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The  
BIBLE  
Book by Book

Hosea - Malachi

G. Michael  
Cocoris

# THE BIBLE

Book by Book

Hosea - Malachi

G. Michael Cocoris

## INTRODUCTION

In the Sunday evening services at the Church of the Open Door, I preached through the Bible one book per evening. In each message I covered the same 5 points: Author, Recipients, Subject, Structure and Purpose. These messages were later edited for release on our daily broadcast called THE OPEN DOOR. This booklet was prepared to help radio listeners study with us on that program.

Volume 4 contains the notes covering the books of Hosea through Malachi. The other books of the Bible are in six other volumes.

The messages, as originally preached at the Church of the Open Door, are available on cassette tapes in convenient albums. Or, you may order individual tapes if you desire. There is an Order Form at the back of this booklet for your convenience which will give you complete information on how to order.

It is my desire that these messages will give you an introduction to the basics of each book of the Bible, and you will then be able to read, study and apply your Bible more intelligently.

— Dr. G. Michael Cocoris

"THE BIBLE: BOOK BY BOOK  
HOSEA - MALACHI"

G. Michael Cocoris

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## HOSEA

The book of Hosea has been called the book for backsliders (cf. 11:7).

### I. Author.

Hosea 1:1 says Hosea wrote the book. The divine authority and authenticity of the book is attested by numerous quotations in the New Testament (cf. Hosea 11:1 with Matt. 2:15; Hosea 6:6 with Matt. 9:13, 12:7; Hosea 10:8 with Luke 23:30; Hosea 23:30 with Rom. 9:25; Hosea 13:14 with I Cor. 15:15; Hosea 1:9,10 and 2:23 with I Pet. 2:10).

### II. Recipients.

#### A. Their date.

Hosea ministered in the Northern Kingdom (5:1), often called Ephraim after the largest tribe (5:3, 5:11, 13). He dates his ministry by giving the names of four kings of Judah and one of Israel (cf. 1:1):

Jeroboam (North) 782-753 B.C.

Uzziah (South) 767-739 B.C.

Jotham (South) 739-731 B.C.

Ahaz (South) 731-715 B.C.

Hezekiah (South) 715-686 B.C.

Now that's interesting! Hosea ministered in the North, yet names only one Northern king and four

Southern kings. Why? The answer is that he, and for that matter the other prophets, only recognized the legitimate rulers of the Southern Kingdom as the Kings of God's people. That explains the Southern Kings, but why one Northern king?

Keil and Delitzsch explain it this way:

"...the house of Jehu, to which he belonged, had been called to the throne by the prophet Elisha at the command of God, for the purpose of rooting out the worship of Baal from Israel, in return for which Jehu received the promise that his sons should sit upon the throne of the fourth generation (II Kings 10:30); and Jeroboam, the great-grandson of Jehu, was the last king through whom the Lord sent any help to the ten tribes (II Kings 14:27). In his reign the kingdom of the ten tribes reached its greatest glory."<sup>1</sup>

So Hosea began his ministry in the reign of Jeroboam II in the North, and Uzziah in the South. We have to guess at the year. Let's say about 755 B.C.

But when did his ministry end? That is a problem. He prophesied until the time of Hezekiah who did not start his reign until 715 B.C. Yet there is no mention in his book of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom which was in 721 B.C. Many date the

end of his ministry at 710. According to 1:1, he did live and minister that long, but the book stops before 721 B.C.

Let's choose a date for Hosea at about 725 B.C. Amos was his contemporary in the North, and Isaiah and Micah were his contemporaries in the South.

#### B. Their description.

When Hosea began his ministry, Israel was enjoying peace, plenty, prosperity and perversity (idolatry). When Jeroboam II dies, his strong hand, which had curbed lawlessness, was removed and Israel began to crumble. Anarchy and assassination followed. It went downhill from there. Laxness and looseness characterized personal behavior. Courts were corrupt; judges made their living from bribes. Robbery, murder and organized vice were visible everywhere. Even the priests were corrupt. They were at the head of organized bandit gangs! They actually led people into sin and made sinning attractive. Worship was formal and professional.

#### III. Subject.

The subject of the book of Hosea is the love of God. That theme crops up repeatedly, for example, compare 2:1, 2:23, and especially 14:4.

#### IV. Structure.

The overall literary structure of Hosea is easy; the details are difficult. It is obvious, even to the casual reader, that the overall structure of the book is Hosea's marriage (1-3), and Hosea's message (4-14).

The details are much more difficult. In those first three chapters, the main subject is Hosea's marriage, but the text repeatedly lapses into a discussion of Israel. Chapters 4-14 are even more difficult. Ellison has said, "There is no strict order, chronological, logical or spiritual, to be discovered in the major portion (4-14) of Hosea; the order within the smallest subsection is often hard to follow..."<sup>2</sup>

Keil & Delitzsch suggest a three-fold division of chapters 4-14. They feel that each of these three contains something like a charge, a judgment and a promise of restoration. Yea, it is the three promises that make the three divisions. The divisions are: 4:1-6:3; 6:4-11:11; 11:12-14:9.

- I. The marriage of Hosea. ch. 1-3
  - A. Hosea's marriage. ch. 1:2-2:1
  - B. Hosea's divorce. ch. 2:3-2:23
  - C. Hosea's remarriage. ch. 3:1-5
- II. The message of Hosea. ch. 4-14
  - A. Round one. ch. 4:1-6:3
  - B. Round two. ch. 6:4-11:11
  - C. Round three. ch. 11:12-14:9

#### V. Purpose.

- A. To express God's case against spiritually adulterous Israel.

The Northern Kingdom departed from the Lord and began to wallow in sin, especially idolatry. One of the major things God is doing in this book is expressing His charge against Israel (cf. 4:1). God lays out the charges like a lawyer laying out a case in court. Some have called the literary form of 4:1-3 a lawsuit. There does seem to be a charge, the evidence and a judgment in these verses. Verses 4-14 contain many charges.

But not only are the facts of the situation expressed, but so is the feeling. In having Hosea marry a harlot, God is expressing the way He feels about sinning Israel. For Israel to go after idols is like a wife prostituting herself with other men. Just as a faithful husband would feel justified in casting off such an unfaithful wife, so God is justified in judging Israel.

- B. To express God's love for Israel.

The other purpose of Hosea is to express God's loyal love for Israel. After statements of judgment, a word of grace follows in which Israel's future return is conceived (cf. 1:10-2:1: 6:1-3).

God loved Israel like the husband



of an unfaithful, adulterous woman who would go and reclaim his wife from the slave market (cf. II Tim. 2:11-13).

#### Conclusion:

Hosea married a woman who became a harlot and he reclaimed her to illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness to God and her eventual restoration.

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<sup>1</sup>C.F. Keil, Biblical Commentary on O.T., The Twelve Minor Prophets, vol. 1, [Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1969] p.13.

<sup>2</sup>H.L. Ellison as quoted in unpublished class notes on Hosea by Dr. Elliott E. Johnson, Dallas Seminary, N.D. p.5.

## JOEL

Joel is a book dealing with the day of the Lord.

### I. Author.

Joel 1:1 says Joel, the son of Pethuel, was the author of the book.

### II. Recipients.

#### A. Their date.

Dating Joel is a problem. There is no explicit time reference in it! The book has been variously placed from the division of the Kingdom, which was in 931 B.C., until Malachi, or even later.

Phoenicia, Philistia, Egypt and Edom are all mentioned in Joel. These countries were prominent in the 9th century, but no later. There is also evidence of borrowing between Joel and Amos (cf. Joel 3:16 and Amos 1:2; Joel 3:18 and Hosea 9:13). The context suggests Hosea, an 8th century prophet borrowed from Joel. Furthermore, Joel's style is more like Hosea and Amos than the post-exilic writers. Many conservative scholars, therefore, have concluded that overall the most likely time of Joel was during the reign of Joash (835-796 B.C.). Since there is no mention of idolatry, it may have been written after the purge of Baal worship and most other forms

of idolatry in the early reign of Joash under Jehaiada, the priest. 830 B.C. Jewish tradition supports this conclusion.

Joel was a contemporary of Elijah, who ministered to the Northern Kingdom.

#### B. Their description.

The book of Joel is addressed to all the inhabitants of the land (1:2). Evidently, that refers to the land of Judah, which can be clearly seen from various references in the book, such as 3:1, 3:17, etc. (Israel, in 3:2, has prophetic reference to all twelve tribes). Special mention is made to "old" men (1:2), husbandmen and vinedressers (1:11), and priests (1:13)."

#### III. Subject.

The subject of Joel is the day of the Lord (cf. 1:15, 2:11, 2:31, 3:14).

#### IV. Structure.

Though there is a repeated reference to the subject of the day of the Lord, there is no repeated phrase that is a clue to the literary structure of the book. The structure of this book is like Hosea. In Hosea, the prophet began with a current situation, his marriage, and went on to make a spiritual application. Likewise, Joel begins with a current local

locust visitation and uses that to talk about the future situation.

#### Introduction. ch. 1:1

##### I. The Day of the Lord foreshadowed. ch. 1:2-20

- A. The destruction of the locusts. ch. 1:2-14
- B. The destruction of a drought. ch. 1:15-20

##### II. The Day of the Lord foretold. ch. 2:1-3:21

- A. The judgment of God. ch. 2:1-11
- B. The invitation to Israel. ch. 2:12-17
- C. The coming of the Holy Spirit. ch. 2:18-27
- D. The judgment on Gentiles. ch. 3:1-16
- E. The blessing on Israel. ch. 3:17-21

#### V. Purpose.

##### A. Historical

Joel is calling Judah to repentance as a proper response to the Lord's judgment of locusts and drought, lest a more devastating scourge come upon them.

## B. Prophetic.

Joel was also announcing the future Day of the Lord in which the Lord will judge the nations, deliver Israel and take up His dwelling in their midst. The unprecedented locust plague was only a forestate of the future Day of the Lord.

### Conclusion:

Joel uses the natural disaster as an illustration of an opportunity to announce the future Day of the Lord and call Judah to repentance.

## AMOS

Amos is famous for the statement, "Prepare to meet thy God."

### I. Author.

Amos 1:1 informs the reader that the author was Amos. The New Testament confirms that. Stephen, in his speech before the Sanhedrin, quotes from Amos (cf. Acts 7:42,43 with Amos 5:25-27). James also cites the prophet Amos (cf. Acts 15:16 with Amos 9:11).

Amos informs us that he was not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs (7:14). Yet he explains that he was gripped by God and divinely commissioned to bring a prophetic message to Israel (3:8b, 7:15).

### II. Recipients.

#### A. Their date.

Amos dates his book by listing the kings who reigned during his ministry. In Amos 1:1, he lists one Northern king and one Southern king. Uzziah reigned from 767-739 B.C. Jeroboam reigned from 782-753 B.C. There is obviously an overlap between the reigns of those two kings from 767-753 B.C.

Amos also says it was two years before the earthquake. Zechariah who

wrote over 200 years later, says the earthquake was in Uzziah's reign (Zech. 14:5). Archer says, "There is general agreement among Old Testament scholars that Amos' ministry is to be dated between 760 and 755 B.C., toward the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II."<sup>1</sup> The date of Amos then is 760 B.C.

#### B. Their description.

During the reign of Jeroboam II, there was expansion, freedom, activity, prosperity and peace. No one had any fear of an invasion. But there was also idolatry. The golden calves of Jeroboam I were still worshipped at Bethel. There were idolatrous shrines at Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba. The priests were no help, they were morally corrupt.

As a matter of fact, corruption was the order of the day. The judges were dishonest, and government was generally corrupt.

The recipient of Amos was Israel (cf. 1:1). This is obviously a reference to the Northern Kingdom, as Amos distinguishes between Israel and Judah in the verse. There are a number of other references to Israel (cf. 2:6,11, 4:12, 5:1,4). Cities of the Northern Kingdom are also mentioned a number of times. Bethel and Gilgal are referred to as "sinners of idolatry." And yet, the message is a warning to the Southern Kingdom as well (cf. 3:1, 2:4,5, 6:1).

#### III. Subject.

The subject is judgment. There is no doubt that Amos is basing his message on the sovereignty of God and deals with the sin of man, but the essence is that the sovereign God will judge the sin of man (cf. 3:2).

#### IV. Structure.

There are several literary devices or clues used in the book. For example, Amos says, "For three transgressions and for four" (cf. 1:3, 6,9,11,13, 2:1,4,6). But that device does not follow throughout the whole book.

The book itself consists of three parts. First, there is a series of judgments (1-2), then a series of sermons (3-6), and finally, there is a series of visions (7-9). The first section deals with judgments against the nations and Israel. In the first section there are eight judgments, in the second there are three messages, and in the last, there are five visions.

Introduction. ch. 1:1,2

I. Eight judgments. ch. 1:3-2:16

II. Three sermons. ch. 3:1-6:14

III. Five visions. ch. 7:1-9:10

Conclusion. ch. 9:11-15

V. Purpose.

A. To pronounce judgment on Israel.

Jeroboam II (793-753) had enjoyed a brilliant career from the standpoint of military success. He had restored the boundaries of the Northern Kingdom to the limits which he had in 931 B.C. The result was an influx of wealth from the booty of war, and advantageous trade relations with Damascus and other cities. But along with the increase of wealth, there was materialism and greed on the part of the nobility. They shamelessly victimized the poor and cynically disregarded the rights of those who were socially beneath them. A general disregard for the sanctions of the seventh commandment had undermined the sanctity of the family and had rendered offensive their hypocritical attempt to appease God by their observance and religious forms.

The way Amos delivers his message is shrewd. He begins with the nations surrounding Israel, naming them one by one and moving around Israel getting closer and closer to Israel (you can almost hear Israel saying "Amen!" "Amen!"). Then he names Judah (you can hear the Northern Kingdom shout, "Hallelujah! The Southern Kingdom is getting it!"). Then Amos hits his target--the Northern Kingdom.

But there is more than cleverness

here. There is a concept: God doesn't condemn the sins of the sinner and condone the sins of the saint.

B. To prophesy the ultimate restoration of Israel.

The vast majority of the material concerns judgment. The conclusion deals with restoration (cf. 9:11-15).

Conclusion:

Amos pronounces judgment on the nations surrounding Israel and on Israel. He also predicts Israel will be restored.

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1

Gleason Archer, p.306.

## OBADIAH

Obadiah is the smallest book in the Old Testament, but it deals with one of the largest questions in life.

### I. Author.

The first verse declares, "This is the vision of Obadiah." That's all. There is no father, no king, nothing is given but his name. Consequently, nothing is known of his time, his town, or his family. He is an obscure prophet who probably lived in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

### II. Recipients.

#### A. Their date.

Dating Obadiah is difficult. There is no reference to any king in the opening verse. To complicate matters, the book describes an attack on Jerusalem that some feel could fit several different historical situations in the history of Israel (cf. vv. 13,14). The only historical reference point in the book is verses 10-14.

There were four significant invasions of Jerusalem in Old Testament times:

1. By the Egyptians 926 B.C.  
Reign of Rehoboam  
I Kings 14:24-25

2. By the Philistines 848-41 B.C.  
and Arabians  
Reign of Jeroboam  
II Chron. 21:16-17

3. By Israel (Northern Kingdom) 790 B.C.  
Reign of Amaziah  
II Kings 14:13-14

4. By Babylon 605-586 B.C.  
Reign of Zedekiah  
II Kings 24-25

Frankly, no one knows for certain to which invasion Obadiah refers. Evidently, it is not absolutely necessary to know which invasion is referred to in order to understand the book. Most believe it is either number 2 or 4 above. Many conservative scholars choose number 2 because of the place of Obadiah in the canon, and because of the lack of reference to the captivity. Assuming that to be the case, the date of the book is about 850 B.C.

#### B. Their description.

The content of the book concerns Edom (vs. 1), but it is doubtful that Obadiah was speaking to the Edomites. They are addressed, but that does not mean Obadiah was speaking directly to them. Rather, Obadiah was speaking to Israel, more specifically the Southern Kingdom, about Edom. For dramatic effect, he was speaking as if he were talking to them.

### III. Subject.

The subject of the book is judgment on Edom (cf. vv. 1,2).

### IV. Structure.

There is no literary device that neatly divides Obadiah into parts. Rather, the content determines the structure.

Introduction. vs. 1

#### I. The destruction of Edom.

- A. The certainty of Edom's destruction. vv. 2-3
- B. The reason for Edom's destruction. vv. 10-14

#### II. The deliverance of Israel. vv. 15-21

- A. The Day of the Lord in all nations. vv. 15-16
- B. The Day of the Lord in Israel. vv. 17-21

### V. Purpose.

#### A. To declare Edom's doom.

Clearly, Obadiah is declaring doom on Edom (cf. vv. 1,2,4,8). The situation was this: Edom and Israel were brothers. (That was literally true. Isaac and Rebekah had twin boys names Jacob and Esau, and out of those two sons came the two nations

Israel and Edom.) There had been rivalries between the two for many years, but about 850 B.C., Edom did some rather unloving things toward Israel. The Edomites looked on with pleasure at the misfortune of the Judeans (vs. 12). They took their possessions, and even took part in a conflict against them (vs. 14), so now Obadiah says that God will judge Edom for her cruelty to Judah.

#### B. To declare Israel's deliverance.

Obadiah 15-21 deals with the Day of the Lord. In verses 15 and 16 he says all nations will be judged, but he says in verse 17 that on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance. The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. In a word, God's justice will ultimately prevail.

### Conclusion.

Obadiah declares Edom's destruction because of her treatment of Israel, and the ultimate deliverance of Israel.

## JONAH

Charles Reade has said, "Jonah is the most beautiful story ever written in so small a compass. It contains forty-eight verses and 1328 English words...There is a growth of character, a distinct plot worked out without haste or cruelty. Only a great artist could have hit on a perfect proportion between dialogue and narrative."<sup>1</sup>

Cornill said, "this apparently trivial book is one of the deepest and grandest that was ever written."<sup>2</sup>

### I. Author.

The first verse of the book indicates Jonah, the son of Amittai, wrote the book which bears his name. From the book itself, we know what happened to him when God told him to go to Ninevah. Apart from that, there is only one other reference to him in the Old Testament, that is, II Kings 14:25. One Jewish tradition says that Jonah was the son of Zarephath, whom Elijah raised from the dead (I Kings 17:8-24).

### II. Recipients.

#### A. Their date.

Jonah lived and ministered under the reign of Jeroboam II (II Kings 14:25). Jeroboam II ruled from 782-753 B.C. (By the way, that was after the time of Elijah and just before the time of Amos and Hosea). So the date

of Jonah is 760 B.C.

#### B. Their description.

Under Jeroboam II, Israel enjoyed a period of resurgence and prosperity. Nationalistic fervor was no doubt running high. During the years of his reign, Assyria was in a period of mild decline because weak rulers had ascended the throne. Yet Assyria still remained a threat and her cruelty had become legendary. Graphic accounts of their cruel treatment of captives have been found in ancient Assyrian records, especially in the 9th and 7th centuries B.C.

Unger says, "The period of Jonah coincides admirably with historical conditions at Ninevah. Under Semiramis, the queen regent and her son Adad-Nirari III (810-782) there was an approach to monotheism under the worship of the god Nebo." He goes on to say that Assyrian history records two plagues in 756 and 759 B.C., as well as a total eclipse which was regarded as an indication of divine wrath (763 B.C.). These natural phenomenas may have prepared the Ninevites for Jonah's message.<sup>3</sup> Boa dates the visit of Jonah to Ninevah in the reign of Ashurdan III (773-775 B.C.)<sup>4</sup>

The ministry described in the book of Jonah was to the Gentile city of Ninevah, the capital city of Assyria. The recipients of the book are not specifically stated, but there is no doubt that it was written to



the Jews. After all, it is in the Jewish canon!

### III. Subject.

The subject of Jonah is God's mercy (cf. 4:2,10,11).

If the subject were Jonah, the book would end at chapter 2. If the subject were Ninevah, it would end with chapter 3. But the subject is God's mercy, or more specifically, the universality of God's mercy and therefore, the book has four chapters.

### IV. Structure.

Is Jonah history, or allegory? The critics want to make it an allegory written about 430 B.C. because they deny the supernatural. The allegorical approach makes Jonah represent Israel, the sea the Gentiles, the fish Babylon, and the three days in the fish the Babylonian captivity.

Jonah is history. He was a real person (II Kings 14:25). Jesus treated his experience as factual, not fictional (Matt. 12:39-41). By the way, there have been numerous incidences in modern times of men being swallowed by a big fish and living to tell about it.

This does not rule out the possibility that the historical incident may illustrate truth. That is typical, not allegorical interpretation (cf. the study under the Song of Solomon. In allegory, people and events are fictional. In typology, the

historicity of the people and events are maintained).

Jonah is historical, but it is different than all other prophecies. All others are taken up chiefly with prophetic utterances. Jonah records little of his utterance. It is mostly his experience. The story of Jonah has been compared to the stories of Elijah and Elisha (I Kings 17-19; II Kings 4-6). It is clearly narrative rather than prophecy.

But what is the structure? Some divide the book into four parts, a few three. It is probably more accurate to see only two (cf. 1:2 and 3:1).

- I. Jonah's commission. ch. 1:1-2:10
  - A. Jonah's commission. ch. 1:1-2
  - B. Jonah's course. ch. 1:3
  - C. Jonah's consequences. ch. 1:4-17
  - D. Jonah's confession. ch. 2:1-10
- II. Jonah's recommission. ch. 3:1-4:11
  - A. Jonah's recommission. ch. 3:1-2
  - B. Jonah's compliance. ch. 3:3-4
  - C. Ninevah's conversion. ch. 3:5-11
  - D. Jonah's complaint. ch. 4:1-3
  - E. God's curriculum. ch. 4:4-11

### V. Purpose.

- A. To demonstrate the universality (extent) of God's mercy.

The purpose of this book is to

show that God's mercy extends beyond Israel to all Gentiles.

B. To expose the exclusivism of Israel.

Though one major purpose of the book is to demonstrate the universality of God's mercy, the book does not end with God's mercy extending to Ninevah. It ends with God educating Jonah who was angry at God for saving Ninevah. In adding this last chapter, Jonah is exposing the narrowness of himself and his nation.

Conclusion.

Even after God twice commissioned Jonah to preach to Ninevah, and they repented, Jonah still did not think God should extend His mercy to them.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Reade as quoted in W.G. Scroggie, Know Your Bible, [London; Pickering & Inglis, 1949] p.159.

<sup>2</sup> Kyle M. Yates, Preaching From The Prophets, [USA; Broadman Press, 1942] p.159

<sup>3</sup> Unger, p.346.

<sup>4</sup> Boa, p.209

MICAH

Micah has been called the short-hand of Isaiah. There are similarities: (1) both prophesied of the early invasion of Assyria; (2) both spoke of Judah's deliverance, but later captivity in Babylon; (3) both emphasized the futility of mere ritual religion; both prophesied Messiah's coming (Isaiah spoke of His virgin birth; Micah spoke of His village birth); (5) both prophesied Israel's final deliverance which had to be preceded by repentance.

Yet there are contrasts: (1) Isaiah primarily addressed the aristocracy of urban Jerusalem whereas Micah spoke to the common people of the rural countryside; (2) Isaiah dealt largely with the international scene and Judah's false political alliances. On the other hand, Micah focused more on the personal and social sins of injustice that were prevalent in Judah; (3) whereas Isaiah extends his judgment to the surrounding nations, Micah limits his condemnation to Judah and Israel; (4) whereas Isaiah centers his Messianic vision around the servant concept, emphasizing atonement and personal salvation, Micah portrays Messiah's national deliverance made possible by God's pardoning grace as promised to Abraham.

I. Author.

The book opens by saying that it is the word of the Lord that came to Micah, but the verse does not mention his father, which is normally done indicating that his family was of humble origin. His town is given. Moresheth was about twenty miles

west of Jerusalem near Gath. The fact that he is identified by location rather than lineage suggests a lowly background. His many allusions to the work of a shepherd may indicate he, like Amos, was a shepherd. He was from the Southern Kingdom. Though a countryman, he ministered principally in the city.

He is quoted in Jeremiah 26:17-19. Some feel he was one of the men of Hezekiah who, together with Isaiah, transcribed Solomon's proverbs (cf. Proverbs 25:1).

## II. Recipients.

### A. Their date.

The dating of Micah is not difficult. Micah 1:1 informs the reader when he lived and lectured, namely in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Jotham reigned from 739-731 B.C., Ahaz from 731-715 B.C., and Hezekiah from 715-686 B.C.

Verse 1 also says his message concerned Samaria and Jerusalem. Micah, therefore, is the only prophet whose ministry was directed to both kingdoms. He predicted the fall of Samaria (1:6), which means much of his ministry took place before the Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C. His strong denunciation of idolatry and immorality also suggests that his ministry largely preceded the sweeping religious reforms of Hezekiah. So while he could have ministered from 739-686, the major part of his ministry

was probably between 735-710 B.C. He was a contemporary of Hosea in the North and Isaiah in the South (Isaiah prophesied seventeen or eighteen years before Micah). As a matter of fact, Isaiah and Micah contain one message in common (cf. Micah 4:1-3 and Isa. 2:2-4). Isaiah ministered in the court; Micah to the common man.

### B. Their description.

The moral conditions during Isaiah's time were corrupt. No class of people were exempt. Princes, prophets, priests and people were all victims of social disorder and moral decay (cf. 2:2,8,9,11, 3:1-3, 5:11), yet they clung to religious ordinances and forms. Micah exposes the futility of it all (4:7-8).

In chapter 6 he addresses the Northern Kingdom as if it is still capable of escaping divine judgment through a last minute repentance. They did not listen. Samaria fell in 722 B.C. From Jeremiah 26: 18,19 we learn that his earnest warnings against the reign of Hezekiah were taken seriously and made an important contribution to the revival which took place under government sponsorship.

## III. Subject.

The subject is not sin, it is judgment on sin (cf. 3:12).

#### IV. Structure.

Micah uses the same repeated phrase, "hear," to convey his message (cf. 1:2, 3:1, 6:1. N.B.: 3:9 uses the phrase, but it is a repetition of 3:1). In each section there is judgment and hope.

- Introduction. ch.1:1
- I. Summon to the people. ch. 1:2-3:13
    - A. Judgment. ch. 1:2-2:11
    - B. Hope. ch. 2:12-13
  - II. Summon to the leaders. ch. 3:1-5:15
    - A. Judgment. ch. 3:1-12
    - B. Hope. ch. 4:1-5:15
  - III. Summon to the mountains. ch. 6:1-7:20
    - A. Judgment. ch. 6:1-16
    - B. Hope. ch. 7:1-20

#### V. Purpose.

- A. To expose sin.

Micah lived during a time of moral and spiritual decay. It was widespread and deep. The prophets and the people, the leaders and the laymen, were all involved. They had an outward show of "religion" and thus respectability which, no doubt, blinded them to the seriousness and hideousness of their sin.

So one of Micah's purposes is to expose sin for what it is. They had outward conformity to rite. God wanted inward conformity to

righteousness. Micah 6:6-8 is classic. Dean Stanley said that these verses contain "one of the most sublime and impassionate declarations of spiritual religion the Old Testament contains."<sup>1</sup>

- B. To pronounce judgment.

Micah is not just a teacher explaining a social or spiritual phenomena. He is a prophet. He exposes sin and pronounces judgment. He predicts the downfall and destruction of Israel, which happened in 722 B.C. (1:6), and Judah, which did not happen until 606 B.C. (1:9).

- C. To promise hope.

Yet with all the sin and judgment in Micah, there is also hope. It keeps seeping through. Messiah will come (5:2), the Messianic Kingdom will come (4:1-2), and more important, mercy will come (7:18-19).

#### Conclusion.

Micah summoned everyone (i.e., all of Israel, North and South) to hear God's judgment on their sin and His ultimate blessing on their nation.

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<sup>1</sup>Dean Stanley as quoted in Robert Lee, The Outlined Bible, [London; Pickering & Inglis, N.D.] Analysis No. 33

## NAHUM

Two of the minor prophets ministered to Ninevah: Jonah and Nahum.

### I. Author.

Nahum 1:1 says that this book is the vision of Nahum. All that is known of him is what is said about him in this verse, and it says very little. It does not tell us who his father was, or who the king was when he lived. It only tells of his town.

### II. Recipients.

#### A. Their date.

There is no mention of the king in the opening verse, but there are several clues in the book as to its date. Nahum 3:8-10 refers to the fall of No Amon (Thebes). That Egyptian city fell before the armies of Ashurbanipal in 664 B.C.

On the other hand, Nahum predicted the fall of Ninevah which took place in 612 B.C. So Nahum must be placed somewhere between 664 and 612 B.C. No Amon was restored a decade after its defeat. Nahum's failure to mention that has led several to the conclusion that Nahum was written before 654 B.C. The absence of any mention of the king in 1:1 may point to the reign of the wicked king Manasseh (686-642 B.C.).

Others prefer a time closer to the fulfillment, perhaps 625 or 620 B.C.

The date was probably about 655 B.C., when Ninevah was still in its glory.

#### B. Their description.

Jonah preached to Ninevah about 760 B.C. The city was converted, but evidently the revival was short-lived. The Assyrians soon returned to their ruthless practices. Sargon II of Assyria destroyed Samaria in 722 B.C. and promptly scattered the ten tribes. Under Sennacherib, the Assyrians came close to capturing Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah (701 B.C.). By the time of Nahum, that is, about 660 B.C., Assyria reached the peak of its prosperity and power under Ashurbanipal (669-633 B.C.). Ninevah became the mightiest city on earth with walls 100 ft. high and wide enough to accommodate three chariots riding abreast. Scattered around the walls were high towers that stretched an additional 100 ft. in the air, the walls were surrounded by a moat 150 ft. wide and 60 ft. deep. Ninevah appeared impregnable and could withstand a twenty year siege. Thus, Nahum's prophecy of Ninevah's overthrow seemed unlikely indeed.

The book is against Ninevah (1:1), but technically, it is to Judah (1:15).

### III. Subject.

Nahum tells us in the first verse that his book and burden is against Ninevah. To be more specific, the subject of Nahum is the judgment of Ninevah.

### IV. Structure.

Nahum uses no literary device to reveal the structure of his thought. The content is the only clue.

#### Introduction. ch. 1:1

- I. Ninevah's judgment decreed.  
ch. 1:2-15
  - A. The divine judge. ch. 1:2-7
  - B. The divine judgment. ch. 1:8-15
- II. Ninevah's judgment described.  
ch. 2:1-13
  - A. The seige and capture.  
ch. 2:1-8
  - B. The sacking of the city.  
ch. 2:9-13
- III. Ninevah's judgment deserved.  
ch. 3:1-19
  - A. Because of her sin. ch. 3:1-7
  - B. Because of justice. ch. 3:8-19

### V. Purpose.

- A. To condemn Ninevah.

Assyria and Ninevah were known for their military power and cruelty.

They were a nation of hunters and warriors, not artists and scientists. Most of their art, culture and science they derived from the Babylonians. Most of their gods were gods of war.

Nahum describes Ninevah's destruction in detail: destroyed by flood (1:8, 2:6) and fire (1:10, 2:13, 3:13,15); the profaning of Ninevah's temples and images (1:14); the city will never be rebuilt (1:14, 2:11,13); the leaders will flee (2:9, 3:17); the easy capture of the fortress around the city (3:12); the destruction of the gates (3:13); and the lengthy seige and frantic efforts to strengthen its defenses (3:14). All of these events have been authenticated in archeological finds and historical accounts.

Scroggie says, "At the time of this pronouncement, Ninevah appeared to be impregnable with walls 100 ft. high and broad enough for three chariots to drive abreast on them, with a circumference of sixty miles and adorned by more than 1200 towers. But what are bricks and mortar to God!...In the 2nd century after Christ, not a vestige of it remained, and its very site was long a matter of uncertainty."<sup>1</sup>

So complete was the destruction of Ninevah that the city was almost a myth for two millennium until its recent discovery in 1842 by Layard and Botta. Alexander marched by it in 331 B.C. There was no evidence of its existence.

Nahum's book is one great big "at last!"

B. To vindicate God.

This condemnation of Ninevah exalted God's justice. Nahum is not overjoyed at Ninevah's destruction because of any nationalistic fanaticism or vengeful malice. Rather, as a man of God, he speaks of one who is wholly preoccupied with the Lord's cause on the earth. His earnest desire is to see God vindicate His holiness in the eyes of the heathen as over against the inhumane and ruthless tyranny of that God-defying empire which had for a long time trampled upon all the nations with heartless brutality.

C. To comfort Judah.

The primary purpose of Nahum was not just to condemn Ninevah, but to comfort Judah. Remember, the Assyrians defeated the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. Judah had escaped at the time, but Assyria was still at the zenith of power. The question in the minds of the Jews at the time was, Would Judah be punished too? Would Judah be conquered by Assyria? Nahum brings good news (cf. 1:15).

Conclusion:

Nahum pronounced judgment on Ninevah to vindicate God and comfort Judah.

## HABAKKUK

Habakkuk has been called, "The free thinker among the prophets."

I. Author.

Habakkuk is named as author, not once but twice (1:1, 3:1). Beyond that, practically nothing is known about him. He is never mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. He was a prophet (1:1, 3:1).

II. Recipients.

A. Their date.

There is no explicit time reference of Habakkuk. No king is mentioned in the introduction, but the Babylonian invasion is pictured as an imminent event (1:6, 2:1, 3:16). The descriptions indicate that Babylon had become a world power. The Chaldeans conquered Babylon in 612 B.C., so it had to be after that.

It is unlikely that the prophecy took place during the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) because the moral and spiritual reforms of Josiah do not fit the situation in Habakkuk 1:2-4. The prophet's concern for violence in Judah suggests a time after the death of Josiah during the wicked reign of Jehoiachim.

The most likely date would be about 607 B.C., when Jehoiachim's reign

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<sup>1</sup> Scroggie, p.181.

was still well under way and before Judah was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C. Habakkuk, then, was a contemporary of Jeremiah, prophesying with him in the Southern Kingdom as it plunged toward national collapse.

Josiah had brought reforms, but they abruptly ended with his death in 609 B.C. The seeds of corruption planted by Manasseh quickly came to fruition under Jehoiachin.

#### B. Their description.

The nobles, and even religious leaders were shamelessly robbing and oppressing the common people in Judah. Therefore, they were to be punished through the instrumentality of the Babylonians. As a matter of fact, the nobility were the first to be taken into captivity in the two preliminary deportations of 606 and 597 B.C. The majority of the lower class were left in the land until the third deportation in 586 B.C.

But Habakkuk sees that the Babylonians themselves will pose a serious problem theologically. How is one to reconcile God using them with His holiness, for they were a bloody and ruthless people who had no respect for God's moral law. Instead of falling into impatient cynicism, Habakkuk puts the situation before the Lord (2:1). The book is God's answer to Habakkuk.

#### III. The subject.

The subject of the book is the righteousness of God (or the holiness of God).

Habakkuk is grappling with the question of how can God use a wicked instrument like the Chaldeans to execute His purpose? Could the divine purpose be justified in such an event? God's righteousness needed vindicating to His people. How does wickedness seem to triumph, while the righteous suffer? This is the question of Job applied to the nation.

#### IV. Structure.

The literary structure of the book of Habakkuk is a conversation between the prophet and God.

Scroggie has said, "The literary form of the Prophecy is unique among the prophetic Writings. The prophet casts his thought into a dramatic representation with Jehovah and himself as the speakers."<sup>1</sup>

##### Introduction.

ch. 1:1

- I. The prophet's problems (the righteousness of God). ch. 1:2-2:20
  - A. First problem (Israel's sin and God's silence). ch. 1:2-11
  - B. Second problem (Babylon's cruelty and God's silence). ch. 2:12-20
- II. The prophet's prayer. ch. 3:1-19



## V. Purpose.

The purpose of Habakkuk is to vindicate God's righteousness in using one wicked nation to punish another.

The immediate situation that Habakkuk speaks to is the sin of Judah. Why doesn't God judge her sin? When God answers that He is about to judge her sin by using Babylon, Habakkuk has a greater problem. How can God remain righteous and use one wicked nation to judge another wicked nation?

That's the immediate situation, but there is an abiding universal question here. Circumstances often seem to contradict God's revelation of His righteousness or His love. If He is righteous, how can He allow sin? If He is loving, how can He allow suffering? Habakkuk struggled when he saw a man flagrantly violating God's law and distorting justice on every level without fear of divine intervention. He wanted to know why God was allowing growing iniquity to go unpunished.

God's answer, of course, is that Habakkuk could trust Him, even in the worst of circumstances because of His matchless wisdom, goodness and power. God's plan is perfect, and nothing is big enough to stand in the way of its ultimate fulfillment. In spite of appearances to the contrary, God is still on the throne as the Lord of history and the ruler of nations. Habakkuk must simply trust the Lord. He has been called "the Prophet of faith" and "the Grandfather of the

Reformation." Paul got his statement, "The just shall live by faith" from Habakkuk, and Luther got it from Paul.

## Conclusion.

Habakkuk narrates his own struggle with the righteousness of God in order to vindicate God's righteousness.

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<sup>1</sup>W.G. Scroggie, Know Your Bible, vol. 1, [London; Pickering & Inglis, 1953] p.195.

## ZEPHANIAH

As Jonah and Nahum are the only two books among the Minor Prophets that deal with Ninevah, so Joel and Zephaniah are the only two Minor Prophets whose subject is the Day of the Lord.

### I. Author.

Zephaniah 1:1 is a very unusual verse. Usually, the author gives his name and the name of his father. Zephaniah identifies himself and traces his lineage back four generations to Hezekiah. This was doubtless Hezekiah the king. Zephaniah was thus the only minor prophet of the royal family. Being a distant cousin of King Josiah, Zephaniah evidently had access to the royal court and knew the religious climate around Jerusalem well.

### II. Recipients.

#### A. Their date.

Zephaniah dates his book for us. In 1:1, he fixes his prophecy in "the days of Josiah." Josiah reigned from 640 B.C. to 609 B.C. 2:13 indicates that the destruction of Ninevah was still future. That happened in 612 B.C. So the book must be dated before that. The sins listed in 1:3-13 and 3:1-7 indicate a date prior to Josiah's reform when the sins from the reign of Manasseh and Amon were still prominent. Zephaniah should be

dated, then, around 630-625 B.C. Jeremiah, Nahum and Habakkuk were his contemporaries.

#### B. Their description.

The evil reigns of Manasseh and Amon, totaling fifty-five years, had such a profound effect upon Judah that it never recovered. Zephaniah probably played a significant role in preparing Judah for the revivals that took place in the reign of the nation's last righteous king. But Josiah's reforms were too little too late, and the people reverted to their crass idolatry and teaching soon after Josiah was gone. Nevertheless, Zephaniah was one of the eleventh-hour prophets to Judah.

### III. Subject.

The one subject which includes all of the themes of the book is the Day of the Lord. Robert Lee says "the Day of the Lord" is mentioned seven times and forms one of the key studies of this book.<sup>1</sup> Luck says, "The Day of the Lord, that day, the day, etc." appears twenty times in the book. Scofield says that he uses the book.<sup>2</sup> Scofield says that he used the term more than any other prophet.<sup>3</sup>

### IV. Structure.

Like Micah, Zephaniah comes out swinging. His book is pure preaching (cf. 1:2).

The Day of the Lord includes judgment and blessing, tribulation and millennium. That is the division of the Day of the Lord, and that is the division of the book of Zephaniah.

Introduction. ch. 1:1

I. The Day of the Lord--Judgment.  
ch. 1:2-3:7

- A. Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. ch. 1:2-2:3
- B. Judgment on the surrounding nations. ch. 2:4-15
- C. Judgment on Jerusalem.  
ch. 3:1-7

II. The Day of the Lord--Blessing.  
ch. 3:8-20

## V. Purpose.

The simple and single purpose of Zephaniah seems to be to compel Judah to repent. 2:3 is the key verse. In order to accomplish that purpose, Zephaniah does two things:

A. He announces coming judgment.

He announces doom and destruction and urges them to seek the Lord that they 'might be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger' (cf. 2:3). Zephaniah means 'the Lord hides, protects.' There is a sense in which his name captures the thought of the book.

B. He announces the coming blessing.

Zephaniah does something else to accomplish his purpose. He announces the coming Kingdom and blessing (cf. 3:13).

This is a truth we tend to neglect or forget. The goodness of God also leads to repentance (cf. Rom. 2:4).

Evidently, it worked. If we are correct in saying that Zephaniah prophesied early in the reign of Josiah, then indeed he contributed to the revival and reforms under Josiah. It was short-lived, but it worked.

## Conclusion:

Zephaniah announced the coming Day of the Lord in order to get Judah to seek the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Lee, p.43.

<sup>2</sup> G. Coleman Luck, The Bible Book by Book, [ Chicago; Moody Press, 1955 ] p.145.

<sup>3</sup> New Scofield Reference Bible [ New York; Oxford University, 1967 ] p.957.

## HAGGAI

As Scroggie points out, "At this point we enter upon a new prophetic period. The history of the people of Israel, as to government, is divisible into three periods: (1) Israel under Judges, Moses to Samuel; (2) under Kings, Saul to Zedekiah; and (3) under Priests, Joshua to the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Viewed in relation to the captivity, the periods are: (1) Pre-Exilic; (2) Exilic; and (3) Post-Exilic. Or, viewed in relation to the world Empires, the periods are: (1) the Assyrian; (2) the Babylonian; and (3) the Medo-Persian. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi ministered in the third of each of these periods."<sup>1</sup>

### I. Author.

Haggai's name not only appears in the first verse, it occurs eight times after that, and that in just two chapters! (cf. 1:3, 12,13, 2:1,10,13,14,20). He is known only from his book and from two references to him in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. Haggai returned from Babylon with the remnant under Zerubbabel and evidently lived in Jerusalem. Haggai and Zechariah worked together in encouraging the people to rebuild the temple.

### II. Recipients.

#### A. Their date.

Dating Haggai is not a problem-- at all. He gives us the year, the month and the day of his ministry.

In 538 B.C., Cyrus of Persia issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Palestine and rebuild their temple. The first group, led by Zerubbabel, returned and in 536 B.C. began work on the temple (cf. Ezra 4-6). They were soon discouraged by the desolation of the land, crop failure, hard work and even hostility from their neighbors. Their work on the temple ceased in 534 B.C.

They became preoccupied with their own building projects. They used political opposition and a theory that the temple was not to be rebuilt until some time later (perhaps after Jerusalem was rebuilt) as excuses for neglecting the temple.

God then called Haggai and Zechariah to convince the people to complete the temple. Both are precisely dated. As a matter of fact, Haggai is one of the most precisely dated books of the Bible (only Ezekiel and Zechariah provide such exact dates). Haggai is also the first prophetic book to be dated by Gentile kings (cf. 1:1 and also the fact this is the time of the Gentiles).

Haggai 1:1	August 29, 520 B.C.
Haggai 1:15	September 21, 520 B.C.
Haggai 2:1	October 17, 520 B.C.
Haggai 2:20	December 18, 520 B.C.

In other words, this book spans four months. After fourteen years of neglect, work was resumed in 520 B.C. By the way, the temple was completed in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:15).

B. Their description.

Basically, the people were discouraged by the desolation of the land, crop failure, hard work, and even the hostility from their neighbors. They needed to be encouraged to resume work on the temple.

The recipients were Zerubbabel, the governor, Joshua, the High Priest (1:1, 2:2,21), as well as all the people (1:13, 2:2).

III. Subject.

The subject of Haggai is the rebuilding of the temple (cf. 1:2-4, 8,9, 14, 2:3,7,15).

IV. Structure.

In a word, the literary structure of Haggai is dated messages. The only difficulty is that some see only four messages, while others see five. The key phrase is, "The word of the Lord came..."

- I. First message (concerning neglect). ch. 1:1-15
  - A. Rebuke for neglecting the temple. ch. 1:2-4
  - B. Results of neglecting the temple. ch. 1:5-11
  - C. Resolve to rebuild the temple. ch. 1:12-15
- II. Second message (concerning glory). ch. 2:1-9
  - A. The glory of the present temple. ch. 2:1-5
  - B. The glory of the future temple. ch. 2:6-9
- III. Third message (concerning blessing). ch. 2:10-19
  - A. Economic blight of neglecting the temple. ch. 2:10-17
  - B. Economic blessing of building the temple. ch. 2:18,19
- IV. Fourth message (concerning the Kingdom). ch. 2:20-23
  - A. Future overthrow of Gentile kingdoms. ch. 2:20-22
  - B. Future authority of Zerubbabel's kingdom. ch. 2:23

V. Purpose.

- A. To encourage the people to rebuild the temple.

When Haggai came on the scene, the people were spiritually discouraged and indifferent. They were busy on their own houses (1:4) and made excuses as to why they did not work on the Lord's house (1:2). Haggai came to motivate the people and the leaders to reorder their priorities and complete the temple (1:8).

- B. To enlighten the people as to God's blessing.

When Haggai began, the people were dissatisfied (1:6). What they did not realize was that was a symptom of their spiritual disease. Haggai seeks to get them to consider their ways (1:5,7). Putting their self-interests first led to their dissatisfaction. Only when they put God first and sought to do His will would He bring His people joy and prosperity.

#### Conclusion:

Haggai preached four messages in four months to motivate the people and the leaders to rebuild the temple in particular, and to obedience in general (cf. 1:12).

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<sup>1</sup>Scroggie, p.210.

## ZECHARIAH

Zechariah could be called the encouraging prophet.

- I. Author.

The opening verse of the book says that Zechariah wrote it. For the Bible-believing conservative scholars, that settles it.

There are at least twenty-nine men in the Old Testament by the name of Zechariah. The Zechariah who was the author of this book was born in Babylon. He was evidently of the priestly lineage (1:1,7, Ezra 5:1, 6:14, Neh. 12:4,16), but the book calls him a prophet (1:1,7). When the Jewish exiles returned under Zerubbabel, Zechariah was among them.

According to Jewish tradition, Zechariah was a member of the great synagogue that collected and preserved the canon of revealed Scripture. Matthew 23:35 indicates he was murdered between the temple and the altar, the same way that an earlier Zechariah was martyred (see II Chron. 24:20-21).

- II. Recipients.

- A. Their date.

Zechariah 1:1 gives the date very clearly: "In the eighteenth month of the second year of Darius..." The verse not only records the year,

but also the month. To be exact, it was November 20, 520 B.C.

That means that Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai the prophet, Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the High Priest. Haggai began his ministry first (by two months), but it was their combined preaching which resulted in the completion of the temple in 516 B.C.

When did Zechariah's ministry end? The last dated prophecy was in December, 518 B.C. (cf. ch. 7-8). Some have dated it December 4, but chapters 9-14 are undated and should be put much later, probably about 480 B.C., when the Greeks were rising to world power (9:13). Boa adds, "This would mean that Darius I (521-486) had passed from the scene and was succeeded by Xerxes (486-464), the king who deposed Vashti and made Esther queen of Persia."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Zechariah had a 40+ year ministry dating from 520-480 B.C.

#### B. Their description.

The Jews of the return received the book; more specifically, the remnant who had returned sixteen years before with high hopes of rebuilding the temple. Local interference caused them to forsake the project. They then became a "me" generation, being absorbed with personal and domestic affairs. That brought the Lord's chastening of crop failure and economic depression.

The recipients were all the people of Israel who returned from the captivity (1:2,4, 7:5, etc.). Some messages were especially addressed to Joshua, the High Priest (3:8), and Zerubbabel, the governor (4:6).

#### III. Subject.

The subject of Zechariah is the restoration of Jerusalem (cf. 1:16, 2:2, 8:3, 9:9, 12:5, 13:1, 14:2).

#### IV. Structure.

The literary structure of at least the first part of the book almost jumps out, even to the casual reader. The literary structure of 1:7-6:8 is a series of visions (cf. 1:8,18, 2:1, 3:1, etc.).

In 6:9-8:23 he says, "The word of the Lord came unto me." Chapters 7 and 8 contain questions.

The last chapters, 9-14, consist of two "burdens" (cf. 9:1 and 12:1).

Introduction: A call to repentance. ch. 1:1-6

I. Visions. ch. 1:7-6:15

II. Questions. ch. 7:1-8:23

A. Questions about fasts. ch. 7:1-3  
B. The four-fold answer. ch. 7:4-8:23

III. Burdens. ch. 9:1-14:21

A. First burden. ch. 9:1-11:17  
B. Second burden. ch. 12:1-14:21

## V. Purpose.

- A. To stimulate the completion of the temple by proclaiming the restoration of Jerusalem.

In a sense, Zechariah is continuing the ministry of Haggai to get the temple completed, yet he and Haggai approach the goal differently. For one thing, Haggai uses rebuke, whereas Zechariah employs encouragement.

- B. To promote spiritual revival so the people could call upon the Lord with humble hearts and commit their ways to Him.

To a degree, Haggai and Zechariah differ here, too. Haggai's chief task was to arouse the people to the necessity of the outward task for rebuilding the temple, whereas Zechariah goes beyond that to seek an inward spiritual renewal of the people. Zechariah was not only interested in the physical rebuilding of the temple, but also the spiritual renewal of the people.

## Conclusion:

By proclaiming the ultimate restoration of Jerusalem, Zechariah urges the people to rebuild the temple and recommit themselves to the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup>Boa, p.240.

## MALACHI

Malachi is the last book in our Old Testament canon. (That was not true in the Jewish canon, but there is no doubt that he comes at the end of the Old Testament period).

### I. Author.

Malachi 1:1 says the author was Malachi. The only Old Testament mention of him is in this verse, and it tells us nothing, not even his father's name. All we know is that Jewish tradition says he was a member of the great synagogue.

Unger adds, "The canonical and doctrinal authority of Malachi is attested by New Testament citation. Compare Malachi 4:5,6 and Matthew 11:10,14; 17:11,12; Mark 9:10, 11; Luke 1:17. Compare Malachi 3:1 with Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2 and Malachi 1:2,3 with Romans 9:13."<sup>1</sup>

### II. Recipients.

#### A. Their date.

Malachi 1:1 does not mention his father, his home town, or the king or kings who reigned during his ministry. Therefore, an exact date cannot be established.

However, internal clues can help fix an approximate date: (1) the Edomites had been driven from Mt. Seir, but had not returned, necessitating a date after 585 B.C. (cf. 1:3-4). (2) the remnant had



returned, rebuilt the temple, and were offering sacrifices (1:7-10, 3:8). The temple was complete in 516 B.C., so the book must have been written after that. (3) evidently, many years had passed since the offerings were instituted because the priest had grown tired of them and corruptions had crept into the system. (4) the moral and religious problems in Malachi are quite similar to those faced by Ezra and Nehemiah. (5) the Persian term for governor (pechah) is used in 1:8. By itself, all this indicates is that the book was written during the Persian domination of Israel (539-333). But the verse indicates that this governor might be bribed. That would hardly be Nehemiah.

Nehemiah returned to Persia in 432, but came back to Palestine around 425 B.C. and dealt with the sins described in Malachi. Therefore, it is likely that Malachi proclaimed his message while Nehemiah was absent, almost a century after Haggai and Zechariah began their ministries (520 B.C.).

All this leads to a date of about 430 B.C. Unger sums up the situation: "The book is obviously later than Haggai and Zechariah. The temple had not only been completed and sacrifices offered (1:7-10; 3:8), but enough time had elapsed for abuses and laxities to creep in, which Malachi unscathingly condemns. Personal piety of priest and people

had degenerated (1:6-8). Mixed marriages were contracted (2:10-12). Payment of tithes had been neglected (3:8-10)."<sup>2</sup>

#### B. Their description.

According to the book itself, the recipients were the people of Israel (1:1, 2:11, 3:6-7), the priests (1:6, 2:1), and a faithful group (4:2,3).

The remnant had returned to Jerusalem and the temple had been rebuilt, but the people had become selfish and sensual. They had grown careless and neglectful in their spiritual duties. Perhaps their interpretation of the glowing prophecies of the exilic and pre-exilic prophets had led them to expect the Messianic kingdom immediately upon their return. They were, therefore, discouraged and skeptical (2:17). This doubt of divine justice had caused them to neglect vital religion and true piety, and they had given place to mere formality. They had not relapsed into idolatry, but a spirit of worldliness had crept in and they were guilty of many vices.

#### III. Subject.

The subject of Malachi is God's charges against His people.

#### IV. Structure.

In his book, Malachi, a Study Guide Commentary, Charles D. Isbell claims there was a style of argumentation that came to be practiced in Jewish literature in the 5th century B.C. It was characterized by three basic elements: an abrasive statement, an anticipated objection or question, and an elaboration on the original theme combined with the answering of the specific objections (p. 8,9). This basic rhetorical question-answer format was the method of Malachi. Consequently, some scholars have called him the Hebrew Socrates.

Malachi contains a series of God's accusations against Israel. These are followed by questions, supposedly asked by the audience, but actually stated by the author. These questions are then answered. Seven of these dot the landscape of Malachi; two are used in the same charge.

By the way, of the fifty-five verses in Malachi, twenty-seven are spoken by God, the highest proportion of all the prophets.

Introduction. ch. 1:1

- I. The charge against the nation.  
ch. 1:2-5
- II. The charge against the priests.  
ch. 1:6-2:9
- III. The charge against the people.  
ch. 2:10-4:3

Conclusion. ch. 4:4-6

#### Six Accusations

1. You have doubted My love (1:2)  
ch. 1:2-5
2. You have despised My name (1:6)  
ch. 1:6-2:9
3. You have disobeyed My law (2:14)  
ch. 2:10-16
4. You have discredited My promise (2:17). ch. 2:17-3:6
5. You have defrauded My storehouse (3:7,8) ch. 3:7-12
6. You have denied My blessings (3:13) ch. 3:13-4:6

#### V. Purpose.

The purpose of Malachi is to rebuke the sins of the priests and the people so that they would return to the Lord.

To understand and appreciate the purpose of Malachi, it must be kept in mind that Israel had been, in the past, in idolatry. The exile had cured that. They were back in the land and the temple had been rebuilt.

The problem now was lethargy and stagnation. The priests and people, leaders and laymen were callous spiritually. Malachi denounces the indifference and hypocrisy of the priests, impure marriages, Sabbath-breaking, the lack of personal godliness, their failure to pay their tithes and their skepticism.

But the critical point is this: they had outward religious form (the

temple), but they lacked inward heart-felt righteousness. They were indifferent and insensitive to their indifference.

Haggai and Zechariah rebuked the people for failure to rebuild the temple. Malachi rebukes them for neglect of the temple.

Conclusion:

Malachi rebukes the sin of the priests and the people so that they would return to the Lord (cf. 3:7).

Boa says, "Malachi is also the only prophet who ends his book with judgment. While Joel and Zephaniah present the theme of the day of the Lord with greater intensity than Malachi (3:2,17: 4:1,3,5), they end on a theme of hope and blessing. But Malachi is a fitting conclusion to the Old Testament because it underscores the sinful human condition and anticipates God's solution in the work of the coming Messiah."

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<sup>1</sup>Unger, p.360.

<sup>2</sup>Unger, p. 359.

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