

Knowing the Old Testament II¹

Part 1

General Introduction

I. Why Study the Old Testament

- a. The OT was Jesus' Scripture
- b. The OT makes up $\frac{3}{4}$ of our Bible (75.55%)
- c. All of Scripture is God's Word (2 Tim 3:16)
- d. The OT provides important truths about God
- e. The OT provides the framework for understanding the NT

"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4)

"Now these things happened to them [the wilderness generation] as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11)

"We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus" (Acts 13:32–33)

- f. The OT helps us understand Christ

"Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. ... Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24:27; 44-47)

"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:46–47)

II. The Protestant Order of the Canonical Books

Protestant tradition has generally divided the books of our canon in this fashion.

Protestant Canon

Law (Pentateuch)	Poetry
1. Genesis	18. Job
2. Exodus	19. Psalms
3. Leviticus	20. Proverbs
4. Numbers	21. Ecclesiastes
5. Deuteronomy	22. Song of Solomon
History	Prophecy
6. Joshua	<i>Major Prophets</i> <i>Minor Prophets</i>

¹These notes are an edited version of notes developed by Dr. Robert McCabe.

7. Judges	23. Isaiah	28. Hosea
8. Ruth	24. Jeremiah	29. Joel
9. 1 Samuel	25. Lamentations	30. Amos
10. 2 Samuel	26. Ezekiel	31. Obadiah
11. 1 Kings	27. Daniel	32. Jonah
12. 2 Kings		33. Micah
13. 1 Chronicles		34. Nahum
14. 2 Chronicles		35. Habakkuk
15. Ezra		36. Zephaniah
16. Nehemiah		37. Haggai
17. Esther		38. Zechariah
		39. Malachi

The Protestant order for the canonical books has a fourfold division of our 39 books into Law, History, Poetry and Prophecy. The Protestant arrangement of the books follows the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament referred to as the Septuagint. The various translators of the Septuagint added some additional books called the Apocrypha. We do not have these books in our canon. The reason for this is that the books of the Apocrypha were never considered inspired by the Jews and were therefore never added to the Jewish collection of inspired writings.

III. An Overview of Israel's History

Pentateuch	Joshua, Judges, Ruth	Samuel, Kings, Chronicles	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
Israel's Period of Growth	The Conquest and Era of Judges	The United and Divided Kingdom	Babylonian Captivity and Resettlement as a Vassal State
2165 B.C.	1405 B.C.	1050 B.C.	586 B.C.
760 years	355 years	464 years	186 years

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPHETS

I. Historical information

The prophetic books make up approximately one-fourth of our Old Testament. The books that we classify as the “Prophets” are found in the last part of the OT. The actual books of this portion of our Bible are identical with the same books of the Hebrew Old Testament. Further, we divide the prophetic books into two sections: the Major and Minor Prophets. We are generally more familiar with the four major prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The section known as the Minor Prophets covers the final 12 prophetic books, Hosea through Malachi. Because of their brevity, these books were labeled as the “Minor Prophets” in the latter part of the fourth century A.D.

Prior to the time of Christ, the twelve Minor Prophets were placed together on one scroll. As a result, they are collectively referred to in the Hebrew Canon as “The Twelve.” This type of designation goes back to the time of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus 49:10) and was also known as such by Josephus (Harrison, p. 858).

In the Protestant Canon the Major and Minor Prophets are not strictly arranged according to chronology. The following chart compares the canonical arrangement with a chronological one (these dates are approximate and have been taken from Freeman, pp. 136–37).

Canonical Order	Chronological Order	Dates
1. Isaiah	1. Obadiah	845 B.C.
2. Jeremiah	2. Joel	835
3. Ezekiel	3. Jonah	782
4. Daniel	4. Hosea	760
5. Hosea	5. Amos	760
6. Joel	6. Isaiah	739
7. Amos	7. Micah	735
8. Obadiah	8. Nahum	650
9. Jonah	9. Zephaniah	640
10. Micah	10. Jeremiah	627
11. Nahum	11. Habakkuk	609
12. Habakkuk	12. Daniel	605
13. Zephaniah	13. Ezekiel	593
14. Haggai	14. Haggai	520
15. Zechariah	15. Zechariah	520
16. Malachi	16. Malachi	433

As we can see there is not a strict chronological arrangement in the Old Testament Prophets, but there is a general chronological arrangement with the Major Prophets and three groups of the Minor Prophets. For example, with the Major Prophets, the events of Isaiah took place while Assyria was in power, Jeremiah when Assyria followed by Babylon was in power, Ezekiel when Babylon was dominant, and Daniel when Babylon then the Medo-Persian empires controlled the ancient Near East. The Major Prophets reflect the progressive dominance of ANE powers ranging in the time from the middle of the eighth century to the fifth century B.C.

Again, with the Minor Prophets, Hosea through Micah occurred during the Divided Kingdom, Nahum to Habakkuk during the period of the single Judean Kingdom, and Haggai to Malachi during postexilic period. With these three groups, the Minor Prophets were arranged according to chronology as stated in the superscription for each book, length of the book, or other shared concepts (Keil, 1:364–66). Returning to the 16 Old Testament Prophets, the following chart provides information for each prophetic book, the world power, and the parallel material in the Historical Books (from Wilkinson and Boa, pp. 227–28, with minor revisions).

Prophetic Book	World Power	Parallels from Historical Books
1. Isaiah	Assyria	2 Kings 15:1–20:21 2 Chronicles 26:16–32:33
2. Jeremiah	Assyria; Babylon	2 Kings 22:3–25:30 2 Chronicles 34:1–36:21
3. Ezekiel	Babylon	2 Kings 24:8–25:30 2 Chronicles 36:9–21
4. Daniel	Babylon; Medo-Persia	2 Kings 23:34–25:30 2 Chronicles 36:4–23
5. Hosea	Assyria	2 Kings 14:23–18:12
6. Joel	Assyria	2 Kings 12:1–21 2 Chronicles 24:1–27
7. Amos	Assyria	2 Kings 14:23–15:7
8. Obadiah	Assyria	2 Kings 8:16–24 2 Chronicles 21:1–20
9. Jonah	Assyria	2 Kings 13:10–25 14:23–29
10. Micah	Assyria	2 Kings 15:32–19:37 2 Chronicles 27:1–32:23
11. Nahum	Assyria; Babylon	2 Kings 21:1–18 2 Chronicles 33:1–20
12. Habakkuk	Babylon	2 Kings 23:31–24:7 2 Chronicles 36:1–8
13. Zephaniah	Babylon	2 Kings 22:1–2 2 Chronicles 34:1–7
14. Haggai	Medo-Persia	Ezra 5:1–6:15
15. Zechariah	Medo-Persia	Ezra 5:1–6:15
16. Malachi	Medo-Persia	Nehemiah 13:1–31

THE MAJOR PROPHETS

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

I. Title and Authorship

The title for each of the Prophets is derived from the prophet named in the first verse of the book. The Hebrew title for each book in both the Major and Minor Prophets is also used in the early versions as a title. As an appropriate beginning for the Old Testament Prophets, Isaiah's name means, "Yah [the LORD] is salvation."

II. Date and Setting

Verse 1 of this book states that Isaiah was the son of Amos. This verse further states that Isaiah received his visionary material about Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This suggests that Isaiah ministered between 739–681 B.C.

III. Message

Isaiah's message reveals the full scope of God's judgment and salvation. As the "Holy One of Israel" (Isa 1:4, etc.), God must judge his rebellious people, yet in accord with his holiness, he will redeem his rebellious nation.

Isaiah 1–39 depicts God's judgment on Judah and the surrounding nations, while also describing the future birth of the Messiah (7:14), a king who is a descendant of David. This king will have a righteous reign (9:7; 32:1) and all nations will come to the holy mountain of Jerusalem (2:2–4). At this time, God people will no longer be oppressed by wicked kings (11:14).

Isaiah 40–55 describes Israel's restoration and the servant of the LORD. More specifically, these chapters portray how the Babylonians would take Judah into exile and then how Judah would be restored through a new "exodus" (Is 43:2, 16–19; 52:10–12) to the Promised Land. The Lord refers to his Messianic King as his "servant" in 42–53, a term which is also used of the nation Israel (see 41:8–9; 42:1). It is through the suffering of this servant that redemption in its fullest sense would be accomplished. In addition, Cyrus, a pagan king, was the Lord's instrument to set Israel free from Babylon (41:2), but "the suffering servant" (the Messiah), would deliver the remnant from the prison of sin (52:13–53:12). He would become a "light" for the Gentiles (42:6), so that those kingdoms facing judgment (described earlier in Isa 13–23) would find deliverance (55:4–5).

Isaiah 56–66 describes the eschatological era when the Lord's kingdom would be on earth, with its righteous King and his loyal subjects. The future eschatological era is the goal toward which the book of Isaiah progressively moves. At this future time, the restored earth and its people will then conform to God's holy expectations. Because of all the work that the Holy One of Israel will accomplish, he will receive all praise and glory.

IV. Outline

- A. The book of judgment, 1–39
 1. The Lord's indictment of Judah, 1–6
 2. Prophecies of deliverance, 7–12
 3. Judgment on the nations, 13–23

4. Judgment and promise of the Lord's kingdom, 24–27
 5. Six woes: five on the unfaithful in Israel and one on Assyria, 28–33
 6. More prophecies of judgment and promise, 34–35
 7. Historical transition from the Assyrian threat to the Babylonian exile, 36–39
- B. The book of comfort, 40–66
1. Deliverance and restoration of Israel, 40–48
 2. The Servant's ministry and Israel's restoration, 49–57
 3. Restoration realized and complete, 58–66

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

I. Title and Authorship

The name for this book is derived from the prophet who wrote this book, Jeremiah, whose name means something like “Yah [the LORD] establishes.” There is abundant evidence to support Jeremiah's authorship of this book: the title of the book in 1:1; Daniel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, cites the prophecies of this book in Daniel 9:2 (see Jer 25); Ecclesiasticus 49:6, 7 and Josephus attributes this to Jeremiah; and the NT quotes this book as coming from Jeremiah (see Matt 2:17; 21:13; Heb 8:8–12).

II. Date and Setting

Because Jeremiah is the author of this book and because Jeremiah 52 describes the destruction of the Temple, the book was written some time after the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.

The book of Jeremiah was written in the politically chaotic times after the fall of the Assyrian nation and the rise of the Babylonian kingdom in the first half of the sixth century B.C. Jeremiah's ministry lasted for fifty years during the reigns of five kings of Judah.

Jeremiah, the son of the priest Hilkiah, was raised in the city of Anathoth, two miles north of Jerusalem. As his call in Jeremiah 1 implies, he had a hard life. At the Temple, Jeremiah delivered a message of repentance that was not accepted by the people of Judah. Jeremiah's hometown of Anathoth plotted against him. Further, he endured great persecution over his fifty years of ministry. Because of God's command in Jeremiah 16, he did not marry. While Jeremiah lived most of his difficult life in Judah, he was compelled in the latter part of his life to relocate in Tahpanhes, Egypt, along with other exiled Jews. Jeremiah 43–44 was written while he lived in Egypt.

While Jeremiah cried over Judah's condition, it is imprecise to call him the “weeping prophet” if this implies he was weak. In reality, he had to be a rugged individual because of all the difficulties he faced.

III. Message

On the one hand, the message of Jeremiah focuses on God's faithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant in Deuteronomy to judge those who are unfaithful to his covenant; on the other hand, the LORD shows that he will deliver his people as expressed in Jeremiah's new covenant.

IV. Outline (taken from Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, pp. 189–94, with some modifications)

- A. Oracles of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem, 1–25
 - 1. The prophet’s call, 1
 - 2. Oracles against Judah’s idolatry, 2–10
 - 3. The broken covenant and Jeremiah’s struggles, 11–13
 - 4. The Lord’s rejection of his people, 14–17
 - 5. Symbols and lament, 18–20
 - 6. Judgment against kings and prophets, 21–24
 - 7. Summary, 25
- B. Though rejected by Judah, God’s word offers hope, 26–36
 - 1. Reaction to Jeremiah’s temple sermon, 26
 - 2. Jeremiah and the false prophets, 27–29
 - 3. Promised restoration and the new covenant, 30–33
 - 4. Zedekiah, Jehoiakim, and Jeremiah’s scroll, 34–36
- C. The fall of Jerusalem and its results, 37–45
 - 1. Jeremiah and court politics, 37–38
 - 2. Jeremiah and the fall of Jerusalem, 39–41
 - 3. Jeremiah and the flight to Egypt, 42–45
- D. Oracles against foreign nations, 46–51
 - 1. Against Egypt, 46
 - 2. Against Judah’s neighbors, 47–49
 - 3. Against Babylon, 50–51
- E. Historical Epilogue, 52

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

I. Title and Authorship

Like the two preceding prophets, the sixth century prophet, Ezekiel (“may God strengthen”), is both the name of the book and its author.

II. Date and Setting

Ezekiel, both a prophet and priest (Ezek 1:1–3), was deported from the land of Israel to Babylon with the exiles in 597 B.C. Perhaps, the reference to “thirtieth year” in 1:1 refers to Ezekiel’s age when he received his first prophetic vision. We should further note that this vision occurred in the “fifth year” of the exile, 593 B.C. His final vision in Ezek 40:1 mentions the “twenty-fifth year” of the exile, which was 573 B.C. Thus Ezekiel’s ministry spanned a period of approximately 20 years. Thus, the book was completed around 573 B.C.

Ezekiel prophetic ministry took place during the troublesome times of Judah’s exile in Babylon. He spent his entire ministry in Babylon as a Judean exile.

III. Message

The message of this book presents a progression of prophecies announcing the fall of Jerusalem because of their covenant disobedience and a looking forward to a future restoration of redeemed Israel and Judah in the land.

IV. Outline

- A. Prophecies against Judah, 1–24
 - 1. The prophet’s call and commission, 1–3
 - 2. The coming judgment on Judah and Jerusalem, 4–7
 - 3. Judah’s idolatry and anticipated exile, 8–12
 - 4. False prophets and inquirers, 13–14
 - 5. The coming judgment on Jerusalem and her kings, 15–19
 - 6. Preparation for judgment, 20–24
- B. Prophecies against foreign nations, 25–32
 - 1. Prophecies against nations surrounding Judah, 25
 - 2. Prophecies against Tyre and Sidon, 26–28
 - 3. Prophecies against Egypt, 29–32
- C. Prophecies about Israel’s future restoration, 33–48
 - 1. The prophet’s role, 33
 - 2. Restoring the Lord’s role as Shepherd of Israel, 34
 - 3. Prophecies against Edom and about restoring Israel’s land, 35–36:15
 - 4. Restoring the Lord’s honor in Israel, 36:16–38
 - 5. Prophecies about the houses of Israel and Judah, 37
 - 6. Restoring the Lord’s supremacy, 38–39
 - 7. Restoring the Lord’s presence among Israel in the land, 40–48

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

I. Title and Authorship

The title of the book of Daniel is derived from its author. Daniel, whose name means “God is my judge,” was a Jewish deportee living in Babylonian exile from 605 B.C. to around 536 B.C. This book was probably written at the end of this period.

II. Date and Setting

Some of the chapters in Daniel are dated. These chapters range from Nebuchadnezzar’s first year as king, 605 B.C. (Dan 1) to Cyrus’s third year, 536 B.C. (Dan 10:1). Because of the last dated prophecy, it is reasonable to understand that Daniel was written at that time or shortly thereafter.

Daniel was of noble birth and was deported from Judah around 605 B.C. With Babylon’s system of deportation, highly educated exiles were integrated into Babylon society. Daniel lived most of his life in the Babylonian court. After the fall of Babylon to the Medo-Persian Empire, he spent the remainder of his life in their court.

III. Message

Because the use of two languages, Hebrew and Aramaic, has some bearing on our understanding the book’s message, we should note that Daniel 1:1–2:4a and 8:1–12:13 are written in Hebrew and 2:4b–7:28 in Aramaic. This suggests that the message of Daniel has an impact upon both Jews (Hebrew) and Gentiles (Aramaic).

Because of Gentiles domination over the Jewish nation from 605 to 538 B.C., Daniel wrote to encourage Jewish exiles. Daniel’s overall message however goes beyond the Jewish exiles of his own time. His point is to describe God’s sovereignty in raising up and tearing down kingdoms both in

Daniel's time and up through the second advent of Christ and, how in keeping with God's sovereign purposes, his sovereign plan will prevail in establishing Judah's future kingdom through the coming Messiah.

IV. Outline

- A. Historical introduction to Daniel and his friends, 1
- B. Daniel and his friends in the Babylonian court, 2–6
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, 2
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold, 3
 - 3. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great tree, 4
 - 4. Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall, 5
 - 5. Darius's foolish edict, 6
- C. Daniel's visions of the future, 7–12
 - 1. Vision of the four beasts, 7
 - 2. Vision of the ram and the goat, 8
 - 3. Vision of the seventy weeks, 9
 - 4. Vision of Israel's future, 10–12

THE MINOR PROPHETS

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

I. Title and Authorship

Hosea, whose name means “salvation,” is the prophet who received the visions described in this book, and, subsequently, placed them in written form.

II. Date and Setting

Hosea the son of Beeri delivered his prophetic messages in the middle of the 8th century B.C. Freeman suggests that his book was written about 845 B.C. Most of our information for Hosea is derived from this book. Hosea is apparently the only writing prophet to come from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. From the kings mentioned in 1:1, we would understand that his ministry extended for approximately 40 years.

Hosea prophecies were partially delivered during the chaotic period of the reign of Jeroboam II (793–52 B.C.). During the days of Jeroboam II Israel experienced great external prosperity, but internally it was apostate. While Jeroboam II was king, the day of judgment seemed remote to Israel, yet the Assyrians were becoming the dominant world power. Under the reign of the Tiglath-pileser III, Damascus fell to this Assyrian king in 732 B.C.; and in 722, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, Samaria, fell and its people were taken captive back to Assyria. Hosea as well as Amos prophesied during the last days of the Northern Kingdom.

III. Message

God had initiated a covenant relationship with Israel. He had brought them out of Egypt and poured abundant blessings upon them, but they departed from him by chasing after false gods. Their spiritual apostasy was a breach in their covenant relationship with God. To purify his wayward people, God would bring covenant judgments upon them. However, because God loved Israel, he would not totally abandon his people. The Lord would work to restore his people by renewing their covenant relationship with him and to fulfill the promises of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. By drawing upon the heartaches of Hosea’s failed marital relationship with Gomer and his subsequent redemption of her, God communicates his message about his covenant relationship with Israel.

IV. Outline (taken from Chisholm, “Hosea,” in BKCOT, p. 1378, with a few modifications)

A. Superscription, 1:1

B. Hosea’s failed marital relationship illustrates God’s dealing with Israel, 1:2–3:5.

1. The symbolism of Hosea’s marital relationship, 1:2–2:1
 - a. Hosea’s marriage: Israel’s harlotry, 1:2–3a
 - b. Hosea’s children: Israel’s judgment, 1:3b–9
 - c. Reversal of the symbolism: a future restoration, 1:10–2:1
2. Restoration through judgment, 2:2–23
 - a. The Lord’s judgment on Israel, vv. 2–13
 - b. The Lord’s restoration of Israel, vv. 14–23
3. The restoration of Hosea’s marriage, 3:1–5

C. Hosea’s message is that God will judge and restore Israel, 4:1–14:9.

1. The presentation of the Lord’s case against Israel, 4:1–6:3

- a. The exposure of Israel's guilt, 4:1–19
- b. The announcement of Israel's judgment, 5:1–14
- c. The description of Israel's restoration, 5:15–6:3
- 2. The expansion of the Lord's case against Israel, 6:4–11:11
 - a. The presentation of Israel's guilt and punishment, 6:4–8:14
 - b. The reiteration of Israel's guilt and punishment, 9:1–11:7
 - c. The renewal of the Lord's compassion, 11:8–11
- 3. The conclusion of the Lord's case against Israel, 11:12–14:9
 - a. Concluding indictment, 11:12–13:16
 - b. Concluding exhortation, 14:1–9

THE BOOK OF JOEL

I. Title and Authorship

The title for this book is derived from the name of its author Joel (“the LORD is God”). His name perhaps reflects the faith of his parents. Though there are other men named Joel in the Old Testament, we know very little about this prophet besides what we know from this book. In 1:1, we are informed that he was the son of Pethuel. Joel’s “frequent references to Zion and the house of the Lord (1:9, 13–14; 2:15–17, 23, 32; 3:1, 5–6, 16–17, 20–21) suggest that he probably lived not far from Jerusalem. Because of his statements about the priesthood (1:13–14; 2:17), some think Joel was a priest as well as a prophet. In any case, Joel was a clear, concise, and uncompromising preacher of repentance” (Wilkinson and Boa, p. 240).

II. Date and Setting

There is some disagreement among conservative scholars about the date for Joel. Based upon internal evidence within the book of Joel, some conservative scholars have opted for an early date, about 835 B.C. (see Freedman, pp. 147–49).

Assuming an 835 B.C. date, this book may have been written either during the rule of Queen Athaliah (841–835 B.C.) or the early reign of Joash (835–796 B.C.). This would explain why there is no reference to a king, for either Queen Athaliah was on the throne or this was during the early phases of Joash’s reign when the country was governed by his advisor, Jehoida, the High Priest.

III. Message

Drawing upon a devastating locust plague that affected all levels of Judean society, Joel uses this as a harbinger for the future “day of the LORD.” The day of the LORD is not simply a time of judgment on the Gentiles but is a time of judgment upon Judah culminating in a time of restoration and blessing. Confronted with God’s judgment, Joel writes a warning to Judah that they need to humbly repent and turn to the Lord.

IV. Outline

- A. Superscription, 1:1
- B. A locust plague forewarns the day of the LORD, 1:2–20
 - 1. The calamity of the locust plague, 1:2–12
 - 2. The call to repentance, vv. 13–14
 - 3. The significance of the calamity, vv. 15–20

- C. The coming of the day of the LORD, 2:1–11
 - 1. The nearness of the LORD’s army, vv. 1–2
 - 2. The destructive nature of the LORD’s army, vv. 3–5
 - 3. The relentless advance of the LORD’s army, vv. 6–9
 - 4. The invincibility of the LORD’s army, vv. 10–11
- D. The renewed call to repentance, 2:12–17
 - 1. The call for repentance, vv. 12–14
 - 2. The call for fasting, vv. 15–16
 - 3. The call for prayer, v. 17
- E. The promises with the day of the LORD, 2:18–3:21
 - 1. Promise of forgiveness and restoration, 2:18–27
 - 2. Promise of the Spirit’s work, 2:28–32
 - 3. Promise of judgment upon the nations, 3:1–16a
 - 4. Promise of messianic kingdom blessings, 3:16b–21

THE BOOK OF AMOS

I. Title and Authorship

Amos, “burden-bearer,” is the author of this book. His name became the title of this work. Not much is known about Amos outside of what we know from this prophetic work. Since no genealogy is given for him, this suggests that he was from a poor domestic background. We do not know his age when he carried on his prophetic ministry or his age at death. According to 1:1, Amos was a shepherd from Tekoa. This is a village that is ten miles south of Jerusalem in Judah. Amos may have been raised in Tekoa where he learned how to tend sheep and be a breeder of livestock (7:14). While performing his responsibilities as a shepherd, the Lord called him to be a prophet, 7:15. Amos apparently had not been associated with other prophets.

II. Date and Setting

In light of 1:1, Amos carried on his ministry during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah (790-39 B.C.), and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (793-53). In the early part of Uzziah’s reign, he was coregent with his father Amaziah, between 790-67, and in the latter part of his reign, he was coregent with both Jotham, 750-39, and Ahaz, 743-39. Since Amaziah, Jotham, and Ahaz are not mentioned in the superscription and since Jeroboam II does not reign after 753, it is probably best to see the dates for the writing around 760 B.C.

Like his fellow prophets, Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah, Amos carried on his prophetic ministry during the eighth century B.C. Under the leadership of Jeroboam II in Israel (793-53 B.C.) and Uzziah in Judah (790-39), both kingdoms had risen to tremendous economic heights and had extended their borders so that their combined territory was almost equivalent to what it was during the reigns of David and Solomon. In this work, a number of nations are mentioned. Amos (1:3-2:16) surveys the historical setting that surrounded him by “moving from outright foreigners (Syria, Philistia, Tyre) to blood relatives (Edom, Ammon, Moab) to Judah and then culminating with the northern kingdom,” the focal point of his prophetic work (Chisholm, *Interpreting*, p. 74). Under Jeroboam II Israel’s borders were restored as far north as Hamath (2 Kgs 14:25). However, with Israel’s prosperity came spiritual neglect. Their decadence is reflected by their violation of the Mosaic Covenant. The rich were becoming richer at the expense of the poor. The Lord had clearly indicated in the Mosaic Covenant

(Lev 26, Deut 28) that when this type of disloyalty was shown to Him, then there would be judgment. This was accomplished in the eighth century primarily through the Assyrian nation. The background for prophecy of Amos is found in the long oppression of Israel and Judah by Assyria. As early as the ninth century, Shalmaneser III (858-24) had exacted tribute from Jehu. The Assyrians would continue to oppress Israel for 30 to 40 years after the composition of Amos's book until they destroy Israel in 722, an event that Amos had predicted.

III. Message

The Sovereign Ruler of the universe, the Lord, will judge the rebellious nations. In particular, the Lord will judge Israel for disobeying the Lord's covenant. However, all was not lost for Israel because the covenant-keeping God will restore his nation in the land under the direction of a renewed Davidic dynasty.

IV. Outline

A. Judgment oracles against the nations, 1:1–2:16

1. Introduction, 1:1–2
 - a. Superscription, v. 1
 - b. Theme of the book, v. 2
2. Judgment oracles against various nations, Judah, and Israel, 1:3–2:16
 - a. Judgment oracle against Syria, 1:3–5
 - b. Judgment oracle against Philistia, 1:6–8
 - c. Judgment oracle against Phoenicia, 1:9–10
 - d. Judgment oracle against Edom, 1:11–12
 - e. Judgment oracle against Ammon, 1:13–15
 - f. Judgment oracle against Moab, 2:1–3
 - g. Judgment oracle against Judah, 2:4–5
 - h. Judgment oracle against Israel, 2:6–16

B. Pronouncement of judgment on Israel for violating the covenant, 3:1–6:14

1. The cause and confirmation of Israel's punishment, 3:1–4:13
 - a. Consequential punishment for disloyalty to a privileged position, 3:1–8
 - b. Judgment speech against the wealthy of Samaria, 3:9–15
 - c. Judgment speech against the wealthy women of Samaria, 4:1–3
 - d. Judgment speech against disloyal Israel, 4:4–13
2. The lamentation and judgment of Israel, 5:1–6:14
 - a. Lament over Israel with an exhortation to repent, 5:1–17
 - b. Denunciation of Israel for having confidence in false religion, 5:18–27
 - c. Warning to Israel about trusting in false power, 6:1–7
 - d. Judgment speech against Israel for having false security, 6:8–14

C. Visions and exhortations of Israel's judgment and future restoration, 7:1–9:15

1. Visions and exhortations of Israel's certain judgment, 7:1–9:10
 - a. Two visions of the Lord withholding judgment, 7:1–6
 - b. Visions and exhortations announcing that the Lord will no longer withhold judgment, 7:7–9:10
2. Proclamation of Israel's future restoration, 9:11–15
 - a. Restoration of the Davidic kingdom, vv. 11–12
 - b. The restoration of the land, vv. 13–15

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

I. Title and Authorship

The author of this book is Obadiah, “servant of Yah [the LORD]” or “worshipper of Yah [the LORD].” We know very little about the author of this book, though there are about a dozen Obadiah’s mentioned in the Old Testament. Because of the difficulty in linking this Obadiah with any of the Obadiah’s mentioned in the Old Testament, there are different interpretations about a precise identification of our author.

II. Date and Setting

Obadiah 10–14 describes an attack on Jerusalem that included Edomite involvement. The Old Testament describes seven different attacks on Jerusalem. The second attack on King Jehoram appears to fit best the description of Obadiah 10–14 (see 2 Kgs 8:20–22; 2 Chr 21:8–17). In this attack, the Philistines and Arabians attacked Jerusalem. Instead of helping his “brother Jacob,” Edom assisted Jacob’s enemies. The animosity reflected by Edom indicates a long history of enmity between these two nations that goes back to the time of troubles between their founding fathers, Jacob and Esau (Gen 27). If this is the proper identification, the approximate date for the writing of this book would be 845 B.C. As such, Obadiah would be the earliest of the writing prophets.

III. Message

Obadiah announces the certain judgment on Edom and the deliverance of Israel. The immediate judgment on Edom is only a precursor for the coming day of judgment that Edom and all nations will face in the day of the LORD.

IV. Outline

- A. The judgment on Edom, vv. 1–9
 - 1. The coalition against Edom, vv. 1–2
 - 2. The abasement of Edom’s pride, vv. 3–4
 - 3. The completeness of Edom’s judgment, vv. 5–9
- B. The reasons for Edom’s judgment, vv. 10–14
 - 1. Edom’s violence against Jacob, v. 10
 - 2. Edom’s hostile actions Israel, vv. 11–14
- C. The judgment on Edom and Israel’s other enemies, vv. 15–16
- D. The restoration of Israel, vv. 17–21
 - 1. The deliverance of Israel, vv. 17–18
 - 2. The delineation of Israel’s territories, vv. 19–20
 - 3. The establishment of Israel’s kingdom, v. 21

THE BOOK OF JONAH

I. Title and Authorship

Like the previous Minor Prophets examined, the title of the book is derived from the name of its author. The prophet Jonah (“dove”) of 1:1 is also mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25. In light of the passage in Kings, Jonah carried on his prophetic ministry in the eighth century B.C. He is from Gath-hepher, a

town located in Zebulun in lower Galilee. As such, he was a prophet to the northern kingdom. According to this passage in Kings, he prophesied under Jeroboam II (793-53 B.C.).

II. Date and Setting

Since Jonah carried on his ministry in the early part of the eighth century B.C., his book was written around 780 B.C. Like his fellow prophets, Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, and Amos, Jonah carried on his prophetic ministry during the eighth century B.C. He carried on his ministry under the leadership of Jeroboam II in Israel (793-53 B.C.). During the eighth century, both Israel and Judah had risen to tremendous economic heights and had extended their borders so that their combined territory was almost equivalent to what it was during the reigns of David and Solomon. Under Jeroboam II Israel's borders were restored as far north as Hamath (2 Kgs 14:25). The Assyrian nation was in a weakened state during the eighth century.

III. Message

God instructs His people that as sovereign Creator, He has the right to show His compassion by delivering those who repent in response to His message of judgment and, consequently, His servants must submit obediently to Him.

A. God is presented as the Sovereign.

The Lord is presented in Jonah as being a sovereign ruler of the world. This is reflected by Jonah's affirmation that God created the sea and dry land (1:9-10). God's creation of the world informs mankind that He is their King. His providential control of the nations of His created world is implied in 4:10-11. The Lord is also responsible for the storm at sea (1:4) as well as the calming of it (1:15). He ordained the fish (1:17), climbing gourd (4:6), worm (4:7), and strong east wind (4:8). His sovereign design relates to even the mightiest of pagan cities (3:3). This book clearly demonstrates the Lord's sovereign control.

B. As the Sovereign Lord, God has the right to show compassion on His creation.

1. God's freedom to act in compassion is the major emphasis of this book. Jonah recognized that the Lord was a compassionate God (4:2). The Lord's compassionate nature is expressed in His positive response to Nineveh's repentance (4:5-7; 10-11). Not only was God's compassion extended to Nineveh, but it was also demonstrated to the sailors (1:15) and to Jonah (2:9).
2. God's compassion is demonstrated by His delivering those who repented in response to his message of judgment. To appreciate the significance of this, we need to look at the object lesson of 4:5-8.
 - a. The word translated as "grief" in 4:6 is the same Hebrew term translated as "evil" in 3:10, *ra'ah*. In 3:10, Nineveh's evil was the coming judgment and in this verse Jonah's grief was the heat.
 - b. For protection from judgment, Nineveh repented and for his protection, Jonah built a hut. Neither of these provided sufficient enough protection from the *ra'ah*. For sufficient protection, God had to respond to Nineveh by withholding their judgment; for Jonah to have adequate protection it was necessary for the Lord to provide Jonah with a gourd.
 - c. This is where God makes His point to Jonah with the object lesson. God did not continue to honor Jonah's divinely provided protection, He removed the plant in a night. Jonah thought this was unfair. However, the point is God's removal of the plant was His prerogative as its

Creator. He brought it into existence and could also have preserved it. This was His right as the Creator. Likewise, it was God's right, and His alone, with Nineveh to deliver or to judge.

C. God's people must submit obediently to Him as their Sovereign Lord. The application of 4:9-11 emphasizes this.

1. God's question, v. 9a

God questions Jonah as to whether or not he had the right to be angry. This is basically the same question that God had asked Jonah in v. 4.

2. Jonah's response, v. 9b

Jonah emphatically responds that he has the right to be angry even unto death. This is the same basic response that Jonah had in v. 3.

3. God's application, vv. 10-11

In these two verses, God drives home His point. Jonah had pity on a gourd over which he did not work. He thought it was unfair to remove God's gracious provision. Should he not feel the same way to Nineveh if God did not withhold judgment? We should notice Jonah's inconsistency at this point. God had raised up and used the gourd to protect Jonah and when God took it away then Jonah became angry. If God would not graciously continue His protection of Nineveh from judgment, would Jonah become angry with that?

God has established in the OT that he responds to repentance over judgment. He did this with Ahab in 1 Kings 21:21-27. By implication, this may have been an example for the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom was going to be judged about 30 to 40 years from Jonah's time. If God had spared a pagan nation when they repented at a message of judgment, how much more so would he not respond to Israel if they would repent. God wanted to use this as an example of how He responds to repentance. This was God's right as the Sovereign God.

D. Lessons to learn from Jonah.

1. God's sovereign control includes the details of our lives.
2. God uses all of us in spite of ourselves.
3. We need to be careful of spiritual pride.

IV. Outline

A. God retrieves his recalcitrant prophet, 1:1-2:10.

1. God's command is disobeyed by the prophet, 1:1-16.

a. God gives Jonah a command and Jonah responds in disobedience, vv. 1-3.

b. God sends a storm to chasten Jonah with a consequence that the sailors acknowledge Lord's power, vv. 4-16.

2. God's deliverance of the prophet results in an expression of his gratitude, 1:17-2:10.

a. The Lord rescues Jonah from the sea, 1:17.

b. Jonah expresses his gratitude to the Lord, 2:1-9.

c. The Lord returns Jonah to the land, 2:10.

B. God sends his reluctant prophet to Nineveh, 3:1-4:11.

1. The Ninevites respond to Jonah's message of judgment, 3:1-10.

a. The proclamation of the message reflects that judgment is coming, vv. 1-4.

b. The response to the message of judgment is one of repentance, vv. 5-9.

- c. The consequence from their response to the message of judgment is God’s deliverance of Nineveh, v. 10.
- 2. Jonah is corrected for his reaction to God’s postponed judgment on Nineveh, 4:1-11.
 - a. Jonah’s complaint is questioned by God, vv. 1-4.
 - b. The lesson focuses on God’s sovereign right in showing compassion, vv. 5-11.

THE BOOK OF MICAH

I. Title and Authorship

This book is named after its author Micah, “who is like the LORD.” Not much is known about Micah outside of what we know from this prophetic work. According to 1:1, Micah was from Moresheth. In light of 1:14 (Moresheth-Gath), this was located in the area known as Gath in the Shephelah. It has been identified with the present-day site Tell el-Judeideh. It is approximately 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem, “about twenty miles west of the Mediterranean coast, and approximately twelve miles northeast of the ancient city of Lachish. It is situated about one thousand feet above sea level, overlooking the coastal highway in the plain, over which countless armies and commercial caravans had traversed the distance between Egypt and Mesopotamia” (Bullock, p. 104).

II. Date and Setting

Based on Micah 1:1, our prophet had an active ministry when Jotham (750–731 B.C.), Ahaz (743–715), and Hezekiah (728–686) reigned. Consequently, the prophet ministered between 750 and 686 B.C. If we compare 1:1 with Isaiah 1:1 and Hosea 1:1, Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea. The social injustice described in this book, especially chapter three, reflects a time prior to Hezekiah’s reforms. Most conservative scholars date the writing of this book somewhere between 735–710 B.C. (Wilkinson and Boa, p. 262). Since Micah is a contemporary of Amos, the historical setting is the same as what we saw for Amos (see *supra*, pp. 9–10).

III. Message

Judah will be judged for disobeying the Lord’s covenant; yet, the covenant-keeping God will establish his ideal king and kingdom to bring salvation to his nation.

IV. Outline

- A. First oracle: exile and restoration, 1:1–2:13
 - 1. Introduction, 1:1
 - 2. Coming judgment, 1:2–2:11
 - a. An announcement of the Lord’s judgment against the sinful nations, 1:2–16
 - b. The reasons for the coming judgment, 2:1–11
 - 3. Prediction of future regathering, 2:12–13
 - a. The Lord will restore his people as their shepherd, vv. 12–13a
 - b. The Lord will lead his people as their king, v. 13b
- B. Second oracle: affliction and hope for the nation, 3:1–5:15
 - 1. Judgment on the nation’s leaders, 3:1–12
 - a. Judgment speech against the rulers, vv. 1–4
 - b. Judgment speech against the false prophets, vv. 5–8
 - c. Judgment speech against rulers, false prophets, and priests, vv. 9–12
 - 2. The establishment of Israel’s ideal kingdom with its ideal king, 4:1–5:15

- a. Jerusalem's exalted future, 4:1–5
- b. The Lord's rule and the restoration of Israel, 4:6–8
- c. The future of Zion and its relation to the Davidic throne, 4:9–5:6
- d. The future role of the remnant, 5:7–9
- e. The conditions during the kingdom, 5:10–15
- C. Third oracle: final indictment and promise of blessing, 6:1–7:20
 - 1. Message of judgment, 6:1–7:7
 - a. The case against the nation, 6:1–8
 - b. An announcement of judgment for Judah's injustice, 6:9–16
 - c. The prophetic lament over Judah's sins, 7:1–7
 - 2. Confident expectations for Judah's future, 7:8–20
 - a. Zion's confidence in the Lord and his deliverance, vv. 8–13
 - b. The nation's prayer and hymn, vv. 14–20

THE BOOK OF NAHUM

I. Title and Authorship

As with many other OT books, the superscription of this book denotes its author, "Nahum, the Elkoshite." This is the only information in the Canon that we have concerning this prophet. This book was probably written somewhere between 668–654 B.C.

II. Date and Setting

The date of this book is to be placed somewhere between the fall of No-Amon (or Thebes) in 663 B.C. (3:8) and the fall of Nineveh, 612 B.C. The date would then be approximately 650 B.C.

Approximately a century earlier, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been defeated and taken into captivity by Assyria in 722 B.C. The book of Nahum announces that it would be in the near future that God would bring judgment upon the Assyrian nation for her wickedness. Assyria had been cruel in warfare and greedy for dishonest gain. The dominant power in the ancient Near East for about three centuries would now be broken apart by the combined force of the Babylonians and Medes.

III. Message

The book of Nahum is a prophetic oracle announcing that the sovereign Lord would destroy the capital of the Assyrian nation, Nineveh, and consequently to encourage Judah with the knowledge of the Lord's sovereign control.

IV. Outline

- A. Superscription, 1:1
- B. The wrath of the Lord, 1:2–11
 - 1. The Lord as the avenging God of his people, vv. 2–6
 - a. God's character as an avenger, vv. 2–3a
 - b. God's action as a judge, vv. 3b–5
 - c. Summation, v. 6
 - 2. The Lord as the protector of his people, vv. 7–11
 - a. The Lord's faithfulness to his covenant, vv. 7–8
 - b. The Lord's judgment speech against Nineveh, vv. 9–11

- C. The Lord's destruction of Nineveh, 1:12–3:19
1. Judah's release from oppression, 1:12–15
 - a. Announcement of salvation to Judah, vv. 12–13
 - b. Announcement of judgment against Nineveh's king, v. 14
 - c. Call to praise with salvation announcement, 15
 2. The invasion of Nineveh, 2:1–10
 - a. Warning and promise, vv. 1–2
 - b. Description of Nineveh's fall, vv. 3–10
 3. The Lord's opposition to Nineveh, 2:11–13
 - a. The taunt, vv. 11–12
 - b. Announcement of the Lord's judgment, v. 13
 4. An Oracle of Woe: Nineveh's Wages for Sin, 3:1–4
 - a. The reasons for Nineveh's judgment, vv. 1, 4
 - b. The description of Nineveh's judgment, vv. 2–3
 5. The humiliating destruction of Nineveh, 3:5–13
 - a. Announcement of the Lord's judgment, vv. 5–7
 - b. The Taunt, vv. 8–13
 6. Satirical warning for Nineveh to prepare for a siege, 3:14–17
 7. Rejoicing over Nineveh's destruction, 3:18–19

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

I. Title and Authorship

The author of this work is identified in the book's introduction and in the closing psalm (3:1). The author identifies himself as Habakkuk ("one who embraces" or "one embraced") the prophet. There is no information given in our Canon concerning Habakkuk's personal background. A Jewish tradition has it that he lived during the days of Manasseh. Another Jewish tradition has him as the son of a Shunammite woman who lived in the ninth century. This is usually correlated with 2 Kings 4:16. Another legend is found in the apocryphal work *Bel and the Dragon*. According to vv. 33-39 of this account an angel transports Habakkuk who is carrying food to feed Daniel while he was in the lion's den (Freeman, p. 255 and Bullock, pp. 175-76).

II. Date and Setting

Since we have no explicit information given in the superscription of this work such as the mention of a date or the use of a king's name or in any other book in the Canon, we must depend on internal information given within this book. The reference to the Babylonians in 1:6 suggests that this book was written in the seventh century B.C. The conditions described in 1:2–4 reflect a period of corruption and apostasy. The social and moral wickedness described by the prophet fit the time period of Jehoiakim's reign (609–597 B.C.), rather than that of the godly reign of Josiah who preceded him. This work is best dated at 609 B.C.

III. Message

Habakkuk is a dialogue between the prophet and his God. Habakkuk wrestles with how God is at work in the midst of a wicked covenant nation. God reassures the prophet that he will judge his nation through the Babylonians and that the Babylonians will also be judged for their sinfulness. In the final analysis, the message of the book is that the sovereign Lord carries out His acts of judgment in a

manner that is consistent with His might and will, but He also takes care of His own in the midst of this and will ultimately deliver them. This should produce in the heart of every genuine believer a resolve to be loyal to the Lord, who will establish righteousness on the earth, by persevering in the faith.

IV. Outline

- A. The revelation of the Lord's justice, 1:1–2:20
 1. Superscription, 1:1
 2. The prophet's initial complaint: his lament over the injustice in Judah, 1:2–4
 3. The Lord's initial response: the Babylonian's correction of the injustice in Judah, 1:5–11
 - a. The Lord's opening command to Habakkuk's generation to observe His work, v. 5
 - b. The Lord's description of his fierce Babylonian instrument of judgment, vv. 6–11a
 - c. The Lord's summation about the guilt of the Babylonians, v. 11b
 4. The prophet's second complaint: the Lord's use of a nation more wicked than Judah to correct the injustice in Judah, 1:12–2:1
 - a. The prophet's complaint prefaced by his declaration of confidence in the Lord, 1:12
 - b. The prophet's complaint demonstrated in his question of the Lord, 1:13–17
 - c. The prophet's complaint concluded by a resolve to wait on the Lord, 2:1
 5. The Lord's response: the wicked's judgment and the believer's provisions, 2:2–20
 - a. The introduction to the sentence of judgment on Babylon, vv. 2–3
 - b. The Lord's retribution for the wicked and provisions for those who live by faith, vv. 4–5
 - c. The sentence of judgment on the wicked Babylonians, vv. 6–20
- B. Habakkuk's psalm of response to the Lord's revelation of his justice, 3:1–19
 1. Superscription, 3:1
 2. The prophet's petition: an appeal for help based on the Lord's mighty actions, v. 2
 3. The Lord's response: a theophanic vision as God's affirmative answer to the prophet's petition, vv. 3–15
 4. The prophet's response: in spite of adversity, a statement of confidence, vv. 16–19a
 5. Subscription, v. 19b

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

I. Title and Authorship

The name Zephaniah, “Yah [the LORD] hides,” is used three other times in the Old Testament. Beyond the information in the superscription, we know little about the author Zephaniah. In 1:1 his ancestry is traced back four generations to Hezekiah that is unique among the prophets. “This implies he was a man of prominence and even of royalty. As the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah, king of Judah, Zephaniah was the only known Old Testament prophet with such high social standing. He was thus a distant relative of King Josiah in whose reign he prophesied. Also the prophet may have been a resident of Jerusalem because of his words ‘from this place’ (v. 4) and his familiarity with the city (vv. 10–11)” (Hannah, “Zephaniah,” in BKCOT, p. 1523).

II. Date and Setting

Since 1:1 states that Zephaniah delivered his prophecy during the reign of Josiah, he wrote some time between 640–609 B.C. Since Zephaniah condemns the idolatrous practices of the nation that was eradicated by Josiah's reforms in 621, his prophecies must have been delivered prior to this. If his

messages had an influence on King Josiah, then this would have been written early in Josiah's reign. In any event, the book dates somewhere between 640 to 625.

After the death of Hezekiah in 686 B.C. with the extremely wicked king Manasseh solely ruling Judah, Judah's moral and religious climate quickly deteriorated. Though the final few years of Manasseh's provided some relief (see 2 Chr 33 where the Chronicler describes Manasseh's change), it could hardly correct the extremes into which Judah had slipped. Manasseh had taken a favorable position toward the Assyrians, which apparently saved Judah from destruction; however, this created a number of enemies. When Amon came to the throne in 642 B.C., he added to Judah's religious deterioration and shared his father's pro-Assyrian outlook. His wickedness may have resulted in him being assassinated after approximately two years as king. The people of Judah then elevated his son Josiah as king in 640 B.C. at the age of eight. When he was twelve years old, he began to seek the Lord. His religious fervor continued until he set up his great reforms based on the Book of the Covenant in 621 B.C. When Josiah came to the throne, Assyria was still a strong nation. They had conquered Babylon in 648 B.C., and by 640 B.C. they had conducted successful military campaigns into Egypt and Elam. By the time of Josiah's reforms, Assyria was in a much-weakened state and, approximately ten years after Josiah's reforms, Nineveh would fall to the power of the Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians (2:13-15).

III. Message

Because of Judah's religious syncreticism, much of Zephaniah's work focuses on the coming of the day of the LORD. The use of Babylon served a symbolic function picturing the future day of the LORD when He would use a future enemy to bring judgment (1:2-3, 18; 3:8) followed by the establishment of the millennial kingdom (3:9-20). For those living in Zephaniah's day, the judgment from the Babylonians was inevitable, though in the midst of judgment God would take care of genuine worshippers.

IV. Outline

- A. Superscription, 1:1
- B. The coming judgment on national Judah, 1:2-18
 - 1. Announcement of judgment against creation, vv. 2-3
 - 2. Announcement of judgment against Judah, vv. 4-13
 - 3. Announcement of judgment against the whole earth, vv. 14-18
- C. Prophetic exhortation and oracles of judgment, 2:1-3:7
 - 1. Exhortation to seek the Lord, 2:1-3
 - 2. Oracles of judgment against the nations, 2:4-15
 - 3. Oracle of woe against Jerusalem, 3:1-7
- D. Future restoration with the establishment of the kingdom, 3:8-20
 - 1. Exhortation to seek the Lord in view of coming judgment and restoration, vv. 8-9
 - 2. Restoration of the nations and Judah, vv. 10-20

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

I. Title and Authorship

This book is named after its author Haggai, "festal." Little is known about this prophet. He referred to himself as "the prophet Haggai" (1:1; cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14, there is an allusion to him in Zech 8:9).

Haggai's name that is linked with Zechariah's name is found in the apocryphal books of 1 Esdras (6:1; 7:3) and 2 Esdras (1:40). Jewish tradition has it that he was of priestly descent. He was supposedly buried near the tombs of priests and was honored as though he was a priest.

II. Date and Setting

Given the precise dates in this work, we can see that Haggai delivered his messages preserved in this book in a span of fifteen weeks during the second year of the reign of Darius I (521–486 B.C.). Each of these messages was delivered in 520 B.C., and the book was possibly written in the same year. The dates for each message in Haggai are the following: 1:1 on August 29, 520 B.C.; 1:15 on September 21; 2:1 on October 17; and 2:10, 20 on December 18.

According to Jeremiah 25:11–12, the nation Judah had been sent into captivity for their disobedience. This began in 605 B.C. with the first Babylonian deportation and this was followed by the 597 and 586 deportations with the last one resulting in the city of Jerusalem and the Temple being destroyed.

Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., and subsequently issued a decree for the Jews to return to the land of Canaan and to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:2–4; 6:3–5). This was completed in 536 B.C. The Judeans laid the foundation for rebuilding the Temple in 536 B.C. However, their Samaritan neighbors interfered and the rebuilding of the Temple had to be discontinued. Because of the Samaritans and internal problems within the Persian empire, the rebuilding of the Temple was postponed for 16 years.

Darius Hystaspes came to the Persian throne in 522 and reigned until 486 B.C. It was during Darius's reign that Judah would complete rebuilding the Temple. Darius I was concerned about the religions of his empire that included the religion of the Jewish nation. Though the Samaritans had a role in having the work on the Temple cease, the primary responsibility during this sixteen-year period fell on the Jews for their indifferent attitude to correcting this situation. Haggai attempts to arouse the Jews from their lethargy. Because of Haggai's successful ministry, the Temple is rebuilt and dedicated by 516 B.C. (see Ezra 6:15–18).

III. Message

Haggai wrote to encourage Judah, by giving a prophetic message about the Lord's future program for the overthrowing of the nations and the glory of Judah with a special emphasis on the Temple and the honor of the Davidic dynasty, to forsake their indifference to the God of the covenant, and to obey the Lord which primarily included their rebuilding the Temple.

IV. Outline

A. Message 1: rebuilding the Temple, 1:1–15

1. Superscription, v. 1
2. The development of the disputation sermon encouraging Judah to rebuild the Lord's Temple, vv. 2–11
 - a. The explanation of the problem: Judah's indifference toward rebuilding the Temple, vv. 2–7
 - b. The solution to the problem: Judah's obligation to rebuild the Temple, v. 8
 - c. The reiteration and expansion of the problem: the Lord's enforcement of covenant curses for Judah's disobedience, vv. 9–11

3. The positive response to the disputation sermon encouraging Judah to rebuild the Lord's Temple, 1:12–15
 - a. The people's positive reaction, v. 12
 - b. The content of God's word, v. 13
 - c. Conclusion, vv. 14–15
- B. Message 2: the promised glory for the new Temple, 2:1–9
 1. Unfavorable comparisons with the Solomonic Temple, vv. 1–3
 - a. The command to address the problem, vv. 1–2
 - b. The questions reflecting the problem, v. 3
 2. The Lord's encouragement to overcome the unfavorable comparisons with the Solomonic Temple, vv. 4–9
 - a. The Lord's exhortation to be strong, vv. 4–5
 - b. The Lord's promise concerning the future of the Temple, vv. 6–9
- C. Message 3: blessings for a defiled people, 2:10–19
 1. Judah's past defilement, vv. 11–14
 - a. Ritual purity and impurity, vv. 11–13
 - b. Judah's past defilement as reflected by the application from ritual impurity, v. 14
 2. Judah's anticipated blessing, vv. 15–19
- D. Message 4: Zerubbabel, the Lord's signet ring, 2:20–23
 1. The Lord's shaking of heaven and earth, vv. 21–22
 - a. The Lord will shake the heavens and the earth, v. 21b
 - b. The Lord will overturn royal thrones, v. 22a
 - c. The Lord will shatter the power of foreign kingdoms, v. 22b
 2. The Lord's choosing Zerubbabel as his signet ring, v. 23

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

I. Title and Authorship

The name Zechariah, “Yah [the LORD] remembers,” is used for more than twenty men in the Bible. The author of this book was born in Babylon and returned from there under the leadership of Zerubbabel in 536 B.C. He is referred to in Ezra 5:1; 6:14; and Nehemiah 12:16. In Zechariah 1:1, he is stated to have been the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, but in Ezra 5:1, 6:14 he is more simply called the son of Iddo. Since Iddo was his grandfather, this may indicate that his grandfather was better known or that his dad died at an earlier period in life.”

II. Date and Setting

Like Haggai, Zechariah delivered his messages during the reign of Darius I (521–486 B.C.). Three dates are given in the book: 1:1 in October to November of 520 B.C.; 1:7 on February 15, 519; 7:1 on December 7, 518. It would appear that this book was written between 520 to 518 B.C. or shortly thereafter (for more information on the historical setting, see *supra*, p. 19).

III. Message

Zechariah delivers a series of prophetic oracles to those who in repentance resumed rebuilding the Temple. To encourage God's people, Zechariah prophesies how God “would make the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem the center for His worldwide rule and restore the Davidic throne and the priesthood to their former positions of leadership and prominence. Though the realization of these promises would

be delayed and seemingly jeopardized by the postexilic community's rejection of God's leadership, the Lord would eventually deliver His people from renewed Gentile oppression, move them to genuine repentance, and restore them to a vibrant covenant relationship with Himself. In that day He would also bring the nations into His kingdom" (Chisholm, p. 273).

IV. Outline

- A. The night visions and questions about fasting, 1:1–8:23
 1. Introduction, 1:1–6
 2. The night visions, 1:7–6:15
 - a. Vision 1: the four horseman, 1:7–17
 - b. Vision 2: the four horns and four smiths, 1:18–21
 - c. Vision 3: a man with a measuring line, 2:1–13
 - d. Vision 4: reinstatement of the high priest, 3:1–10
 - e. Vision 5: a golden lamp stand and two olive trees, 4:1–14
 - f. Vision 6: the flying scroll, 5:1–4
 - g. Vision 7: the woman in the ephah basket, 5:5–11
 - h. Vision 8: the four chariots, 6:1–8
 - i. Conclusion to night visions: symbolic crowning of Joshua, 6:9–15
 3. The question about fasting and related messages, 7:1–8:23
 - a. The question, 7:1–3
 - b. The answer, 7:4–8:23
- B. The Kingdom of God, 9:1–14:21
 1. Oracle one: the advent and rejection of the Messiah, 9:1–11:17
 - a. The advent of the Messianic King, 9:1–10:12
 - b. The rejection of the Messianic Shepherd-King, 11:1–17
 2. Oracle two: the advent and reception of the Messiah, 12:1–14:21
 - a. The redemption of Judah, 12:1–13:9
 - b. The return of the King, 14:1–21

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

I. Title and Authorship

The author of this book simply refers to himself as Malachi, "my messenger," with no additional information about his background. This has suggested to some that Malachi is not a proper name but a title. Because the other prophetic books begin with the prophet's name, which also serves as each book's title, it appears best to take Malachi as a proper name. Support for this being a proper name is also found in the early versions of Theodotion, Symmachus, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Vulgate. In addition 2 Esdras (second century A.D.) lists the last three minor prophets as *Aggaeus*, *Secharias*, and *Malachias*. In reference to Malachi, an additional remark was added, "who is also called the angel [messenger] of the Lord" (Verhoef, p. 156).

II. Date and Setting

Unlike the two other postexilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, Malachi does not date his material. The internal evidence within the book of Malachi in comparison with the book of Nehemiah suggests that it was written around 430 B.C. "Malachi probably ministered at the same time as Nehemiah. They addressed similar issues. For example, the Temple was completed but being misused (Mal. 1:7–10

with Neh. 3:10); there was a corruption in the priesthood (Mal. 1:7–2:9 with Neh. 13:1–9); there was some intermarriage with the heathen (Mal. 2:11–16 with Neh. 13:23–28); and there was neglect of the offerings of God (Mal. 3:8–12 with Neh. 13:10–13). Malachi’s ministry would fit very well into the time just after Nehemiah or perhaps into the time when Nehemiah was absent for a short time from Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 13:6)” (Benware, p. 234).

The Babylonians were responsible for three major deportations of Jews in 605, 597, and 586 B.C. The last deportation also included the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. The Babylonian empire began to decline with Nebuchadnezzar’s death (ruled from 605–562 B.C.) in 562, the Neo-Babylonian empire declined quickly. His sons Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk) ruled from 562 to 560. He was the king who released Jehoiachin from house arrest while living in Babylon in 561 B.C. (Jer 52:31). Babylon fell to the Persians in 539 B.C. At the time of the fall, Babylon was under the ruler of Belshazzar (553–539). Belshazzar had been made coregent with his father Nabonidus (556–539) in 556 B.C.

Throughout the postexilic period, the Judeans were controlled by the Persians. There were three major returns from Babylon during the Persian period. The first was led by Zerubbabel in 538 B.C., the second by Ezra in 458 B.C., and the third by Nehemiah in 444 B.C. After the first return the Temple was rebuilt (see Ezra 1–6, Hag, and Zech). After the second return, the people needed to return to their covenant responsibilities (Ezra 7–10). After the third return, the people of Judah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.

III. Message

The major thrust of Malachi’s work was to apply the Mosaic Covenant to this postexilic community of Judahites who had lost sight of their distinctiveness as God’s chosen nation, problems of improper worship, improper marital relationship, and outright disloyalty to the God of the covenant. Consequently, Malachi was often negative because he reminded Judah of the consequences of disobedience. However, this must be tempered against introductory section of 1:2–5 where he reminds Judah of their privileged position. By reminding Judah about God’s dealing with them in the past, present, and future, Malachi called Judah to repent of their covenant sins and to renew their allegiance to the God of the covenant.

IV. Outline

- A. Superscription, 1:1
- B. First disputation: the Lord’s covenant love for his covenant nation as demonstrated by his rejection of Esau, 1:2–5
 - 1. The Lord’s assertion about his love for Judah, v. 2a
 - 2. Judah’s objection to the Lord’s assertion about his love for Judah, v. 2b
 - 3. The Lord’s correction of Judah’s misunderstanding his love for them, vv. 2c–5
- C. Second disputation: the priests denounced for polluting the table of the Lord and corrupting the covenant of Levi, 1:6–2:9
 - 1. Introduction, 1:6a–7b
 - 2. First part of the response: the Lord’s response to the priests’ polluting his table, 1:7c–14
 - 3. Second part of the response: the Lord’s response warning the priest’s about corrupting the covenant of Levi, 2:1–9

- D. Third disputation: Judah's unfaithfulness through violation of the Lord's expectations in marriage, 2:10–16
 - 1. The Lord charges Judah with violating his covenant by marrying idolaters, vv. 10–12.
 - 2. The Lord charges Judah with violating his covenant by divorcing their covenant partners, vv. 13–15c.
 - 3. The Lord concludes his charge with a summary challenge, vv. 15d–16.
- E. Fourth disputation: the Lord's coming to judge the wicked and to purify his people, 2:17–3:5
 - 1. The Lord's assertion, 2:17a
 - 2. The people's objection, 2:17b
 - 3. The Lord's response, 2:17c–3:5
- F. Fifth disputation: the Lord's desire to bless his unfaithful people, 3:6–12
 - 1. Introduction, vv. 6a–8b
 - 2. The Lord's response to Judah's disobedience in giving, vv. 8c–12
- G. Sixth disputation: the Lord's affirmation of justice by contrasting the fate of the righteous and the wicked, 3:13–4:3
 - 1. The Lord's assertion, 3:13a
 - 2. The people's objection, 3:13b
 - 3. The Lord's response, 3:14–4:3
- H. Concluding summary and exhortation, 4:4–6
 - 1. Remembering the Law, v. 4
 - 2. Preparing for the day of the LORD, v. 5
 - 3. Repentance, v. 6a
 - 4. Judgment, v. 6b