the reign of Uzziah. As often happens,



this time of physical highs was followed by spiritual lows. While Uzziah's son Jotham kept a relationship with God, his son Ahaz was an extraordinarily wicked king. He brought the worship of Baal and other idols into Judah. Even when God sought to discipline the king, Ahaz responded by turning to more idols and other nations for help. Israel and Syria grew increasingly worried about the threat of Assyria and sought to make an alliance that included Ahaz. When Ahaz refused, the two other nations invaded. Ahaz responded by seeking out help from Assyria. This foolish error would cripple Judah by making it a debtor to this foreign nation. Soon after there were two major invasion of Judah by the Assyrians: Sargon the II in 712/711 BC, and then Sennacherib in 702/701 BC. These both took place during the reign of Hezekiah. One can imagine the tense atmosphere as the people were

living under the threat of constant invasion. But because of Hezekiah's good leadership and the stabilizing influence of Micah, the nation was able to navigate these difficult times.

That doesn't mean that all was well with the people! While Hezekiah carried out many religious reforms, Micah doesn't seem to have been terribly impressed with how deep they went into the hearts of the people. Micah's message targets the gross excesses of the rich and calls out the greedy religious leaders of the day. The overall tenor of the people could not be judged by the quality of their ruler. Micah would liken them in 6:16 as having become like the house of Omri and Ahab.

Finally, Micah's prophecy is most famously remembered for having spoken of the birthplace of the Christ in chapter five and verse two.

## **MICAH SUMMARIZED:**

### ***Chapter 1:1-7***

God calls on the other nations to serve as witnesses to His accusations against both Israel and Judah. An extreme judgment is about to be levied, and the blame is laid at the feet of the leadership of both nations (the capital cities are both targeted as the source of each nation's collective wickedness).

### ***1:8-16***

God dramatizes the coming judgment through the attire of the prophet and by a series of word plays: Gath = Tell-town; Akko = Weeping-town; Lachish (horse-town) etc.

## *Chapter 2:1-13*

Building on the accusation from 1:5, Micah elaborates on the sins of those in power. Their greed is exposed in the way they unlawfully seized the property and possessions of others. As they had taunted others, God would soon taunt them until they no longer remained. In addition to these physical abuses, they had forbidden true prophets from speaking and instead favored spokesmen who lived by deceit. Verses 12-13 contrast the wicked rulers of the day with the Messiah that God would send to lead His people.

## *Chapter 3:1-12*

Some of the previous chapter's themes are continued here. What is shocking is the extent to which this text describes how thoroughly rotten the leadership had become. Whether it is the predatory elders of the people (1-4), prophets whose message could be bought for the right price (5-8), or the rest of the prophets and priests (9-12); those who should have led in righteousness were leading God's people to become a ruin.

## *Chapter 4:1-8*

In the midst of the despair God still brings hope. There may be judgment coming, but God looks forward to a time when the people would be restored. It would not be a physical return to power; here the prophet looks forward to the time when God's kingdom would be established and all nations would be brought to Him through the Church.

## ***4:9-13***

Before that bright future could be attained, the nation must be refined. This would take place in the land of Babylon. While the experience would be extremely humbling, it would not be their end. Other nations would interpret this as their being abandoned and forgotten. God assures them that they will return from their time in Babylon stronger than before.

## ***Chapter 5:1-9***

Micah now foretells the exact place where the Messiah would be born. God continues to reveal new parts of His plan, now describing this One as being of a divine origin, even though He would be a brother to Israel. He would shepherd God's people and bring them lasting peace. Assyria is used to stand in place of the enemies of God. Still speaking in symbolic terms, any enemies that arise after God's Chosen assumes power will be easily beaten back and defeated. In contrast to the barren picture of the present, Micah provided a picture of a time when God's people would be a refreshing presence throughout the earth.

## ***5:10-15***

In this new and better kingdom, there would be no room for those who trusted in the strength of physical weapons or sought power from false gods. Those who persisted in the old ways would be rooted out.

## *Chapter 6:1-8*

Similar to the picture of Samuel coming before Israel in 1 Samuel 12:3, God demands to know what charge Israel could bring against Him. In this court-like scene God recounts the good He had done; what complaint could they have? Verses 6-7 reveal that Israel has forgotten what it takes to please God. It is not the endless displays of opulence that they imagine, but the basic tasks revealed in vs 8: Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly.

## *6:9-16*

The people could bring no charge against the LORD, but He had plenty to lay at their feet. Wickedness is found in every house, manifesting itself in their oppressive and deceitful practices. They had become more like the house of Omri and Ahab than the house of David.

## *Chapter 7:1-6*

Micah speaks on behalf of Jerusalem, lamenting that there are no righteous to be found inside the city. Her inhabitants were ambidextrously evil. The best citizen to be found among them was still a pain-causing, neighbor-betraying, family-deriding, piece of rotten fruit.

## *7:7-17*

The people were reaching peak capacity for evil, but there would always be a remnant among God's people. Now the remnant speaks: although they acknowledged that there would be times of well-deserved and righteous punishment ahead, they knew that God would preserve and save His faithful ones. They call on God to maintain His rightful place as their leader and shepherd them through these times and restore them in the future.

## *7:18-20*

Micah's prophecy ends with a reminder/appeal to the great and merciful nature of God. His anger burned fierce, but would not abide forever. God would maintain His covenant with Abraham and show mercy to His people.

## CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:

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**Chapter 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 6:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 7:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Micah today?

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2. What portions of Micah's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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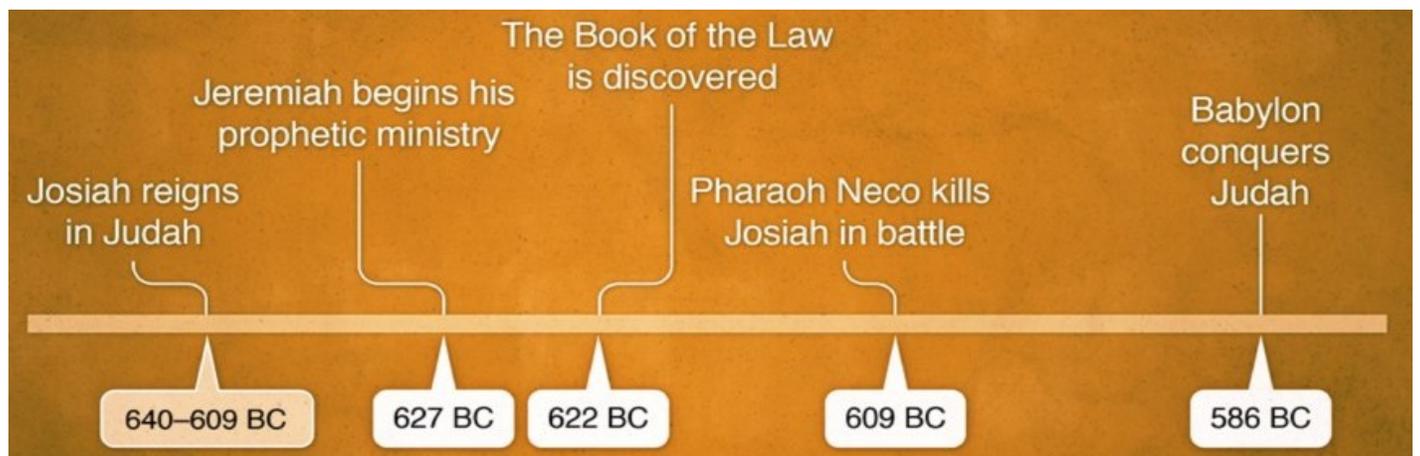
# ZEPHANIAH

## THE MAN:

The first verse of chapter one would seem to indicate that this prophet was part of the royal family. The text traces his family four generations away from Hezekiah. His name means, “YHWH hides”—which has led to some speculation about the circumstances of his birth. Given the message of the book however, it may be better to take this as a reference to God’s provision for and protection of the faithful remnant.

## THE DATE:

Looking again to the first verse, his ministry is placed during the reign of Josiah. There is little debate around when Josiah reigned, starting somewhere around 641/639 and ending in 609/608 BC. The difficulty comes in where to place Zephaniah during that period. Again, some speculation puts him in the same year that Jeremiah was called (626/627 BC). This seems to work as well as any date, especially since Zephaniah’s message focuses so intently on the growing Babylonian threat.



# ZEPHANIAH

## THE BACKGROUND:

The days of the prophet Micah were a time of transition. They moved from a wicked ruler to one who was able to bring some measure of reform. Zephaniah's message, although given many years later, would take place under similar circumstances. Hezekiah's reforms failed to take root in the hearts of the people and soon faded away after his death. His son Manasseh took power and filled the void with the worst sort of wickedness imaginable. It was during his day that the sentence of captivity was pronounced and made irreversible. He tried to use his final years to undo his wrongs, but by this time the people were too far gone to listen to their repentant king. When his son Ammon took the throne, he was quick to carry on the worst of the rebellion against God (II Chron. 33:1-15).

When Hezekiah's great grandson took the throne, there would be one last attempt at reform. Josiah proved to be an exemplary king, following God in all matters. However, even as we read about the positive changes he enacted, we must remember two hard truths: First, the sentence of captivity has already been handed down. At this point, the best they could hope for is some measure of leniency in how severe the punishment would be. Second, the hearts of the people had not changed since the day of Manasseh. As Zephaniah describes God's people, (as well as what his contemporary Jeremiah would say), it is apparent that the nation's repentance was nothing more than an outward show.

As to broader events, we will remember that Israel is long gone. Assyria is on its way out as a world power. They would be crushed in battle with the Babylonians in 609 BC, an event that would be affected by Josiah's own death battling Pharaoh Neco.

# ZEPHANIAH

## ZEPHANIAH SUMMARIZED:

### *Chapter 1:1-6:*

God declares that a cleansing will shortly take place against Judah. Their punishment will leave the land as though it was abandoned. Those who led in the rebellion against God would have their names forgotten. The people turned to Baal and Milcom, no longer calling on the LORD or seeking His will.

### *1:7-18:*

Like other prophetic messages, we see the rulers (vs 8) and the wealthy merchant classes (vs 11, 13) being specifically called out. When the Day of the LORD came there would be nowhere to run or hide. Every quarter of the city and every hiding place would be filled with mourning as God sought them out for punishment. Even the strongest warrior would fall: When a nation is on the wrong side of the LORD's visitation, it can only be a day of darkness.

### *Chapter 2:1-11*

Before the prophet issues more calls of judgment, overtures are made for the faithful of all nations to seek out God and take shelter. In the first half of the chapter, the focus is on the judgment of Judah's most immediate neighbors (Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, etc.). Their lands will be just as empty and desolate as those of God's own people.

# ZEPHANIAH

## *Chapter 2:12-15*

The judgment against God's enemies continues, but now the focus shifts to enemies beyond their borders. The Ethiopians and Assyrians will be overthrown as well. The same type of desolate language is used to describe once flourishing lands falling into disrepair and being overtaken by nature.

## *Chapter 3:1-7*

What should have been known as Zion or the city of God is spoken of as a rebellious and tyrannical city. Those whom God had entrusted with power had become destructive predators of their own people. But God's presence was still among them and would see that justice was handed down.

## *3:9-11*

God looks forward to a new day, when after the time of punishment had passed, the people would be called to Him from all nations. After the peoples had been purified they would cease their rebellion and serve God in humility on His mountain.

## *3:12-20*

The book closes by looking to a time when the remnant would be restored; they would be led by God as King, and holiness would be the normative behavior.

# ZEPHANIAH

**CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:**

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**Chapter 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# ZEPHANIAH

## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Zephaniah today?

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2. What portions of Zephaniah's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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## THE MAN:

The opening verse of chapter one identifies Nahum as being from Elkosh. While there are at least three guesses as to where the city might have been located, we don't have any compelling evidence to say for sure. The only other information we might extend about the man is the meaning of his name, and possible implications. Nahum means "consolation" or "comforter." It would seem reasonable that this would be aimed at the comfort God's people would feel as they saw His promise come true: Assyria would finally be punished and held responsible for their wickedness.

## THE DATE:

Nahum's prophecy as a wider window than most. Chapter 3 and verse 8 makes reference to the destruction of No-Amon. This event took place in 663 BC under the reign of Ashurbanipal. The prophecy must then take place after this date, but has no other anchor to go by. We know that Nineveh was overthrown in 612 BC, so it must have taken place at some point between those two dates.



## THE BACKGROUND:

Judah is mentioned only in passing (1:15, 2:1-2)—the message of the book is intended for the people of Nineveh. The same city that God had granted mercy in the days of Jonah was now being judged for their failure to realize who was in control (Isa. 7:20). It should not fail to



impress us that God devoted two whole books to the nation of Assyria. Could it be that as the first in a line of empires, all who would be used by God, that He was setting an example for the others to learn from? At any rate their time was up. Some key figures and dates to remember are:

**Tiglath-pileser III:** 745-727 BC: Began to build the Assyrian Empire.

**Sargon II:** Destroyed the City of Samaria in 722/721 BC.

**Sennacherib:** Surrounded city of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time: Murdered in 681 BC.

**Esarhaddon II:** Reigns when Babylon toppled Assyria in 612 BC. Died by his own hand.

There were other rulers in between, but take note that the last 3 on this list all met an untimely end. The empire was falling apart. The only real attraction has been their wealth, not any sense of nationalism. Without wealth and power, they would quickly find themselves bereft of all their former allies.

## NAHUM SUMMARIZED:

### *Chapter 1:1-8*

Time has finally run out for Assyria and its capital city of Nineveh. They had been warned of God's avenging nature on the wicked, but had let the warning of Jonah's day slip into the past. Now God's immense reserves of patience had run out. While those who are good can take refuge in the LORD, the wicked don't stand a chance.

### *1:9-15*

The wicked do not give up so easily. They will plan and scheme and try to withstand the day of the LORD. And yet, whatever plans they make will be thwarted. Whatever defenses they erect will be toppled. The defeat of Judah's enemy would be announced to them by a herald of good news.

### **Chapter 2:1-7**

Continuing where chapter one left off, the prophet continues to look forward to God vindicating His people. This will be accomplished by a great army (the Babylonians) described in all their strength in vs 3-5. Nineveh would prepare for a siege, but it would be futile in the face of the coming military might.

## *2:8-13*

Nineveh may have been the refreshing watering hole in the past, but now the city has been plundered. No one will have any interest now because they've already taken whatever wealth they could steal. What was once a greedy den of lions, taking more than they could ever need, is now empty and cut off.

## *Chapter 3:1-7*

Nahum again brings the focus on the immense greed of Assyria, as well as their thirst for wanton violence. Now God will see them repaid in kind. Their fate will be so grievous and shameful that anyone who once found them attractive would be repulsed.

## *3:8-19*

Nineveh may have seen itself as still being strong and mighty, but they had become like a piece of ripe fruit—ready for the taking. They would prove to be no better than other mighty cities in the past who God took into exile. In the end, they would fall, and there would be no one mourning for the loss.

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## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Nahum today?

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2. What portions of Nahum's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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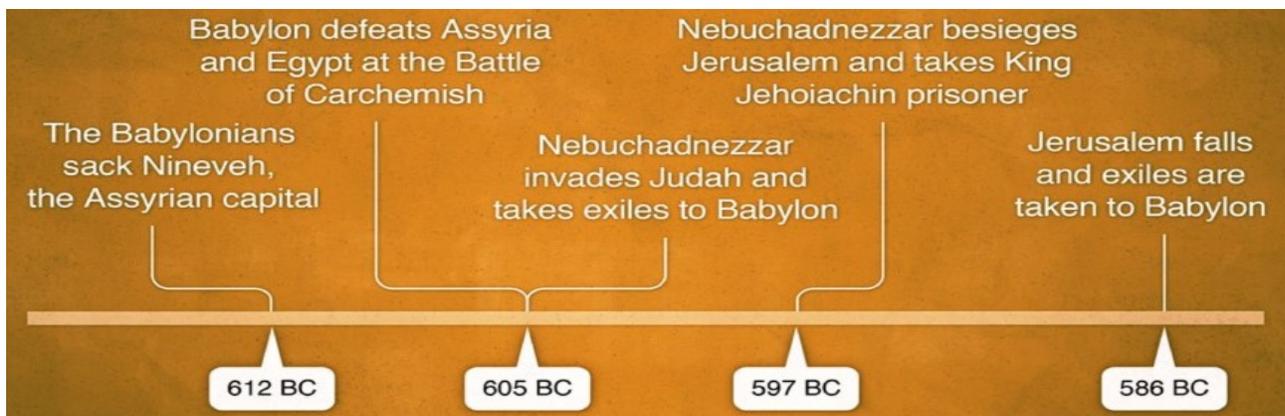
# HABAKKUK

## THE MAN:

We have little personal information on Habakkuk. We have none of the information we've come to expect (hometown, lineage, or occupation). Because of the conversation about Babylon's impending arrival, some have speculated that he may have lived in Jerusalem, although this is only a guess. His name has a few possible meanings: Embrace, clasp, fold, or even press. The idea being that his name reflects the way in which the nation was held close by this prophet.

## THE DATE:

Much of our method of dating the book comes from different internal clues. It would seem apparent that the prophecy took place sometime before Babylon's first invasion of Judah, as the prophet is taken completely off guard by the revelation of who God will use to punish Judah. He also speaks in 3:16 of still waiting for the day of their distress to arrive. Assyria was dealt its greatest blow around 612 BC, but Babylon did not attack Jerusalem for the first time until 605 BC. It is a safe assumption to place Habakkuk's work somewhere between those two dates.



# HABAKKUK

## THE BACKGROUND:

The events on the world stage and the events on the local level are not much different from what we saw with Zephaniah, we've only progressed a few years down the line. His warnings went unheeded, and the full weight of God's wrath is about to fall on the people. After the death of Josiah at Megiddo (II Chronicles 35:20-27), Judah became an Egyptian city



state. His wicked son Jehoahaz only reigned for three months before he was removed from power by Pharaoh Neco. His brother Jehoiachim was set up in his place. He was just as wicked, if not more so. He was the recipient of some harsh and pointed rebukes from Jeremiah, (*see Jer. 22:13-14*) and was evil enough to chase down and murder prophets who had spoken out against him (*Jer. 26:21ff*). With a wicked ruler over a wicked people, it is no wonder why the prophet cries out for justice against God's people (*Hab. 1:1-3*).

The discourse between God and Habakkuk deals with hard and difficult questions. How could God use wicked people to accomplish His will? What do God's people do when it seems as though His plans do not coincide with what we think is right? The final chapter of the book gives us a glimpse of how the righteous will respond.

# HABAKKUK

## HABAKKUK SUMMARIZED:

### *Chapter 1:1-4*

Habakkuk cries out to God, lamenting the LORD's apparent lack of distress over the sin that is present among His people. When will God finally act and see justice carried out?

### *1:5-11*

God states that He is about to take action in a most unexpected way. The Chaldeans, (the Babylonians) are on their way. They are an unstoppable military force, making short work of any resistance they may meet.

### *1:12-17*

Habakkuk responds with shock and dismay. Yes, Judah is evil, but Babylon is far worse! How can God allow these ruthless and unmerciful pagans to triumph over His own chosen people?

### *Chapter 2:1-3*

Habakkuk sets himself to see how God will respond, anticipating that God will let His servant know what it is that he's missed. The LORD responds immediately: His words were true, and they must be made known to the people with all haste.

# HABAKKUK

## *2:4-11*

This section is best understood as describing the sins of the Babylonians, and by implication, an anticipation of God's punishment of them once they've served His purpose. Two "woes" are pronounced against them, each of which describes the greed and violence that have accompanied their rise to power: Woe to him who increases what is not his (v6), and woe to him who gets evil gain for his house (v 9).

## *2:12-20*

The section continues by highlighting their treatment of captives who they forced to build their cities (vs 12), as well as their terrible sexual immorality (vs 15). The final "woe" in this section gets to the root of all their behaviors: Woe to the one who makes a piece of wood or stone their god (vs 19).

## *Chapter 3:1-15*

Habakkuk responds to the LORD's faithfulness with a poetic prayer. Looking back over Israel's history, and the many times God has saved them, he pictures the LORD as coming down from the mountain to once again save His people as he always has before. Habakkuk recalls the nations and earth shaking before God and the power of His coming.

## *3:16-20*

While the news may have initially shaken the prophet, he can still wait for the day of trouble with confidence that the LORD delivers the righteous.

# HABAKKUK

**CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:**

**Chapter 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# HABAKKUK

## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Habakkuk today?

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2. What portions of Habakkuk's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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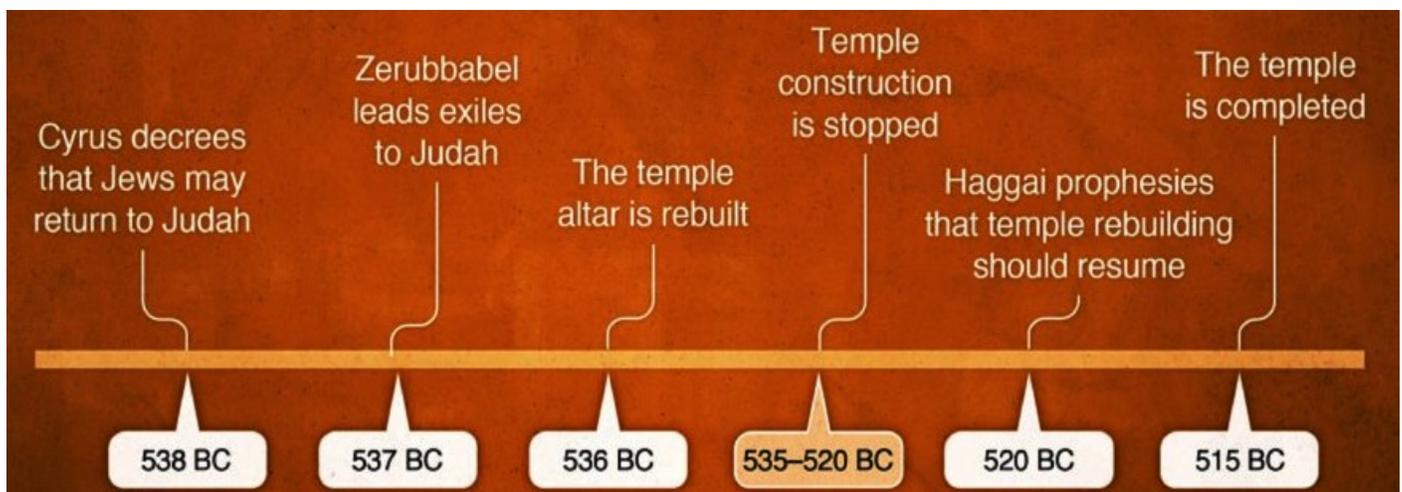
# HAGGAI

## THE MAN:

It could be said that Haggai was one of God’s most “hands-on” prophets. We are first introduced to him in the historical accounts of Ezra 5:1-2, and 6:14-16. There we learn that Haggai was integral in helping with the construction of the Temple. Those brief mentions portray him as working alongside the prophet Zechariah and Israel’s other leaders, Joshua and Zerubbabel. His name means “festival”, and would be a fitting way to describe what the people would experience if they’d get about the business of finishing the temple.

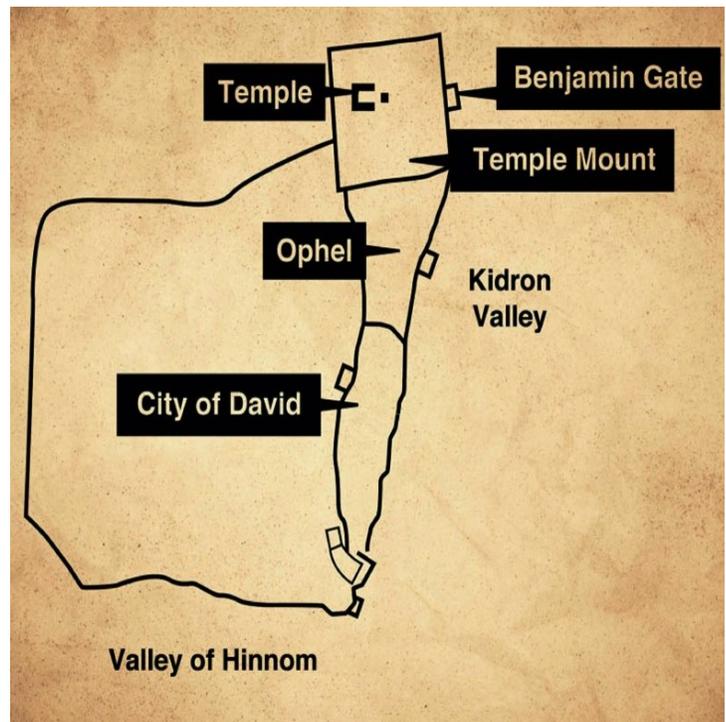
## THE DATE:

Haggai place the date he received his message as being “on the first day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius. By almost all accounts that would place the book in the year 520 BC.



## THE BACKGROUND:

Haggai takes the Book of the 12 and moves it into yet another century. His book begins the post-exilic period of roughly 520 BC to around 450 BC. The warnings that God had sent through the His other prophets had all come to pass, and Judah had been taken into captivity. After the 70 promises years, they had been allowed to come home.



In approximately 536 BC, the first group of exiles were able to return, led by Zerubabel. Although other historical books record that the returning captives met a great deal of difficulty, their initial return was largely an occasion of excitement. The foundation of the temple was laid, and worship was restored. But over the next 16 years or so, through a combination of opposition (*see the events of Ezra chapter four*) and their own complacency, the work on the temple ceased. The work of Haggai was rouse the people out of their spiritual slumber and to renew their sense of faithfulness to the LORD. No longer could they be satisfied with “good enough.” It was time for them to decide whether or not they were serious in honoring their commitment to LORD, as He had already proven His own faithfulness to them.

## *HAGGAI SUMMARIZED:*

### *Chapter 1:1-6*

The people are called out for being content to have built their own houses, even though the temple was still unfinished. They are called to take stock of their actions: It should not have been a mystery as to why they were not experiencing God's blessing.

### *1:7-11*

God plainly states that any current state of suffering is because they have failed to honor Him. If they will worship Him in good faith, He stands ready to reverse the situation.

### *1: 12-15*

The leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, respond with zeal in leading the people to the task with a spirit of reverence. Haggai assures them that God is with them (to protect and provide) and the temple work resumes.

### *Chapter 2:1-9*

Haggai is given further words of encouragement to Zerubbabel (and the people), assuring them that God will see their efforts through to completion. Haggai looks ahead to the Messianic era when God would work wonders that would fill His house.

## *2:10-19*

In the midst of progress, all was not yet right. Three months into their work Haggai brings a message of rebuke. They were getting ahead of themselves in their expectation of blessings. They had not yet fully restored their relationship with God, and as a result the work of their hands (both the temple work and agriculture) would be unclean.

Although the message is stern, there is still hope. In the same way that unfaithfulness and brought suffering, a full return to God would bring restoration.

## *2:20-23*

The message given to Zerubbabel is a renewal of the promise made to David in II Samuel 7. These verses look ahead to the Messianic era. Zerubbabel, as a descendant of David would also be in the lineage of Christ (Matthew 1:12). These promises would ultimately be fulfilled in what the LORD would do through Christ.

## CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:

Chapter 1: \_\_\_\_\_

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Chapter 2: \_\_\_\_\_

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## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Haggai today?

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2. What portions of Haggai's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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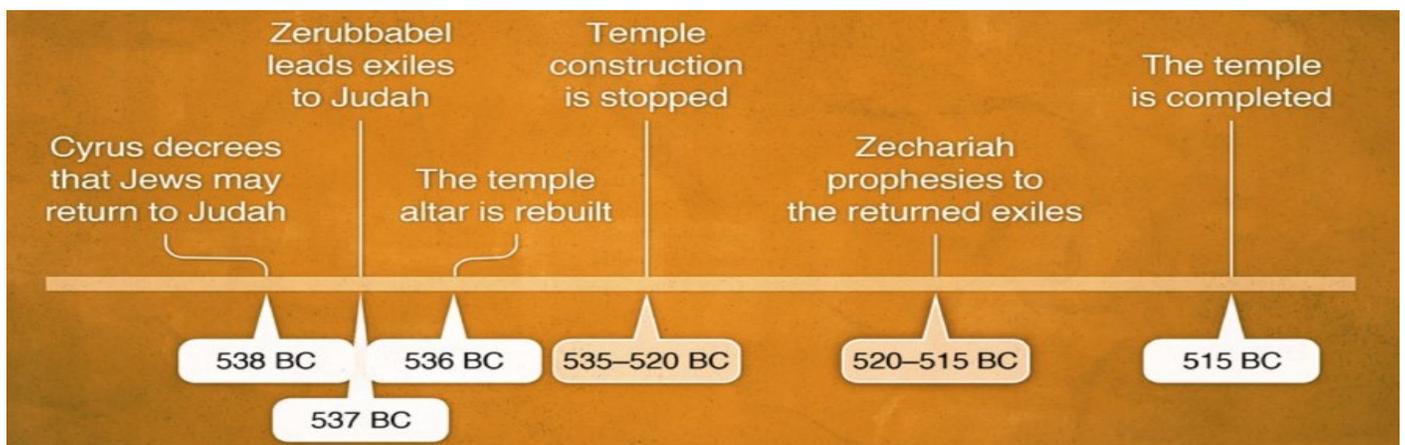
# ZECHARIAH

## THE MAN:

Zechariah was yet another prophet who was called out of the tribe of Levi. He is identified as being the grandson of Iddo (1:1,7, and Ezra 5:1; 6:14), who was head of one of the families listed as coming back from exile with Zerubbabel. (*Some do advise some caution here as Zechariah was an extremely common name, but this seems to be a reasonable assumption.*) His name means “YHWH Remembers”, which fits well with the reminders that God was still with His people and still honoring His covenant.

## THE DATE:

The first date given (in 1:1) would place the start of his prophecy around October or November of 520 B.C.. This places him within two months after Haggai began his work among the remnant. Other events in the book are as dated as late as 518 (7:1), and Ezra puts the completion of the temple (Ezra 6:15) in the sixth year of King Darius, placing the temple's completion in 516/515 BC. It would seem from the text in Ezra 6:14 that this prophet was active long enough to see that work through at the very least.



# ZECHARIAH

## THE BACKGROUND:

Much of what is needed to know going into the book is the same as what is covered for Haggai. Zechariah was assisting in the work of stirring up a people who had become satisfied with a complete lack of progress. Zechariah also worked alongside leaders like Joshua and Zerubbabel and helped to guide them in the temple work.



Zechariah's book does not however record these events in the style of an Ezra or Nehemiah. Instead of recording any difficulties or sharing much progress on the temple construction, our focus is drawn to what is happening behind the scenes on the spiritual stage. Some parts read like a chapter from the book of Revelation, as we see the messengers of the LORD being sent throughout the earth. Some parts reveal visions that underscore the presence of God with His people, while others speak of judgment to come.

What sets Zechariah apart from the rest of the Twelve is the sheer volume of Messianic prophecies. The other prophets certainly spoke of the Messiah, but it is difficult to find any interaction in the book that doesn't somehow foreshadow the coming of Jesus. So while the construction of the temple plows ahead, Zechariah invites us as readers to look at what God had planned for the future.

# **ZECHARIAH**

## ***ZECHARIAH SUMMARIZED:***

### ***Chapter 1:1-6***

Zechariah reminds the people of how angry God had been with the previous generation. They are urged not to make the same mistakes by not listening to God. They are encouraged to take note of how God's promises had come to pass, and repent.

### ***1:7-17***

This section begins a series of eight visions. The first reveals a red rider in the midst of myrtle trees, accompanied by other horses. These represented those who patrolled the earth on the LORD's behalf. The vision goes on to communicate that God is ready to show compassion to His people, and stands by to judge the nations who had persecuted them so.

### ***1:18-21***

The second vision reveals four horns and four craftsmen (or carpenters). The horns are representative of the world powers who have scattered God's people, while the craftsmen represent the powers that will build them back up.

### ***Chapter 2:1-5***

The third vision begins with Zechariah encountering a man who was setting out to measure the walls of Jerusalem, but is told that it will be a city without walls.

# **ZECHARIAH**

## ***2:6-13***

Now the third vision is expounded on by urging those who were still in Babylon to flee that place which would not last, and return home. Those who were already home are told to be glad and praise the LORD for what He had planned for His city.

## ***Chapter 3:1-7***

The fourth vision sees Satan accusing Joshua the high priest, and by extension the nation as a whole. Joshua is seen as stained with the sins of the people. God gives him new garments and extends the meaning to the nation. They have been cleansed through the fires of captivity and can now walk with God if they will follow His Law.

## ***3:8-10***

The meaning of the fourth vision is then extended to the Messianic era when God's servant, and the stone set before Joshua, would remove the iniquity of the land in one day.

## ***Chapter 4:1-10***

The fifth vision shows a now exhausted Zechariah a lampstand with seven lamps, flanked by two olive trees. While not yet being given an interpretation, he is given a message of encouragement to Zerubbabel: God's Spirit ensure that the construction of the temple would be carried out.

# **ZECHARIAH**

## ***4:11-14***

Zechariah's first request for an explanation is apparently not answered, and so he rephrases it a second time. The response, focusing on the two branches, looks to the two leaders of God's people (Zerubbabel in a civil capacity and Joshua in the spiritual), and their being connected to/supplied by God's Spirit. It is hard to read these verses though and not think about the time when both of these offices would be joined into one through Christ.

## ***Chapter 5:1-4***

The sixth vision focusses on an enormous flying scroll. It was inscribed on both sides with curses against sinners contained in the Law. It symbolized God's judgment against those in Israel who were still only worshipping Him outwardly.

## ***5:5-11***

The seventh vision begins with an ephah (or a basket, and one of the largest units of measure). The woman sitting inside the contained represented the wickedness, and is sealed inside with a heavy lead cover. It is transported to the land of Shinar by two angels. It can probably be taken in a general way as being symbolic of God desiring sin to be removed from the midst of His people. Perhaps one step further, the vision could communicate a contrast between God's city, and a land that represented evil/rebellion. Wickedness would be expected and exalted in one, but have no business in the other.

# ZECHARIAH

## ***Chapter 6:1-8***

The eighth and final vision sees four more agents of God. The horses were hitched and ready to pull the chariots at a moment's notice. These are not however simply those who would come and report, but are also arbiters of His judgment (see vs 8).

## ***6:9-15***

Now Zechariah was to construct an elaborate crown within a crown (*using wealth that was apparently sent back from those in Babylon to assist in the rebuilding efforts*). This was to be taken and placed, not on Zerubbabel, but on Joshua the high priest. The role of two offices coming together as one (vs 13), and the designation of “the branch”, are highly symbolic of the coming Messiah who would unite the office of priest and king.

## ***Chapter 7:1-7***

Some time after the series of visions messengers came to inquire whether or not they should continue to fast as they had been doing. The LORD's reply comes as a rebuke—they had not been fasting for Him, but they had fasted and feasted on their own behalf.

## ***7:8-14***

The people are called to take another lesson from their fathers. Instead of selfishly observing fasts and feasts, they needed to observe compassion and justice.

# **ZECHARIAH**

## ***Chapter 8:1-8***

This section could well be taken as a continued part of the LORD's answer to those who had come to inquire in chapter seven. While God had looked to the past when the people were scattered, now God will dwell with the people again. This was true for the remnant who were rebuilding the temple, but also looks forward to the Messianic era.

## ***8:9-13***

Not only will the conditions of the people be reversed, but what the other nations thought about them would change. They would no longer be considered a curse when those outside saw how God had redeemed His people.

## ***8:14-17***

The evil actions of the people had brought down an unavoidable judgment. If they would practice justice and righteousness, it would bring down unavoidable blessings.

## ***8:18-23***

Again, looking both to the immediate future as well as the time of the Church, God says that their fasts will turn to feasts, and all nations will stream in to take part.

# **ZECHARIAH**

## ***Chapter 9:1-8***

In what some take to be a reference to the coming of Alexander the Great, God pronounces judgment on Syria, Phoenicia, and Philistia. Judah however will be safe from the war path of this coming conqueror.

## ***9:9-10***

Far more impressive and important than whatever physical being may be references in vs 1-8, is the coming of the king of Judah! He will put an end to war and establish peace among the nations.

## ***9:11-17***

Some see in these verses a reference to some specific intertestamental events. The main point that can be easily taken from the text is that while God's people continue to wait for this Messiah to come, God would continue to protect and preserve the remnant.

## ***Chapter 10:1-12***

If the people want to take part in the previously mentioned blessings, they must turn to the LORD—not idols, false prophets, or bad leaders. These wayward rulers would be punished and God would establish a true leader for His people. The result is a strengthened Israel that would be returned and restored.

# **ZECHARIAH**

## ***Chapter 11:1-14***

The section, while dealing with events of Zechariah's day, is meant to heavily foreshadow the future relationship between God and *physical* Israel. The section begins with a lamentation over destruction and ruin. God commissions Zechariah to be a shepherd over a doomed flock. This was indicative of a people who did not desire after good and honest leaders. They would reject Zechariah, and by extension the LORD, from being their shepherd. Zechariah in turn broke his two staves, Favor and Union, which those with a more righteous attitude recognized as a symbolic breaking of their covenant. In the end, the people only valued his service at the price of a gored slave.

## ***11:15-17***

Zechariah is again commanded to take up the tools of a shepherd whose task was in vain. God promises to give them the kind of wicked shepherd they desired, although both the worthless shepherd and the foolish sheep would be held accountable.

## ***Chapter 12:1-9***

The last three chapters of the book contain the words "in that day" at least 17 times. Like earlier references in the book, they are pointing toward the time of Christ and the Church. Although the Church would be attacked with vehemence and ferocity, any effort to bring it down would be in vain. This new Jerusalem will resist any and all advances.

# ZECHARIAH

## ***12:10-14***

These verses seem to apply almost exclusively to the events of Jesus' death. While the death of Josiah is alluded to in vs 11, it is only there for the sake of comparison. In the same way that his death had caused nationwide mourning, God's people would mourn over one they would pierce, an event that would occur alongside the outpouring of God's grace.

## ***Chapter 13:1-6***

The previously mentioned events would open the way for complete forgiveness of sins. Along with this would be a full revelation of God's will. The result would be that false prophets could easily be recognized and lose their ability to pull God's people astray. This, along with the removal of idolatry, is to be the ideal that exists in the kingdom to come.

## ***Chapter 13:7-9***

Continuing to look forward to the time of Christ, (*Jesus would apply these verses to himself in Matthew 26:31*), these verses speak of the striking of the Good Shepherd, and the falling away of many sheep afterwards. Those who remained though would be genuine among the people of God.

# **ZECHARIAH**

## ***Chapter 14:1-8***

The previous section is expanded further. Although God would be with His people, the events following the striking of the Shepherd would be dark days. There would be severe testing of the saints and much violence against them. However, while the days would be dark, the gospel and salvation would spread out from Jerusalem to all the world.

## ***14:9-15***

As God rules over His kingdom, (and the world), His protection over His people will be absolute. Instead of Jerusalem being cursed, those who come against it will be cursed.

## ***14:16-21***

Those who survive the judgment of the LORD will be those who take part in His worship. Those who refrain will not be blessed. But while there may still be some who do not convert to Him, He will be honored among His people.

# **ZECHARIAH**

**CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:**

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**Chapter 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 4:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# **ZECHARIAH**

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**Chapter 7:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 8:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# **ZECHARIAH**

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**Chapter 10:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 11:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 12:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# ZECHARIAH

Chapter 13: \_\_\_\_\_

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Chapter 14: \_\_\_\_\_

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# ZECHARIAH

## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Zechariah today?

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2. What portions of Zechariah's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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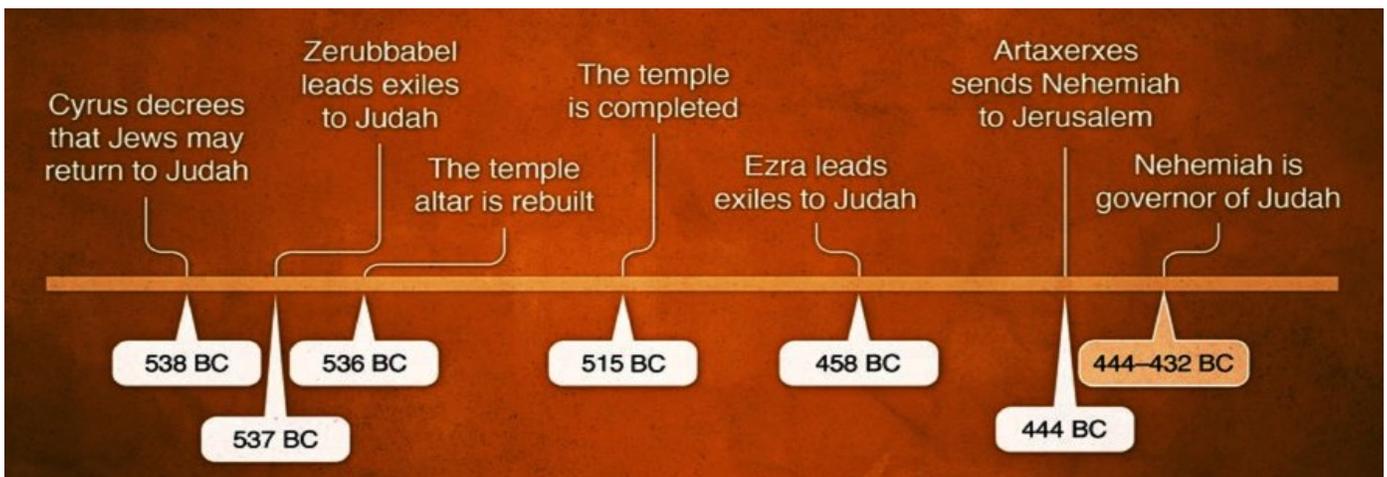
# MALACHI

## THE MAN:

The text does not present much information about the prophet himself. In fact, the only information to be gleaned is his name, which means “my messenger.” Some have supposed that this may be more of an anonymous title than an actual name. Whatever the case may be, the name is a fitting one. Malachi engages with the people in a unique back and forth style known as “didactic-dialectic.” The question and answer style strongly emphasized that these were charges from the LORD.

## THE DATE:

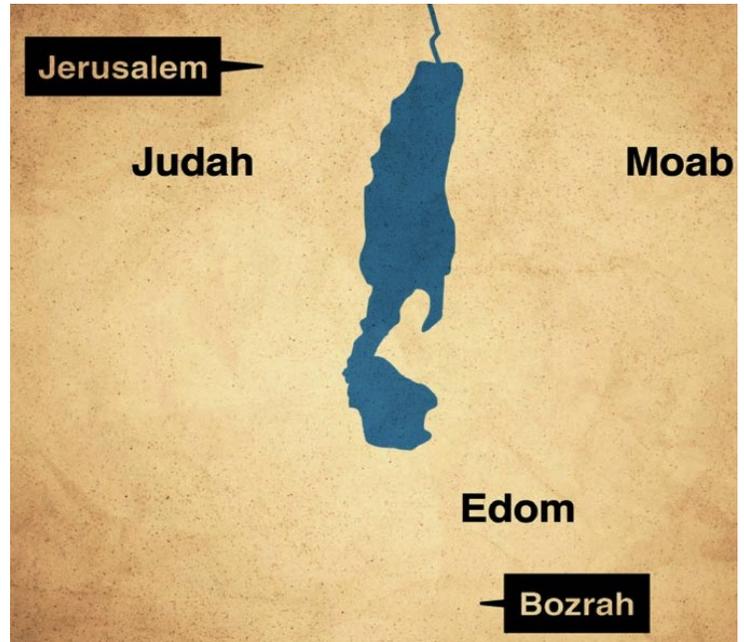
Although there are no specific internal references to when the prophecy was given, there are still some helpful clues. The earliest suggested date of 470 B.C. doesn't seem to match up with the internal evidence, nor does the much later date of 200 B.C.. Seeing as how closely the conditions align with what can be read about in Nehemiah, an approximate date of 445/4-432 B.C. seems to work well.



# MALACHI

## THE BACKGROUND:

After reading through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, one might think that the conditions in Judah were going to be on an upward trajectory. And yet, in the nearly four score years that separate this final book from those two prophets, the spiritual situation would grow stagnant and



the physical state of the nation would be much the same. After the initial wave of returned captives had been stirred up by Haggai and Zechariah, another group of captives returned under Ezra the priest.

Ezra had tried to turn the people back to a sincere practice of the Law, but had been presented with shocking spiritual scandals. Nehemiah had been sent back during the reign of Artaxerxes I to rebuild the wall and had faced his own share of difficulties. Aside from the opposition the builders faced, Nehemiah also records rampant usury among the people as well as the continued problem of foreign marriages.

Malachi storms onto the scene attacking these (and other) problems head on. It was not enough to simply make physical progress. A new temple inside of new walls was worth nothing if the people who walked through them were not pure of heart and devoted to the LORD. Malachi attempts to rouse the people out of their spiritual indifference and points to the coming of another messenger who would do the same.

## ***MALACHI SUMMARIZED:***

### ***Chapter 1:1-5***

Malachi's prophecy begins with a declaration of God's love for His people (albeit one that is immediately contested). As a nation, God had chosen to adopt the children of Jacob instead of Esau. Then, He had preserved and restored Jacob while refusing to do so for the descendants of Esau.

### ***1:6-14***

Against the priest's objection, the LORD declares that they have despised His name like a worthless son or servant. They offered sacrifices to the LORD that they knew no physical ruler would accept. Rather than be approached in such a way, God longs for one to simply bar the gates of the temple. While God's own people may have looked at serving Him as a great burden, His name would be lifted up and feared among the nations.

### ***Chapter 2:1-9***

God had made a covenant with the house of Levi that they would serve Him as His priests. Many of that tribe had feared the LORD and honorably kept that covenant. Sadly, this did not reflect the priests of that day. They were a disgrace to their tribe and to their covenant. God would continue to curse them and make them as an object of shame. There seems to be hope in v4 that this would cause some to turn and bring about reform.

## ***2:10-17***

Although they were all brethren, there was a terrible failure to treat one another as family. There are overtones of the perversion of justice, but the main crime under consideration is the violation of the marriage covenant. In what is a probable reference to events found in Ezra and Nehemiah, the men of Israel were divorcing (and thereby abandoning them to fend for themselves) their wives. They then joined themselves to the daughters of foreign gods. But (vs 15) no one who had the Spirit of God was engaged in this terrible practice.

God states in no uncertain terms His hatred for divorce and the violence it does to the family—and yet the chapter ends with the people still utterly confused as to how they've wearied the LORD.

## ***Chapter 3: 1-6***

The people wondered where as to the whereabouts of the God of justice: He was coming! His way would be prepared by a messenger (referred to in 1a, and further elaborated on in chapter four) and then the Lord—the messenger of the covenant (the figure in 1b) would arrive as well.

While they envisioned any appearance of the LORD would be to destroy their foes, this visitation would be to purify and judge His own people so that they could be pure once again.

## ***3:7-15***

God longed for them to return, but they acted as though they did not know the way. As usual, this was not an overly complicated matter. If they would cease offering insincere and selfish worship, God would begin to bless them again. They spoke arrogantly against God (again denying the charge) by claiming that there was nothing to be gained by serving Him! But if they would only return, they would once again be a delightful land.

## ***3:16-18***

Once again, the words of God did not fail to have an effect on the good hearts of the remnant. They paid attention to the LORD and He took notice. Whether or not Malachi speaks of a literal book, the point is the same—God would remember their names and preserve them.

## ***Chapter 4:1-6***

Malachi's prophecy concludes by looking to a day of winnowing. God's people were going to be sorted and separated. Those who were wicked and of a false nature would be burned, while those who feared the LORD would experience His healing. God would send His messenger, an Elijah like prophet, who would call the faithful to God before His terrible day came upon the people.

## CREATE YOUR SUMMARY:

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**Chapter 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chapter 4:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## THEME QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can we apply the message of Malachi today?

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2. What portions of Malachi's prophecy could be said to point to Christ?

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***Consulted Works:***

*A Commentary on the Minor Prophets:* Homer Hailey

*College Press NIV Commentary; Minor Prophets Volume I :* Harold Shank

*College Press NIV Commentary; Minor Prophets Volume II:* Hahleen and Ham

*Interpreting the Prophets:* James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeir

*Truth Commentary Series: Minor Prophets Vol. I:* Edited by Mike Willis

*Truth Commentary Series: Minor Prophets Vol. II:* Edited by Mike Willis

*Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah:* Alexander, Baker, and Waltke

*Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: An Introduction and Commentary:* David. W. Baker

*Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary:* Joyce G. Baldwin

*Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary:* David A. Hubbard

*Salvation through Judgment and Mercy: The Gospel According to Jonah:* Bryan D. Estelle

*Longing for God in an Age of Discouragement: The Gospel According to Zechariah:* B. Gregory

*Love Divine and Unfailing: The Gospel According to Hosea:* Michael P. V. Barret

*Old Testament Survey Series: The Minor Prophets:* James E. Smith

