



FOUR MINOR PROPHETS

JOEL

NAHUM

HABAKKUK

MALACHI

"The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (II Peter 1:21)

THE PROPHECY OF

JOEL

A. S. COPLEY

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the Day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand."

(1992)

First Printing: 1929

Second Printing: 1953

JOEL

INTRODUCTION

"THE WORD OF THE LORD THAT CAME TO JOEL, THE SON OF PETHUEL" (Joel 1:1). Joel is the second of the minor Old Testament prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are termed the major prophets, because their messages are much larger than the other twelve - Hosea to Malachi. However, their size does not determine their value. Each one has an important and distinct place. Some claim that Joel gave his message about 800 years before Christ, probably half a century before Isaiah. But it is said that the Hebrew canon places it between Hosea and Amos, as our Bible has it, which is a little later. Israel were already losing out; for less than a hundred years later, they were carried captive into Assyria by Shalmaneser - (II Kings 18:9-11). The name Joel means, "Jehovah is God, or might." Pethuel means, "Be persuaded, be enlarged of God." These names inspire reverence, faith, courage and hope. They express the attitude which Israel should have held toward the Lord God.

A Three-fold Outline

The following birds-eye division will simplify our study of the book, which tells of the devastation and restoration of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

1. Devastation Declared - Due To Backsliding - Chap. 1.
2. Devastation Described - Chapter 2:1-11.
3. Devastation Reversed - Followed By Prosperity - Chaps. 2:12-32 and 3.

Devastation Declared

Chapter 1

Attention! "Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?" - Verse 2. Today, the custom is to address the young men, but Joel spoke to the elders. If the Jewish fathers had obeyed the voice of God, Israel would not have fared as they did. Had the elders and rulers

received Christ as the Messiah, the present blindness would never have come, neither would the advertised calamities of the future. A proverb promises: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." God holds the fathers responsible for giving their offspring the light, and then holds the children responsible to walk in it.

What the prophet was about to say, had not yet come. It was still future, and indeed extended into the far distant future. The background of the dark picture was already painted by the unbelief and rebellion of these to whom he spoke. His sudden and exclamatory utterance, "Hear this," indicates terrible foreboding.

PROCLAMATION. "Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation" - Verse 3. These words express the importance of spreading the news. All Israel should hear of what was coming. They also show that the serious message of the prophet would cover many generations. Oh, how much is couched in a few words which God speaks. It is exceedingly profitable to us, therefore, to read slowly, and read the same portion again and again, lest we miss much of His thought.

ALARM! "That which the palmer worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten" - Verse 4. There is scarcely a more comprehensive verse, or more prolific picture in the Bible than this. It is simply unique. These four insects, in their devouring raid, picture the four world empires in their successive devastations of Israel's land. In verse 6, God says, "A nation is come upon my land, strong and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion etc." Note too that in Chapter 2:25, He calls those insects, "My great Army, which I sent among you." Observe their exact photograph in chapter 2:2-11, and compare it with the horde of locusts in Revelation 9:3-11. The final onslaught of that destructive host is still future. God will use them to chastise the Jews during the indescribable tribulation (Matthew 24:21), and then severely punish them for it, as stated in chapter 3. The "lion and great lion" (vs 6) figure Babylon - Daniel 7:4.

The following from Fausset's Bible Encyclopedia is both interesting and instructive. Each of the four species of locusts in Hebrew letters represents the exact number of

years that each empire oppressed, until they had deprived the Jews of all their glory - (J.C. Reichart). **Gazam**, the palmerworm, represents the 50 years of Babylon's oppression, from the temple's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar (588 B.C.). **Arbeh**, the locust, represents Persia's 208 year's sway over the Jews, from 538 to 330 B.C., when Persia fell before Alexander the Great. **Yelequ**, the cankerworm, represents 140 years of the Greco-Macedonian oppression, from 330 to 190 B.C., when Antiochus, the Jews' great enemy, was defeated by the Roman, Lucius Scipio. **Chasil**, the caterpillar, represents the 108 years of Roman oppression, beginning with their minion, Herod the Great, an Idumean stranger (38 B.C.) and ending A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The whole period thus comprises that between the destruction of the first and the second temple; and the calamities which befell the Jews by the four world empires in that period are those precisely which produced the ruin under which they are still groaning, and form the theme of their **Kinoh**, or songs of lamentation.

EXTENT OF DEVASTATION. "He hath laid my vine waste and barked my fig tree. He hath made it clean bare and cast it away. The branches thereof are made white" - Vs 7. The "vine" speaks of the ten tribes and the "Fig tree" of the Jews. See Isaiah 5:1-8 and Luke 13:6,7. God here speaks of the carrying away of the Ten Tribes (B.C. 720, II Kings 18) and of the 70 years captivity of the Jews (B.C. 606 to 536, II Kings 25), as if already accomplished, because He knew that they would come to pass. Verses 17 to 20 describe in detail the widespread desolation wrought by the treaders-down, the unproductiveness of the land and the sad results. How dreadful are the consequences of unbelief and disobedience toward the Lord. Deserved and unavoidable chastisement is sure to ensue. Let us profit by Israel's folly.

Devastation Due To Backsliding

Chapter 1:8-20

EXHORTATION. "Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth" - Verse 8. Verse 5 calls the drinkers of wine to awake from their intoxication, and "weep and howl" because of their worldliness. The people became engrossed with business and intoxicated with pleasure, which wine drinking figures. Paul wrote: "Be

not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." Joel portrays the deplorable condition in Palestine - 2:8-11. Verse 12 is a summing up, and with verse 16, gives the cause thereof.

"The vine is dried up and the fig tree languisheth. The pomegranate tree, the palm tree also and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men. Is not the meat cut off from before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God?" The land lost its productiveness, the commodities of corn, wine and oil failed, and the trees ceased to bear fruit - all because "joy withered" from the inhabitants. Do you marvel that John wrote centuries afterward, saying, "Beloved, I wish (or pray) above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth"? - III John 2. In Joel's day, that sad withering began. It rapidly increased until Jesus came when there were but a few who looked for the Messiah. Individuals received Him, and the Gift of the Holy Spirit; but the Jews, as a nation, rejected both.

APPLICATION. Has not Joel painted a picture of Christendom? What confronts us today? What means the fight between Modernism and Fundamentalism? Why are some ministers crying for an old time revival? Ah! joy is withered from Christendom. Joy and gladness are cut off from the churches. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," cried Nehemiah. Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might be in you, and that your joy might be full" - John 15:11 and 17:13. In the beginning of the 20th century, the Holy Spirit visited the Church, restoring the former power and joy of the Lord, but the majority refused Him. When the Spirit of joy sought entrance into pulpits and pews, the preachers and people said, "No, we do not want fanaticism and wildfire." They rejected the Joy-bringer and the Joy-sustainer. Some congregations today would not allow Spurgeon to leap two feet high with the joy of the Lord; neither do they have a constant revival of real new births, as he did.

Beloved saints, let us take warning. Welcome the dear Holy Spirit in His unlimited pentecostal fulness. Fear not to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. Let the gifts of the Spirit be restored and displayed for God's glory. Having received the Spirit, keep yielding to Him and learn the Word, so as to know how to be used by Him and how to "walk in the Spirit."

If you want to lose out, be defeated and prove a failure, just yield to sadness. When grief comes, give in to it and hang your harp on the willow; quit singing about Jesus, quit praising the Lord; cool off your ardor for the Truth, and Satan will soon overpower you. If you seek to be nice and religiously polite and not so hilarious as formerly, your faith will weaken, your victory will subside, your physical frame will grow weary and the gate will presently be open for sickness to walk in and take possession. Oh, let not the joy wither. Keep the joy-bells pealing. Maintain the shout of triumph. Rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and the God of glory will never fail you, but He will thunder against your enemies and fight your battles for you.

TESTIMONY. I thank God over and over that He made me thirsty for the Holy Spirit. Despite the discouraging words of friends, He held the water trough before me until my thirst was quenched and my longing heart was satisfied. My mind was hot with thinking and study; my body was weary with ardent toil, and I yearned and cried for the "rivers of living water." When I let go, threw up my hands in entire abandonment to God, threw off my preacher robe and bid goodbye to sectarianism, and let the Lord have absolute sway in my life, then He poured in unspeakable joy and gladness, which has never leaked out to this day. Over forty years of joy, and glory too, has been my daily portion. Hallelujah! If he could, the devil would put a quietus on me as he has on some others. He would make me still, nice, proper, and mechanical, if he could; for I am naturally studious, deliberate and exact; but I refuse satanic opiates and cooling parlors. By God's grace, I purpose to live in the torrid zone of pentecostal power till Jesus comes.

Praise the Lord! He has brought me on victoriously and gladdened my heart wonderfully. He has shown me, not only by the Word, but by observation and experience, what it means to be filled practically with the Spirit, and to keep filling with the Spirit, and keep yielding to the Truth. He has made me to see the danger of compromise, especially with the religious world, and be willing to "sit alone" with Jeremiah, "filled with indignation" - Jeremiah 15:17. My fervent desire and purpose is to be among the "living creatures" whom Ezekiel said, "ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning," and from whose midst, other linen-clothed messengers may fill their hands with "coals of fire and scatter them" near and far for God's glory. God forbid that He should have to say, "Gird yourselves and

lament, ye priests; howl ye ministers of the altar, etc." - Verse 13. We will never hear such a dismal exhortation if we go "every one straight forward whither the Spirit goes," and turn not when we go; but the glory of the Lord will be lifted up and stand over the threshold of His house and the court will be filled with the brightness of His glory - Ezekiel 1:12,13 and 10:1,4.

PROPHETIC AND PATHETIC. "The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of God; the priests, the Lord's ministers mourn" - Vs. 9, 13. Evidently these words refer to the future from Joel's day. The offerings were still kept up in his time. Hosea said, "Israel shall abide for many days without a king and without a prince and without a sacrifice - Hosea 3:4. For 2520 years, they have been deprived of a king, having rejected Jesus when He offered to return and reign - Acts 7:55-56. The offerings were discontinued no doubt from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. These words about the offerings being cut off will have their final and most important fulfillment during the seven years of coming judgment. Verse 15 indicates this clearly: "The day of the Lord is at hand." The day of the Lord will be here, "as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come," when the priests and ministers will lament, mourn, weep, and howl on account of the cutting off of the offerings and sacrifices. Before that period of judgment will begin, the Jews will be at home in their land and will resume the sacrifices, because the real Priest, Jesus Christ, will be due to be received; but they will not yet receive Him. Hence, they will return to the shadows, and accept overtures from one who will prove false to them and cause the daily sacrifice to cease and also the meal offering - Daniel 8:11 and 9:27. Then they will weep and mourn, as Joel foretells.

7

DEVASTATION DESCRIBED

Chapter 2:1-11

"BLOW YE THE TRUMPET IN ZION AND SOUND AN ALARM IN MY HOLY MOUNTAIN" - Verse 1. The first two divisions of the book were covered in our former lesson. Let us note several preliminaries before studying this portion. The name Joel means "Jehovah is God, or

might." There is real significance in this and in the meaning of his father's name.

TIME. When Joel's prophecy will be fulfilled, the anti-Christ will be in power, and the world will be wondering after him because he will show off himself as God. He will deceive the people and make them believe that he is the Son of God, the Anointed of God and the millennial king. But the truth is that the Lord Jesus Christ will be God. He will be the Jehovah for that day. In Isaiah 9:6, we read of the entire career of the Lord Jesus Christ, from the beginning of His first advent to the end of His second advent. "Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given." This speaks of Jesus' first advent. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." These last statements refer to His second advent, which will cover a period of 1,000 years. Bethuel, the father of Joel, means, "persuaded, or enlarged of God." Israel will be persuaded that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and He will be the Persuader. As a result of His persuasion, they will be enlarged. We will read of their enlargement later in this prophecy. I wish to speak again briefly of the time of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

NO OVERLAPPING. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins and to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy" - Daniel 9:24.

This verse was fulfilled within the first seven years of this age, which extended from the crucifixion of Christ to the death of Stephen. Those first seven years were the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ, if the Jews had received Him as their Messiah; but because they did not receive Him and because God knew that they would not receive Him, Daniel was moved to make another statement. Let us look at the 26th verse to get the connection. "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood: and unto the end of the war, desolations are determined."

Notice that a "prince" is coming, a wicked prince. His ancestors would destroy Jerusalem. That people was the Romans, who, in A.D. 71, under Titus, the Roman General,

came up with a great army and besieged Jerusalem for seven years. That connects immediately with the next verse. "And he shall confirm the covenant with the many for one week: and in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even unto the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolator." Nearly 1900 years intervene between Titus' campaign and this verse. That Roman prince (who is doubtless here now) will make an agreement with the Jews for seven years, but he will break that covenant in the middle of that seven years by rejecting Jewish ceremonies.

Verse 24 speaks entirely and absolutely of blessing; no curse, no devastation, no destruction. It names six items altogether of blessing. In verse 27, we read of no blessing whatever, but speaks only of devastation, destruction and overspreading desolation. Prophetic students make a serious mistake. They insist that the 24th verse must be fulfilled again simultaneously with the 27th verse; but it is not so stated by Daniel at all. The 24th verse does not need to be repeated. Its six blessings only wait to be received by the Jews. Notice further, that the 24th verse was "determined." The 27th verse was simply announced. The 24th was fulfilled in the will of God. The 27th verse will be fulfilled out of the will of God, because the blessings of the 24th verse were not received by the people upon whom they were bestowed. The 27th verse of desolation will come inevitably as a chastisement upon the Jews, because they did not receive Christ as their Messiah, who brought the six blessings of verse 24.

When Jesus Christ will set up His throne in the heavens, the Gentile times will end. The 2520 years of Gentile dominion must cease when Jewish times begin. Two lines of kings cannot reign over the same domain at the same time. Gentile dominion was divinely decreed for 2520 years, from 606-587 B.C. to A.D. 1914-1933, and cannot go beyond that period without a herculean crash. Jesus Christ, the divinely anointed Jew of destiny, must begin to reign at the close of that period. Now because the nations will not accept His rulership, but continue their dominion, wholly by the power of the devil, the Lord must take the universal dominion from them by divine despotic force; for they will be devilish usurpers of His domain. Unsparing and worldwide judgment is inevitable.

No, there will be no overlapping of Dan. 9:24 and 27 during those days. Because Israel refused the six blessings of verse 24 at the beginning of this age (which should have begun the millennium) and accepts the overtures of "the prince" (the Roman), God will use the usurping powers to give them a final spanking during the days of "darkness and gloominess" of which Joel writes. Then the woes of Daniel 9:27 will culminate and end with the battle of Armageddon. Israel will receive Jesus as their national Deliverer and Savior, and the six blessings of Daniel 9:24 will flow in upon them without measure.

ALARM SOUNDED. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; for the day of the Lord cometh; for it is nigh at hand" - Verse 1. If the alarm was first given 2700 years ago, how very necessary that it be sounded out today. That period was not "nigh at hand" in Joel's time; but in the time prefigured by his startling words it will indeed be at hand. That critical period is fast approaching. The day of the Lord is imminent. In the broadest sense, the day of the Lord, called "the Lord's day" in Revelation 1:10, embraces the entire thousand years reign of Jesus Christ. Joel refers to a brief period of judgment, which will cover nearly the first seven years of the millennium.

DESCRIPTION of that day. Joel here says, It is "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, great and very terrible, and who can abide it?" - Verse 11. Zephaniah 1:15-18 describes it more in detail - "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of clouds and thick darkness." God says, "I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust and their flesh shall be as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the "day of the Lord's wrath." Amos 5:18-20 speaks of the terrible-ness of that day upon those who call for the day of the Lord with their lips only. It says, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light, as if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness and not light? even very dark and no brightness in it?"

We have cited only three of the many references to "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" - Malachi 4:5. The phrase, "day of the Lord," occurs over 24 times in the Old Testament. It is found in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. It seems that more space is given in the Scriptures to the happenings of the first seven years of the millennium, than to any other subject. The phrase, "that day," referring to the day of the Lord, occurs scores of times. You will not believe me until you search the Word along this line. Consider that the whole world will be arrayed against Jesus Christ in that day. Satan will then have his final swing of 42 months on earth. The Jews as a nation will receive the anti-Christ. The Gentile nations allied as one grand empire will "wonder after the beast," the anti-Christ. At the beginning of the seven years, many Christians will be perched on the fences of indifference, half-heartedness, uncertainty and selfishness, even where they are now; hence, they will not know when the Lord's dominion really will begin, and will not be prepared for translation out of this terrible scene. The Jews' rejection of Christ, the Gentiles' rebellion and usurpation against Him, and the Christians' indifference to His place and honor all combine to make a great and terrible day. Oh, let us be in the perfect, glorious will of God by keeping absolutely surrendered to Jesus now, every day, every hour, and thus be prepared to ascend to meet the Lord in the air, when He blows the trumpet of translation. We belong in His perfect will now. We will belong in heaven when that day dawns, even when the millennium begins. By God's grace, we may be "accounted worthy to escape those things that are coming to pass and to stand before the Son of Man" - Luke 21:36.

I repeat that the great majority of the Church will be in some considerable measure out of God's perfect will at the beginning of those seven years. That sad fact will help to pave the way for Joel's "great and terrible day of the Lord." The whole Church ought to be of Philadelphian character, that is without blame before the Lord. All should be full overcomers. Our Lord says to all Philadelphia saints, "Because thou hast kept the Word of my patience, I also will keep thee from (literally, out of) the hour of temptation that is coming on all the world to try them that dwell on the earth" - Rev. 3:10. That hour of temptation will begin where Gentile dominion should end and where Christ's dominion should commence. It will continue nearly seven

years and will be culminated by the battle of Armageddon. Philadelphia saints will be kept out of that hour of temptation by translation. Other saints will pass into it and "come out of" it (Revelation 7:14) before the "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21 will begin. "The hour of temptation (Revelation 3:10 and 7:14) will be worldwide and affect the Church. "The great tribulation" (Matt. 24) is "Jacob's time of trouble" (Jeremiah. 30:7) and will especially affect the Jews in Palestine. Keep these two facts distinct. All present day believers should live so as to escape the former. They should live in preparation for translation any moment. But by their fruits, we know that multitudes are not so living. Their love for pleasure, or fame, or place, betrays them. Their greed for wealth and their avaricious hoarding it up betrays them. Hear the thousands of eagles screaming in the safety vaults of saved people. Hear the sad groans of houses and lands owned by those people who sometimes speak of the advent of Jesus. Do not tell me that such possessors of wealth are looking for Jesus to come, or that they are prepared for His coming. They are talking about and preparing for "old age." Oh, how few believers really believe the Bible.

12 **TERROR** of the devastator. Joel declares that they will be "a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any after it, to the years of many generations" - Verse 2. This cannot refer to the siege of the Romans against Jerusalem in A.D. 70, or to any divine visitation before then, because it speaks expressly of "the day of the Lord." The latter phrase of the verse suggests Satan's assembled hosts at the end of the millennium. - Revelation 20:7-11.

"A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth. The land is as a garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them." Today, Palestine is being improved by the expenditure of immense sums of money. Houses are being built. Irrigation devices are being planted to make the land productive. The Zionist movement would usher in millennial prosperity if they could. The devastating nations will find a fat field before them indeed, but oh, how terrible and unsparing the waste and desolation that is soon to come! Could we expect anything less? In that day, God will gather all nations to battle before Jerusalem, says Zechariah 14. "The holy city shall the Gentiles tread under foot for forty-two months" - Revela-

tion 11:2. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision" - Joel 3:14. One's pencil fails to picture the overspreading hordes in the Holy land in that day.

APPEARANCE of the devastators. Joel's portrayal of them is quite similar to John's painting in Revelation 8. They are like "the appearance of horses, and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array" - Verse 5. These graphic utterances suggest the simultaneous movement of tanks and airplanes in the same direction and for the same purpose - utter devastation. Power, speed, height, flight, daring, endurance, unitedness, persistence unto perfection will characterize that warring host. Now this may seem strange that God calls them "His army, His camp" - Verse 11. Though Satan will equip that host and move them to assemble there; yet, God will use them to chastise His ancient people, the Jews. See Zephaniah 1:17.

"The earth shall quake before them. The heavens shall tremble. The sun and moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." The tribulation of the Jews will be ended by the consummation of that great and terrible day of the Lord, even as Matt. 24:29 indicates. Isaiah 13:6-11 foretells that awful day. He announces one important purpose of it concerning Palestine, saying, "He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." Those Jews, who will accept the anti-Christ and reject the true Messiah will be overthrown and perish. A remnant will be preserved miraculously and delivered by divine intervention. The convulsions of nature in the heavens and on the earth beggar description. There will be indescribable death struggles between nations and nations. Hitherto unknown and unused war implements in earth and sea and sky will be employed. The battle of Armageddon will rage. Devil-possessed men will not only fight one another, but they will be arrayed with thrice-heated hatred against Jehovah and His Anointed One. No doubt some airplanes will attempt untried upward flights and endeavor to destroy the glorified saints. But the Lord will descend with His mighty host of holy ones and overthrow all His foes with glorious triumph. Hallelujah!

DEVASTATION REVERSED

Third Portion

Chapter 2:12-32 and Chapter 3

"THEREFORE, ALSO NOW, SAITH THE LORD, TURN YE EVEN TO ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning" - Verse 12. Verses, 12-17 indicate that God will bring the dire devastations to an end, upon Israel's repentance. Hence, they will be fulfilled within the seventh year of the "week" of world-wide trial.

"TURN YE," is Jehovah's earnest exhortation, as of a loving father to his wayward children. That was always His tender attitude toward His ancient people after He had divorced them. Hosea 13:9 expresses His deep, plaintive feelings as He exclaims, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." Their repentance must be "with all the heart." An outward, apparent turning will not suffice. Hence, He says, "Rend your heart, and not your garments." We have witnessed superficial, make-believe repentance. It sheds tears, rolls on the floor, tears its raiment, but has no depth, and does not last. It turns seemingly, because it was caught in the wrong, or because it wants to be delivered from trouble. When the heart is actually torn with sorrow because of departure from the Lord, there are abiding results; for He is drawn on the scene thereby and accepts those who turn to Him.

HOPE. "Who knoweth if He will return and repent and leave a blessing behind Him?" Joel was not in doubt concerning God's mercy. He knew what is written in Deuteronomy 4:29,30, where Moses said, "In the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God and shall be obedient unto His voice, thou shalt find Him." And Peter declares that "the Lord is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness." Some people are perplexed about God repenting. It is not as if He had done wrong, for He cannot do evil. He does not even change His mind, but His attitude toward men is changed when they turn from their evil ways unto Him. Note the references from Genesis 6:6, and study especially Isaiah 63:14. You will see that God never swerved from His purpose of cutting off the old creation and of bringing in a new creation. His "repenting," or

"repenting not," hinged on that purpose. Finally, observe that whatever He did, it was "to make Himself a glorious name" - Isaiah 63:14. That is His ultimate object in showing mercy to Israel and replacing them in the promised land.

"A MEAT offering and a drink offering," the blessing which Joel hoped the Lord would grant, is yet future. See our notes on chapter 1:9,13. Israel will resume their sacrifices, foreshadowing their hope of the coming of the Messiah. God will show His favor temporarily by accepting them. Presently, the Lord will reveal Himself to them from the skies, and bless them as indicated in verses 18-20.

A GREAT REVIVAL due. "Gather the people. Sanctify the congregation. Assemble the elders. Gather the children and those that suck the breasts. Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber and the bride out of her closet." The exhortations of the preceding verses will be heeded. Young and old, great and small, will assemble in Jerusalem and cry out to God. The crushing heel of the nations will drive the Jews to the Lord. The 85th Psalm will be the voice of their entreaty. "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" With fervent expectation, the awakened prophets will exclaim, "Come and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn and He will heal us. He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days (2,000 years will have passed), will He revive us. In the third day (at the beginning of the millennium), He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight" - Hosea 6:1-3.

HOW TO PRECIPITATE A REVIVAL. "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar." It appears that the temple will be rebuilt between now and that time, probably not the one described in Ezekial 40. See Isaiah 60:10 and Zechariah 1:16. And yet, will not Dan. 9:25 have another fulfillment? - "The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." The prayer of the priests will be, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them. Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" That will be the time of the treading under foot of Jerusalem for three and a half years - Revelation 11:1,2. It will be the period of "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), the "great tribulation," that which there has been none greater - Matthew 24:21,22. Oh, will there not be a dire need of repentance and crying out to the living God? A remnant will weep and wail, lament and

mourn. Yes, it is the remnant always who save the situation by their bitter tears and dying groans. They will refuse the rulership of anti-Christ. He is not Israel's Messiah and King. Infidels will yell mockingly, saying, "Where is the God of the Jews?" Then "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure" - Psalm 2:4,5. See also Proverbs 1:24-32. The proud and haughty shall be humbled to dust and destruction, but the Jews, who shall humble themselves before Almighty God, will be exalted forever.

DELIVERANCE DUE. "Then will the Lord be jealous for His land and pity His people" - Verse 18. This is the first of seven potent points in this portion. God will answer the prayers of His oppressed people and rise to their rescue. He will bring their sorrow to an end suddenly. Jesus said, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened" - Matthew 24:22. They will fall short 250 days of the seven years that Satan purposes to dominate men and destroy the children of God. Joel begins this portion by speaking of God's blessing upon the land. The deliverance of Israel, related by other prophets, is implied.

REPROACH REMOVED - verse 19. "Yea, the Lord will answer His people, Behold, I will send you corn and wine and oil and ye shall be satisfied therewith; and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen." The Jews are known to be thrifty. They make and lay up money where others fail. To be rag and bottle gatherers is indeed a reproach to them - a hiss and a byword among the Gentiles. And the most humiliating thing that could befall them is that their land should be barren. It is a stinging pain for a Jew to hear a Gentile say of him, "He is no good. He cannot make a living." Therefore, what a day that will be when the whole country will again be productive. How Israel will rejoice, especially when they turn to the Lord and acknowledge Jesus Christ to be their Messiah and King. Then the tables will be turned. Then it will be the time for the Gentiles to blush, for Jehovah will be on the side of Israel. They will again be the chief folk on earth. Their three leading commodities - corn, wine and oil - food, intoxicant and lubricant will abound. There will be an ample supply.

REVENGE RETURNED - Verse 20. "But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive

him into a land barren and desolate," etc. See notes on chapter one, under verse 4. Primarily, the army of the north refers to the Syrians, but other nations will be gathered at the gates of Jerusalem in that awful day. Compare Jeremiah 1:14,15 with Ezekiel 38:1 to 6. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya will be there. "Gomer and all his lands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters and all his lands." Observe in verse 4, that God says to Gog, "And I will turn thee back and put hooks in thy jaws." Read Ezekiel 38 and 39. Evidently the countries east from Palestine will be desolate. See Jeremiah 50:39,40 and 51:42,43.

"The East sea" refers to the Caspian sea, which is north of Persia and east from Russia. "The utmost sea," also called "The Great sea," is the Mediterranean, which borders Palestine on the west. "His stink and ill savor shall come up." The odor of the egregious defeat of Israel's foes will ascend before them like the nauseating, steaming stench of a huge manure pile. The reproach will be turned upon them forever, "because he hath magnified to do great things." Satan will make Gog "think an evil thought," or conceive a mischievous purpose, to overrun and despoil the holy land - Ezekiel 38:10. But Jehovah will know it, and suddenly discomfit him and all his bloodthirsty horde.

17

PROSPERITY PLEDGED - Verses 21 to 24. "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit; the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength." How wonderful! God's eyes are upon the holy land to renew its fertility, and upon the animals to put an end to their groans and ferocity - Romans 8:21 and Isaiah 11:6-9. Everything everywhere in that region will abound with life and health and prosperity. The orchards will blossom and bloom and be fruitful. The vineyards will be green and vines laden with the most luscious grapes. The whole nation of Israel will be overwhelmed with prosperity, as illustrated by the fruitfulness of the fine and fig tree. The prophet's words of encouragement continue, as he speaks now to the people.

"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God," as if to say, "You have not brought all this about by your own efforts. Your wealth has not purchased this sudden outburst of plenty; neither have you merited it by your goodness. My grace, wisdom, and might, because of my covenant with your fathers, have wrought this for you." God had promised the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

for an everlasting possession, saying also, "And I will be their God" - Genesis 17:8. Then follows the proof of it.

THE RAINS RESTORED - Verse 23. "For He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain (rains), the former rain and the latter rain in (as at) the first. And the floors shall be full of wheat and the fats (vats) shall overflow with wine and oil." Some basic facts must be noted in order to understand these words easily and clearly. First, Joel wrote as if "the day of the Lord" were in sight. See 1:15 and 2:11 and chapter 3. He does not recognize the first advent of Christ and this church period. He beholds only Israel's past plenty, while obedient under Joshua, and later, and then their poverty and the withholding of the rains because of their disobedience. The latter fact and the nearness of the day of the Lord stirred him up to exhort them to repentance.

Before proceeding, let the student observe, that three Hebrew words in particular are used with reference to the rains in Palestine. "**Moreh**," the early sprinkling rain, translated, "the first, the former, the early rain," which falls in October. "**Malqosh**," the gathered rain, translated, "the latter rain," which falls in March. And "**Geshem**," the heavy, drenching rains, which include the former and the latter. Geshem is always plural, and should be so translated, as in Leviticus 26:4, R.V. In Jeremiah 3:3, Ezekiel 34:26 and Zechariah 10:1, geshem is translated "showers." In our text in Joel, is it "the rain" (lit. rains). Therefore, we may paraphrase the verse thus - "For He hath given you moreh, the early, sprinkling rain, in just measure (R.V.); and He will cause to come down for you geshem, the showers, that is, both moreh, the early sprinkling rain, and malqosh, the latter or gathered rain, as at the first, when Joshua led Israel into Canaan."

Four Rain Epochs

It is very important to know that four distinct stages, or epochs are recorded concerning Israel and their rains.

First, was the original promise. God said to Israel, "If ye walk in my commandments and do them, I will give you RAINS (Heb. geshem) in their season; and the land shall yield her increase and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit" - Leviticus 26:3,4 R.V. Compare also Deuteronomy 11:14,15. That promise was most certainly fulfilled, beginning under Joshua's dominion. Note Ezra 10:9,13; also Song of Solomon 2:11,12 - "For lo, the winter is past; the

rain (geshem, rains) is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth." Joel remembered the days of prosperity, saying, "The land is as the garden of Eden before" the devastators - Chap. 2:3. And the phrase, "in the first," refers back to that time. The word, "month," is not in the Hebrew.

Second, was the period of scarcity and drought, which Joel deplures - Chap. 1:10 to 20. Study also Jeremiah 3:1-3 and 5:24. Malachi 3:10 implies that time of barrenness of the land and promised plenty upon their repentance.

Third, the rains fell and plenty was restored at the first advent of Jesus. This is exactly what Joel's words mean - "He hath given you the former rain (moreh) moderately" (or in just measure, R.V.). This is also implied by such citations as James 5:7, Acts 4:34-37 and 11:28 with 3:19, which the student may examine. The margin reads, "He hath given you a Teacher of righteousness," which refers to Jesus Christ. How marvelous that the Hebrew word "moreh" should mean both the spiritual Blessor and the material blessings. Indeed, everything depends upon Christ. All God's plans and purposes are wrapped up in His Son. "By Him all things consist," or hold together. His coming brought spiritual and material plenty. "It is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you" - Hosea 10:12. Job is a beautiful type of Christ at this point. He said, of the people, "And they waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain" - Job 29:23.

19

Joel and his contemporaries had only one advent of the Messiah in mind, even that which is yet future; but God saw much more. Therefore, Joel's declaration, "He hath given you the former rain moderately" was fulfilled by the advent of Jesus Christ as the Teacher of righteousness." In the New Testament He is called, "a Teacher come from God" - John 3:2. The Greek word, translated "teach," or "teacher," occurs over a hundred times with reference to Jesus. The Greek term rendered "teacher" is translated "Master" nearly fifty times. The word "teach" is used of the Holy Spirit only once (John 14:26); but He is nowhere called a teacher. Hence, the phrase, "teacher of righteousness," in Joel 2:23 cannot refer to Him.

Four, the state of Israel and of the rains on their land. This is yet future. Joel continues by saying, "And He will cause to come down for you the rain (geshem, rains or showers) - the former rain the the latter rain as at the first." What is said of David, "the king's son," (Psalm 72:6), refers

finally to Jesus - "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." Hosea 6:3 confirms this view - "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain (geshem, rains); as the latter rain that watereth the earth," R.V. These citations speak of the Lord's second advent in particular. Hosea says, "After two days (two thousand years as II Peter 3:8 explains), will He revive us. In the third day (the millennium), He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight." He agrees with Joel's second, or prophetic statement. From Hosea until Jesus returns will be more than 2,700 years. Hence, in his third dispensational day, Israel will be revived and their land will receive copious showers, the early and later rains, and will abound in fruitage. Zechariah speaks of the same hopeful days, exhorting his people to "ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain," with the promise of the pent-up heavy rains (geshem) and a plentiful harvest. Without knowing it, Joel announced in one verse, both advents of Jesus.

20 "In the first month." Let us look at this perplexing phrase. This cannot mean that all the rains will be crowded into the first month. In fact, the word "month" is not in the Hebrew, nor is it implied by the adjective, "first." The Revised Version reads "at" instead of "in." Now supply "as" before "at," so that it reads, "As at the first"; then our problem is solved. Note how often "as" is used in Job 29:23, Psalm 72:6 and Hosea 6:3. This is evidently the meaning. When the Lord comes again, the land will be restored to its original productiveness; for the rains will fall upon it as copiously as they did "at the first," or when Israel first dwelt therein, before the showers were withheld because of Israel's sins. The following four verses prove this to be the meaning. Read them and rejoice.

"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten. . ." See notes on chap. 1:4. The unwordable devastation of the nations will be ended suddenly by divine interference at the coming of Jesus. Their ravages will be followed by marvelous prosperity. The land will be restored to its former fruitfulness. Hence, these gracious words of hope and comfort - "And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be ashamed." The Gentiles will never again have occasion to reproach the Jews on account of God's judgment upon

them. They will no longer be a "hiss and a byword" among the nations. They will dwell in their own land and be safe forever.

REVELATION renewed - verse 27. "And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else; and my people shall never be ashamed." "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" - Isaiah 40:5. "So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel" - Ezekiel 39:7. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God. We have waited for Him and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" - Isaiah 25:9. The Jews as a people will accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah and King. He will overthrow the anti-Christ and save them. Hence, again, Joel says, "And my people shall never be ashamed."

DEVASTATION REVERSED

Third Portion Continued

Chap. 2:12-32 and Chap. 3

21

PENTECOST Promised - Chapter 2:28-32. This division contains the culmination of the swallowing up of the devastation. The oft-promised spiritual showers are here foretold. The material rains were only reminders and symbols of the far greater spiritual "floods upon the dry ground" - Isaiah 44:3. Joel beheld the pouring out of the Spirit just before the day of the Lord, the day of darkness, gloominess and judgment. But Peter, by divine inspiration, declares Joel's prophecy partly fulfilled in his day. Of course he expected the foretold day of darkness to follow the advent of the Spirit, even as Joel did. But he understood differently when he wrote his second epistle - II Peter 3:8.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," said Joel. But Peter said, "And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh" - Acts 2:17 R.V. There are three points of difference between these two men's words though they both spoke by and concerning the same Holy Spirit. Joel said, "Afterward," that is, after all that is recorded in chapter 1 and in the preceding verses of this chapter. After the treading down of the city by the nations and the conse-

quent losses, and after the overthrow of those nations and the restoration of fruitfulness and plenty in the land. Even after what we shall read in the third chapter; for the fullest measure of the Spirit's presence and power in Palestine will follow the battle of Armageddon. Hence, Peter could not say, "Afterward," but "In the last days." See our studies in Acts, chapter 2.

This leads us to the third point in which Peter differs from Joel. He says that thus "saith God, I will pour out OF (Gr. apo) My Spirit." The Pentecost at the beginning was only an earnest of the "floods upon the dry ground" (Isaiah 44:1-4), "the showers of blessings" - Ezekiel 34:26. The Spirit has not yet been "poured upon all flesh." The mighty visitation of the Holy Spirit, of this century is a renewal of the first showers of Pentecost and an earnest of the final and complete fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Peter's words, "In the last days," includes the present church age and the coming millennial age. Time is compassed by two great periods, the first days or the period before Christ came, and "the last days," the period since He came. These are expressed by the two calendar countings - A.M., Anno Mundi, in the year of the world, and A.D., Anno Domini, in the year of our Lord. Hosea (chap. 6:1-3) and Peter (II Peter 3:8) tell us that there are three last dispensational days. But we want to impress upon our minds, that the final Pentecost will be far more wonderful and powerful than the first, or the present, effusion of the Spirit. By means of the early spiritual rain, the first advent of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, God has been "visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name." And there was only a sprinkling of salvation for the Jews, because they refused the Messiah nationally. But at Christ's second advent, and the final outpouring of the Spirit, the great world-wide revival among Jews and Gentiles, will take place. "After this (after this church age), I will return ... that the residue of men - "all Israel," who will believe (Rom. 11:26), might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord who doeth all these things" - Acts 15:14-17. Those will be halcyon days for both Jews and Gentiles. The golden age will then be here.

The second point in which Peter's words differ from Joel, is this. Peter added, "Saith God," the emphatic Greek order for "God saith." Peter sought to impress his hearers, that he was not quoting Joel's words simply, but the words of God. They were responsible to accept the prophecy as

divine. And are we not responsible to accept them as divine? And were not Peter's words also the voice of Jehovah? Not one prophetic student denies that we are in the last days. Then how can men deliberately denounce the present, effective, phenomenal working of God and call it fanatical and devilish? What happened in the beginning of the last days? How can verse 17 be fulfilled in the closing days except by a repetition, or a continuation of the same miraculous phenomena of the first last days? If the phenomena in Peter's day were the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in any measure, what else can similar supernatural phenomena today be if not another fulfillment of Joel's prophecy? How dare men garble the Scriptures by introducing a substitute for Jehovah's own sovereign Gift and His miraculous accompaniments? How dare men admit the miraculous of the early "last days," and insist that we can be anointed with the Holy Spirit and power in the "last days" without the Spirit's own phenomenal sign and without the works of power that prove His presence? Peter exclaimed, "This is THAT which was spoken by the prophet Joel" - Acts 2:16. Certainly, we need to be able to say of our anointing, or baptism, as some term it, "This is THAT which was spoken by Joel and enjoyed by Peter." Anything less is spurious, being a vain imitation. Not only did God say, but He "saith," He has continued to say, "This is that," for lo, these 1900 years. How foolish are those who turn a deaf ear to His voice. But how blest and victorious and useful, and how pleasing to Him, are those who believe and heed His words.

23

Joel's "afterward" had therefore already come to pass in a measure. The material rains have been falling to some extent in Palestine. And over seventy years ago, the Holy Spirit began to manifest His mighty power in signs and wonders. People became filled with the Holy Spirit, receiving the distinctive supernatural sign of their anointing. And our God be praised! These phenomena continue; for Jesus said, "These signs shall follow them that believe" - Mark 16:16,17, and some saints still believe God is preparing the Church for translation; for it is "the day of His preparation." The world is being warned of certain judgment, and the Jews are being made ready to receive Christ as their Messiah and King, though they may not realize it.

TRIBULATION Days. "And I will show wonders in the heavens and the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke" - v. 30. Revelation 8 and 9 record somewhat in detail the

things here mentioned by Joel. They will likely begin before and continue throughout the time of "Jacob's trouble," the great tribulation upon the Jews. "The great and terrible day of the Lord" will follow; for Jesus said, "immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened" - Matt. 24:29. The battle of Armageddon will culminate and end the tribulation days. It seems that the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars and the shaking of the heavens will be occasioned by that battle, or at least occur at that time. All the terrific and indescribable commotions in the sky and on earth for that brief time, Joel foresaw as "great and terrible."

"THE REMNANT" of Jews shall be delivered during those days. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" - v. 32. The prophecy of the two witnesses (Revelation 11) will be effectual. Some of their hearers will cry out to Jehovah and believe on Jesus and be saved from their sins and "endure unto the end" of the tribulation. "The same shall be saved" miraculously from physical death; for those days will be shortened by sovereign divine intervention - Matthew 24:13,22. As we read in the next chapter, God says, "I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem." See also Micah 4:6,7. Observe that Peter quotes only part of this last verse, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21), because the tribulation could not come within the first seven years of the Spirit's advent. Daniel 9:24 only, with its half dozen proffered blessings, could be fulfilled. Daniel 9:27, a week, (seven years) of trial and judgment, will occupy the opening of the millennium, because Israel as a nation did not accept those six blessings in the beginning; but that week will be shortened 250 days by the Lord's mighty hand. "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

Devastators Judged
Chapter 3:1-16

TIME of the judgment. "For behold in those days and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem" - v. 1. The fulfillment of this portion will occur during the seven years of trouble mentioned in Daniel

9:27, called by some, "The last week of Daniel." It is termed "the hour of temptation (lit. trial) which shall come upon all the world" - Revelation 3:10. Within that time, the Lord will deliver Israel out of their long drawn-out captivity.

DEVASTATORS Assembled. "I will also gather all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat and will plead with them there for my people and my heritage Israel" - v. 2. Zechariah 14 says that God will gather all the nations against Jerusalem at that time. The valley of Jehoshaphat is east of Jerusalem, between it and the mount of Olives. That international gathering will cover a small part of the three and a half years; "for the holy city shall they tread under foot forty-two months" - Revelation 11:2. It will be Jehovah's final chastisement of His ancient people which would be averted if they would accept Christ nearly three years before, instead of accepting a covenant with an enemy of His. But the Lord will also plead for them, not by gentle, persuasive words, but with fire, the sword, pestilence, hailstones and brimstone - Isaiah 66:16 and Ezekiel 38:22. The phrase, "all nations," evidently includes especially the two contending great leagues of nations, the Western, or European Confederacy, dominated by the anti-Christ, and the Northern Confederacy, headed by Gog - Ezekiel. 38:3. These two leagues will be bitterly opposed to each other. Study about "the king," the anti-Christ, and "the king of the north" in Daniel 11:36,40,44,45.

RETRIBUTION Rendered. "Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? Will ye render me a recompense? - v. 4. Tyre and Sidon, being part of the Roman Empire, were then representative of the Western League. Ostensibly they will protect the Jews from the onslaughts of the northern army (Ezekiel 38:3-12), and thereby claim to do the Lord a great favor. But in reality they will be seeking the riches of that land, even as the Northern confederacy will be doing at that time. They will be usurping God's place, as the Protector of His people; for He will be on His throne. Thus they will incur His just wrath. And He will not forget the cruelty of the four world-powers against Israel, before Christ came -- the Babylon, Persia, Greece and Roman empires. Compare verses 5 and 6 with II Kings 17, 24 and 25. God will deliver His people from the slavery of the nations. Not only so; but He will punish the nations for their oppression of His people. This is the meaning of verse 7 - "Behold, I will raise

them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own heads."

A DIVINE Challenge. "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles, Prepare war; wake up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. . ." - vs. 9-13. At that time, Jesus Christ will be on His millennial throne. He will be the authorized Ruler; but the nations will be united against Him. He will know their wicked counsel and purpose - Psalm 2:2. They imagine a vain thing, that they can control all the world and get possession of the holy land, the home of the Jew. Therefore, they gather around Jerusalem. The Western and Northern Confederacies will be in hot contention against each other. Hence, the Lord utters the seven-fold challenge of these five verses. He bids all the nations to make the fullest and most powerful preparation. He challenges the utmost wisdom and skill of their mightiest men. He invites their ships, both air and sea, as well as their tanks. And he exclaims, "There will I sit to judge all the nations round about."

JUST Judgment executed. When the hatred and rage of the nations are at their height, and their cup of iniquity is full, "the Lord shall bring down His mighty ones" (v. 11) and deliver Israel. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (the glorified saints) in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" - II Thessalonians 1:7-9. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision (concision, threshing); for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of concision" (v. 14); that is, in the valley of cutting off by just judgment. The time of that assemblage of the nations is plainly "the day of the Lord." His judgment of them will culminate with the battle of Armageddon, which will extend to about 60 miles north from Jerusalem in the valley of Megiddo.

SIGNS In heaven. "The sun and the moon shall be darkened and the stars shall withdraw their shining" - v. 15. Jesus declared that the darkening of the sun and moon should immediately follow Israel's time of tribulation - Matthew 24:29. Chapter 2:31 shows that it occurs "before the great and terrible, or notable day of the Lord." Daniel 7:12 seems to come in here. That day is described in Zechariah 14:5-8 thus, "The light shall not be with brightness and with gloom; but it shall be one day which is known

unto the Lord; not day and not night," R.V. It will be 75 days long. (See our Chart on Revelation). "The Lord shall roar out of Zion" (as a lion roars over its prey) in triumph over his conquered foes, "and utter His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake," because of His mighty power. The whole world will lie defeated at His feet, and begin to acknowledge Him as "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Devastation Followed By Millennial Glory

Chapter 3:16 to 21

"But the Lord will be the hope (or harbor) of His people and the strength of the children of Israel" - v. 16. He will not roar against His own. He will appear to their mighty deliverance and great delight. That will be the beginning of the golden age. Israel will know then that Jesus is the Lord their God dwelling in Zion. Neither the Arabs, nor any other foreigner will have quarters there.

PROSPERITY will prevail. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord and shall water the valley of Shittim" - v. 18. The vineyards will be unspeakably productive. Cattle and goats will roam the forests and hills. The rains (geshem and morah), promised in Leviticus 26:4 and Deuteronomy 11:14, will fall very copiously and fill all the river beds with fresh water.

We read of the same fountain, named here, in Psalm 46:4 and Ezekiel 47. In Revelation 22:1 we read of a stream "proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" in the heavenly city, which corresponds with the one of which Joel writes. The stream below is the symbol and result of the one on high, which is the Holy Spirit. Shittim is a place in Moab east of the Salt Sea. Israel camped there just before crossing Jordan, and from there Joshua sent two spies to view Jericho - Joshua 2:1 and 3:1. The Shittim wood, or acacia tree, grew there. It is likely somewhat barren now; but will be fertile and productive during the millennium. Egypt and Edom will be desolate places because of their ill treatment of God's people in the past. God does not forget the sore bondage that Jacob endured in Egypt over four thousand years ago, nor the selfishness and cruelty of the Edomites against them on their way to the

promised land - v. 19.

FINAL Word of Joel. "But Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation." A thousand years of safety, peace and plenty lie just ahead for God's ancient people, who suffered losses and crosses, hardships and persecution. And they shall continue in their own land throughout eternity. God says, "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed; for the Lord dwelleth in Zion" - vs. 20,21. The many plagues and diseases that have fallen upon humanity will be gone forever. Israel will not suffer from scabs, scurvy, and leprosy; for the Lord will purify their blood. No doctors and druggists will be needed then; for where the Lord shall dwell, all will be forever well.

The End

28



**THE PROPHECY
OF
NAHUM**

A. S. COPLEY

29

"The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings." (2:4)

**Third Printing 1992
Second Printing 1955
First Printing unknown**

The Prophecy of Nahum

A. S. Copley

"The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum, the Elkoshite" (Nahum 1:1).

Nahum is the seventh of the minor prophets. Obadiah is the smallest, and Nahum is the next one in length. He was contemporary with Isaiah, and prophesied in the time of Hezekiah, the king of Judah. His words are very graphic and awe-inspiring.

Nineveh means "the offspring of ease," and is a type of Babylon described in Revelation 17-18. God gave Nahum a vision of the end of this age and the introduction into the next. The cruelty of the nations against Jerusalem, their final attempt to destroy it, Jehovah's gracious interference and deliverance of Judah, and His final overthrow of the great harlot and all His foes, are described clearly in this little prophetic word.

Jonah had prophesied against Ninevah 150 years before (862 B.C.), and the city repented; hence it was not then destroyed. Nahum prophesied against it in 710 B.C., and it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in 606 B.C. Ninevah had been the capital of Assyria, and was then greater than Babylon. At one time, its infants numbered more than 120,000 (Jonah 4:11).

"God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord vengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies" (1:2). This first chapter, except verses 7 and 15, is a positive and powerful proof of God's wrath against His enemies. Verse 5 shows that He will visit the wicked with judgment at the close of this age. "The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein." When it is too late, men will discover that the wrathful God has never changed. "The Lord is slow to anger;" He has suspended His judgments since Christ came and bore the judgment that all men deserve. Meanwhile the Holy Spirit is now calling people to accept Christ's substitutionary death, and be set free.

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him" (1:7). Like a brilliant sunburst on a dark day, this verse is thrown in here.

The Jews will have a special need of it at the end. They will be glad for Nahum, which means "Comforter", a hint of the Holy Spirit. Their greatest day of trouble, called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), is yet future.

Anti-Christ Foreshadowed

"There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor" (1:11). That wicked counsellor was Sennacherib, king of Assyria. He was a counsellor of Belial, which means "worthless, reckless, lawless." His predecessor, Shalmanezer, had laid siege against Samaria in 720 B.C. and three years later carried Israel captive into Assyria. In 710 B.C. Sennacherib came against Jerusalem with "a great host, or a multitude of chariots." Hezekiah, king of Judah, prayed, and God answered through words of comfort by Isaiah, and then He smote 185,000 of the enemy. The king "departed and went and returned and dwelt in Nineveh" Later, one of his sons "smote him with a sword." (II Kings 18-19; Isaiah 36-37). Nahum gives us a picture of end times, and Sennacherib is a remarkable type of antichrist.

The Seven Climactic Years

The first chapter closes with these cheering words to Judah: "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cast off" (1:15). This may apply to any faithful Gospel herald, but its primary interpretation is limited to our glorious Lord as joined to His mystical Body, the Church. It is similar to Zechariah 14:4: "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." After the greater portion of the Church is taken to heaven, the "feet" portion will be here still, publishing peace. Therefore, Paul quotes these words in direct connection with the Gospel as given to Israel (Romans 10:15-21). They may possibly be represented by the company of saints referred to as "five foolish virgins," who will miss the marriage feast because they have no oil in their lamps, (or, neglect to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit).

"O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts; perform thy vows; for the wicked one (Sennacherib) shall no more pass through thee. He is utterly cut off." The Jews, under Hezekiah, obeyed and God cut off their enemy. They will need to heed this verse again. The tribulation days of the end will interfere with Judah's worship. The modern Sennacherib, the "man of sin," will cause the sacrifice to cease,

thereby attempting to put an end to the worship of the true God. Hence, Jehovah will encourage His people to "be strong and do valiantly" (Daniel 11:32), assuring them that the enemy's power will be broken forever. The first chapter has given us an introduction into the seven years of tribulation with which this age will end.

"He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily" (2:1). Sennacherib is the enemy of history, and the antichrist is the prophetic answer, who will stand before the face of Jerusalem with purpose to devour her. They will fortify themselves in that day by crying out to God in their distress. Jehovah says: "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle," (Zechariah 14:2), "and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations" (Joel 3:2). God will plead for His own by way of judgment upon their foes. As truly as He delivered them from the savage Assyrians, so truly will He deliver them finally and forever from all nations, and in a similar manner, even by His flaming power and presence (II Thessalonians 1:7-8; 2:8).

"The shield of His mighty men is made red; the valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots are with flaming torches (flash with steel, R.V.) in the day of His preparation, and the fir trees are shaken terribly. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like lightnings" (2:3-4). This is a description of Sennacherib's army as he was drilling them for conflict. The phrase, "the day of his preparation," is sometimes applied to the present time, in which our Lord is preparing His saints for the rapture and the world for judgment. The flaming chariots, raging and jostling in the streets, are used as prophetic of vehicles today which are choking the roadways in many cities across the land. This application may be made without doing violence to Scripture, but such is not the typical or prophetic interpretation, which always should be ascertained first of all.

Nahum is not telling us only of our city autos, but is describing a scene far more serious. This is why he introduces his prophecy as "the burden." A prophetic load was laid on him, and it lay heavy on his heart. Nahum saw the war implements of the antichrist. If the warrior's shield and

the valiant soldiers themselves seemed to be covered with blood; if the tanks and chariots of war appeared like flames of angry steel, even in the day of preparation for war; if the battle drill and dress parade were so imposing and spectacular as to burn with bloodthirsty hatred; if the carnage of 1914-18 war (also, World War II, Korean, Vietnam and Desert Storm conflicts) was only an earnest, what will the actual international, fiery, bloody, raging, roaring, insane, devil-directed final conflict be!

The prophet declares that "chariots shall rage in the streets" in their battle drill, as if impatiently waiting for the bloody dash. They shall "jostle one against another." Jeremiah 46:12 says: "The mighty shall stumble against the mighty." The broadways will be too narrow for their preparation, so intoxicated will men be with the desire to kill.

The nations will accept the Divine challenge of Jeremiah 46: "harness the horses; stand forth with helmets; furbish the spears and put on the brigandines." From Russia in the north, across the Euphrates from the east, Egypt from the South, and from the west, great hosts of battle-trained and armed soldiers, the valiant of the devil will fly like lightning and gather around Jerusalem to battle. "For this is the day of the Lord God of Hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Him of His adversaries; and the sword shall devour and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north county by the river Euphrates" (Jeremiah 46:10). Language is inadequate to portray the unspeakable horrors of the consummation of this age.

If only men would yield to God and seek His face! If they would only accept the judgment that fell upon Jesus on Calvary, these judgments predicted could never come. But men will not believe; hence, judgment is inevitable. God "put away" sin by the sacrifice of the Lamb." If men will not believe that, God must put them away "by the wrath of the Lamb." They will reject the purification of the world by the blood of Christ, and boast of purifying it by the blood of war, therefore, Jehovah will let them have war. The earth will be purified by judgment. Study Jeremiah 25:15-38.

"He shall recount his worthies (or, gallants); they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared" (2:5). Sennacherib boasted in the numbers and strength of his army, tried to frighten Hezekiah, king of Judah, and dared

the God of heaven. But the mightiest of men are less than nothing before God. Therefore, as Nahum says, "they shall stumble in their walk," despite their valor. "They stumble upon their corpses," when the angel of the Lord comes against them (chapter 3:3 with Isaiah 37:36). The antichrist will speak great things and blaspheme God and His Name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. He will make war with the saints and overcome them. The world will run after him and worship him as God (Revelation 13). Despite all his devilish cunning and universal power, he will suddenly come to his end and none shall help him (Daniel 11:45).

"And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts" (2:7). Huzzab means "that which was established." It was the most fertile land in Assyria east of the Tigris river, therefore it stands for all Assyria. Its inhabitants gloried in their wealth of silver and gold (verse 9), which they supposed could never be disturbed. The remaining verses of Chapter Two prove how futile it is to fight against God. Assyria, with all her boasted wealth and strength, was overthrown. Her women lamented as doves mourn, beating on their breasts. When they were exhorted to "stand, stand," their hearts melted and their knees smote together and their faces gathered blackness. How quickly the proud shrivel up before God's wrath! These women are a type, possibly, of the churches in the end-time. (Compare Revelation 2:23)

Ninevah's Shameful End

"Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot, the mistress of witchcraft, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts" (3:1, 4). Nineveh, the capital of this empire, and hence as representing it, is here addressed. Because of her religious pretentiousness, God arraigns her king, saying, "Thy shepherds slumber, O King of Assyria. Thy valiant ones shall dwell in the dust" (3:18). Years afterward, Babylon was also addressed in a similar manner, for Assyria became a part of the Babylon Empire.

This last chapter describes the full and final overthrow of Nineveh and the subjugation of the Assyrian Empire and the shame thereof before the other nations. Nin-

even "dwelt carelessly," acting out the meaning of her name, "offspring of ease," and said in her heart, "I am, and there is none beside me" (Zephaniah 2:15). Hence, Jehovah exclaims: "Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers? . . . Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers; Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity" (3:8-10). Doubtless, reference is made here to the important defeat of the Ethiopians over 200 years before (II Chronicles 14:9-15; 16:8-9). No was a large city on both sides of the Nile river. God challenges Nineveh to strengthen herself to the uttermost: "Draw thee waters for the siege; fortify thy strongholds" (3:14). With all this, she would be destroyed without remedy.

Type Of The Harlot

Why is so much said in God's Word about this antiquated city? God does not record past events just because He is interested in history. Rather, this is the reason: "They happened unto them for types, and were written for our admonitions on whom the ends of the ages have arrived" (I Corinthians 10:10). Therefore, Nineveh is a type of the great whore of Revelation 17-18. Papal Rome makes the same blasphemous boast which that ancient city made. She terms herself the "Mother Church," and her headquarters the "Eternal City." She "hath glorified herself and lived deliciously . . . for she hath said in her heart, I sit a queen and am no widow and shall see no sorrow" (Revelation 18:7). What is said of Ninevah and Assyria is also said of religious Babylon.

"All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations" (Ezekiel 31:6; also, 17:23). This was written of the Assyrians, from which there is an amazing leap in one of our Lord's seven parables, which set forth the "mysteries of the Kingdom of the heavens" (Matthew 13:11). There He declares that the Kingdom of God is mysteriously like "a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth, but when it is sown it groweth up and becometh greater than all herbs and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it" (Luke 13:30-32).

The real people of God have always been a small company comparatively, as an "herb" rather than a "great tree." But professed Christendom, of which the Roman Church is the first and chief factor, has grown into a gigantic tree. The Holy Spirit declares that Rome has "become the habitation of demons and the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Revelation 18:2). Paul writes of these demons and foul spirits in I Timothy 4:1-3: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy (professing to teach and live the truth, but really denying it), having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry and bidding to abstain from meats." Paul terms these things "profane and old wives' fables." Roman Catholicism claims to be this great mustard tree, or the "true church", and the protestant denominations are the daughters. And she is the "woman who took the leaven (corrupt doctrine) and hid it in three measures of meal (the Word of the triune God), till the whole was leavened" (Matthew 13:33).

36 Indeed, Rome has proven herself to be the "mistress of witchcrafts, for by her sorceries were all nations deceived" (Revelation 18:23 with Nahum 3:3). Paul cried out to the Galatians: "Who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?" (3:1). John proclaims as a last-day warning that "all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." God says all her many works are "sorcery, fornication, sins and iniquities." He pronounces her the "Great Harlot, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication." Rome will be a chief advisor in forming the world empire of the end. Nahum said: "Ninevah is of old like a pool of water," inviting all nations to drink from her bosom; but at great cost. Jehovah names her a pool furnishing only stagnant, sickly, poisonous, and destructive drink.

The Doom In One Day

Notwithstanding all the wealth of the wicked city, and all her boasted strength and glory, Jehovah exclaims: "There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off; it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm. There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous; all that hear the report of thee shall clap their hands over thee" (Nahum 3:15, 19). Likewise, the Mother of harlots, in the height of

her glory, when she declares herself to be a queen and no widow, then "shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her." She will seem to have supremacy over the nations; she shall "reign over the kings of the earth," and even help the antichrist to his throne. But at the pinnacle of her power and glory, "the ten horns and the beast shall hate the whore and shall make her desolate and naked (exposing her religious hypocrisy) and shall eat her flesh (nationalize the system) and burn her with fire: for God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will" (Revelation 17:16-17).

There is only one word of mercy heard in the Divine Anathema of Revelation 18. It is the last appeal to the believers that may be found within Rome's embrace. "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues." Thank God for this little prophecy of Nahum! Thank God that long ago He caused some of us to hear and heed the call of wondrous grace! Now we have the supreme hope of being in the heavenly throne room with our glorious Bridegroom, when that final urgent mercy summons is made. "To Him be the glory and the dominion forever."

Jesus

THE PROPHECY
OF
HABAKKUK

MARY M. BODIE

38

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Habakkuk 2:3)

(1992)

First Printing: 1928

Second Printing: 1950

THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK

INTRODUCTION

Habakkuk was contemporary with Jeremiah. He prophesied a few years previously to the Babylonian invasion of Judah. His name means "an embracer," one who presses another to his heart. This is truly most characteristic of the Prophet; for as we read these three short chapters, describing his deep exercise of soul, he truly appears as one who embraces the Lord, as well as the Lord's people. He stands here as a type of the faithful Jewish remnant of the last days who will thus struggle in faith and hope and love in the days of apostasy and impending judgments. And they will actually see fulfilled before their eyes what the dear faithful prophet only saw in vision -- the coming of Jehovah in power and great glory.

At the same time there is much to be learned from this Prophet by all who love the Lord's appearing, though we will not be here at the time of the fulfillment of this vision, for when it comes to pass, we will be with the Lord. In fact we, the Church, the Body of Christ, will be a part of the Holy One, that Habakkuk views, as coming from Mount Paran, whose glory covered the heavens.

39

The book may be readily divided into three parts, as follows:

1. Habakkuk's Questions; Jehovah's Answer - Chapter 1:1-11.
2. Habakkuk's Testimony; Jehovah's Answer - Chapter 1:12-2:30.
3. Habakkuk's Vision - Chapter 3.

The prophecy begins in distress and ends in triumph. This is always the case when we come to Jehovah with our perplexities and troubles and question Him concerning the matter. We will find that there is always a cause for the trouble, and a way out of it.

FIRST PART

"The burden which Habakkuk, the prophet, did see" (1:1).

Habakkuk has a burden on account of the condition of the Lord's people. The first four verses are his questions,

his earnest expostulation to Jehovah. The "How long?" and "Why?" of the Prophet call for an answer. He must hear from God. He cannot understand Jehovah's silence in view of the sins of Israel; for he lived in the midst of their great wickedness. The first three verses unfold the sad picture of the condition of the house of Judah, the professing people of God. Violence and iniquity abound on every side; contention and strife and oppression among the people, the law disobeyed, the wicked compassing the righteous, and justice perverted. Habakkuk beholds all this, and his soul is stirred within him. But as the man of faith that he is, he takes his refuge in the Lord. He prays, but his prayer is more in the form of a complaint - "O Lord, how long shall I cry?" He has his questions of "How?" and "Why?" as well as his complaint that Jehovah does not save. All this is the foreshadowing of the coming time when violence will be ruling in the earth and the faithful of that day will cry to Jehovah for deliverance, even as the prophet did. Then too, the complaint will arise, "How long, Jehovah? How long? Why dost thou not save?" The Psalms depict these same exercises of the remnant, as well as the coming of Jehovah to their help as we read in the third chapter of this prophecy.

JEHOVAH'S ANSWER

The complaint of the Prophet is answered by the Lord. His words are found in verses 5-11. The first verse is very suggestive. It anticipates the scattering of the nation. "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously; for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe though it be told you." Paul gives a striking application of this to the redemptive work of Christ - Acts 13:37-41. He quotes it to Jews of the dispersion in the synagogue at Antioch, but it has a greater reference to the dispersion at the end.

At that appointed time, the Lord tells the Prophet that punishment will come upon his people for their disobedience. The Chaldean army and invasion is described. They enter the land of Palestine and possess the dwelling places of Judah. The mighty army is presented as the coming of a tempest - "they shall sup up as the east wind." Their arrogance cannot be checked. There is no stopping of their advance. They do as they please, as the eleventh verse indicates, "Then shall his mind change and he shall pass over and offend, imputing this his power unto his god." It ap-

pears as though they were not intending to invade Palestine, but his mind changes and he passes into the glorious land of Jehovah. They impute this marvelous victory to their god. They are assured such power is supernatural. And so it is; for that last invasion of Israel's land by the Gentile world-powers, will be truly devilish. Their god will be their strength, for Satan will energize and empower their emperor, the man of sin, the anti-christ. We find a description of this man, and the divine woes pronounced against him, in chapter 2:4-12: "Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by faith" (the latter clause will be a comfort to the believing ones of those days who will have no apparent might or power). "Woe to him that buildeth a town by blood and establisheth a city by iniquity" (2:12).

SECOND PART -- 1:12 - 2:30

This division contains the Prophet's answer to Jehovah; his waiting attitude; and Jehovah's answer to him. This would make three sections to the Second division of the prophecy.

The Prophet's Testimony

"Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and O mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction" (1:12).

The Lord has answered Habakkuk's perplexity as to his apparent laxity towards Israel's sin, and the Prophet utters his wonderful eulogy of Jehovah. He is comforted, though the Lord has only told him of judgment. His words are full of faith. In full assurance, he could say, in view of the impending invasion of his land, "We shall not die." He knew that Jehovah, the Holy One, the Rock, is with His people in every time of trial; therefore they cannot perish. His faith rested upon the promises of God, yet he knew that judgment and chastening were to be theirs for a time. He justifies God's attitude toward Israel and His chastening hand because of their rebellion toward Him.

In the pleadings which follow, his faith beholds the wicked invaders, the Chaldeans, who are more wicked than Judah, as checked and punished. Their conquest of the nation is described - "catching them, like fish, in a net and then sacrificing them to their net," their false god - V. 16. The Prophet ends this section with a question, "Shall they

therefore empty their net and not spare continually to slay the nation?" That is, will the enemy never be satisfied? Will there never be an end? But faith sees the answer even as the next portion discloses.

In the second section of the second part, we see the Prophet in a waiting attitude. Jehovah has informed him of coming trouble upon his people, in answer to his first question. Now he waits for a further unfolding of the divine purposes in answer to his next question. He knows the Lord will not turn him away.

He says, "I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower and will watch to see what He will say unto me and what I shall answer when I am reproved" - Chap. 2:1. With all the burden upon him, the troubles of his spirit, the difficulties and coming judgments, he decides to wait calmly for the answer Jehovah will give to him. He even infers that he may be reproved for his apparent bold attitude toward the Lord. But never, never does the Lord reprove the faith that challenges Him to answer. We may learn precious lessons of showing confidence in the Lord in the midst of trouble, and earnestness in addressing Him, and patience in waiting for Him, in the Prophet's attitude.

42

The third section gives us the response, and as it appears, he did not have to wait long for the answer. He is told by Jehovah to write the vision and make it plain upon tablets, "that he may run that readeth it" (2:2). This is most suggestive. Jehovah commands that the vision, or prophetic word, which he is now about to speak, should be made plain upon tablets. It should be displayed prominently that it might be seen at a distance. He desires that it be clearly understood. The prophetic word is not at all mysterious. Man has made it so, but God sent the Spirit of Truth that we might be guided into all the truth. And the Holy Spirit shows us things to come, when we compare Scripture. It is then found to be simple and harmonious. The practical result is, that he does run that reads it. The more we look into the prophetic word, the plain and simple vision for an appointed time, the more earnestly we run in the Lord's way, as drawn by Himself.

The deplorable condition of Christendom, and even of the Lord's true people in false religious systems, is partially the result of having turned away from the sure word of prophecy. Not having divided the Word of Truth rightly, all is therefore confusion. The professing people of God are like a ship upon the sea without a chart or compass, drifting

to certain wreck and destruction. But, for the individual believer, there is still hope. He may still read and run. We are living in the very day spoken of when in consequence of the knowledge of the prophetic Word, "many run to and fro and knowledge is increased" (Daniel 12:4). Believers run to and fro in the Word searching and seeking for the treasures of wisdom and knowledge concealed therein, and therefore become wise as to the purposes of God.

The Lord instructs Habakkuk to wait for the vision, that it will surely come," though it tarry long. These are most precious words. The appointed time to which the vision refers, is the end of this age and the manifestation of Jehovah to judge his enemies and deliver His people. The description of the Chaldean emperor and the woes upon him follow. The description perfectly fits the ending of the times of the Gentiles. The sins of the ungodly world-power are enumerated - covetousness, greed for expansion, moral corruption, and idolatry. Against these sins, five solemn woes are pronounced. The twelfth verse shows the nations struggling for supremacy in the earth, building a town with blood and establishing a city by iniquity. But they labor for the very fire which is coming and weary themselves for vanity. Are not present day events perfectly expressed in this verse? The fourteenth verse refers to Jehovah's visible glory in the earth. This has no reference to a spiritual conquest of the world by Christendom, that is so widely discussed today; but to the actual physical coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and great glory to judge the nations as is prophesied - Matthew 24:30. It is after this event that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth. The world must have judgment before the glory.

Verses 18-19 clearly refer to the image of the anti-christ, the man of sin, which will be set up in the temple. This antedates the revelation of the Lord and is the special iniquitous act which calls for the immediate vengeance of Jehovah at His revelation; for the beast and the false prophet will both be cast alive into the lake of fire at His appearing - Revelation 19:20. The image will be a counterfeit of the presence of God dwelling in the Holy Place in the temple. It will no doubt be a marvelous exhibition of satanic power; for it will have life and will speak forth the doom of all who refuse to bow and worship at its feet - Revelation 13:14-16. The "teacher of lies" refers to the false prophet; while the image itself is that of the anti-king who will usurp to himself Christ's authority. He will de-

clare himself the sovereign of the world. Yea more, he will show himself that he is God and all men must worship, or suffer death. All this is hinted at in these verses. But the Lord shall "consume that wicked one with the spirit of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming" - II Thess. 2:8.

"But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him" (2:20). Habakkuk gets the answer he wants. He could not understand God's attitude toward the situation. It did not appear consistent with His holiness; but the Lord reveals His purposes to the Prophet. He gives him a revelation of coming events. These purposes must mature before the Lord can interfere and show His anger and judgment against the wickedness which was great in Habakkuk's day; but how much more will it be in evidence in the day of Jehovah's vengeance. He will arise to shake terribly the earth; clean up its politics as well as His own temple and city, after which He will dwell among His people forever. Habakkuk will see his vision actually fulfilled. The earth will be in awe at the presence of the Lord. He will dwell in His holy temple. The Shekinah Glory will again be manifested in the holy place, Habakkuk assures us. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former" - Haggai 2:9.

THIRD PART

The Prophet ends his book in a sublime psalm of the coming of the Lord. It is one of the mountain peaks of prophecy. The Lord answered his deep heart longings with a marvelous vision of His return. He takes over the whole ground of His coming and emphasizes many of the events connected therewith. It is like a song upon the stringed instruments of David - even Shigionoth.

It commences with a prayer. Habakkuk is overwhelmed with a sense of the impending wrath, shut up in the heaven which is about to burst forth. He cries out, "O, Lord, in wrath remember mercy" - V. 2. Then he is caught away in spirit, even as John on the isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:10), into the Day of the Lord, and he beholds wondrous things. As we read, the glory and majesty of the vision envelop us. We can almost see the radiance of the "Holy One from Mount Paran; for His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise." The whole world is lightened with His brightness. His power is made visible at last. The Lamb has indeed become the Lion. But there is the hiding of His power; for even yet the world cannot bear the full ef-

fulgence of His glory. Mark the result of the light of His presence.

"Before Him went the pestilence and burning coals went forth at His feet." No disease can abide His presence. Sin and sickness depart when He steps upon the scene. "Our God is a consuming fire." Nothing can live in His presence that is out of harmony with His nature. "He stood and measured the earth," the Prophet tells us. He is the "Big Man" the world needs and for whom they are even now looking, though they do now know it. He drives asunder the nations; that is, He takes His place as the Sovereign of the world. "The everlasting mountains were scattered and the perpetual hills did bow." All dominion and power is given into His hand. He is the Master and Ruler. The mountains, or kingdoms, are scattered, for the King is coming whose right it is to reign. The hills are bowing and acknowledging His right to the throne of empires. The tents of Cushan are in affliction and the land of Midian is trembling. The consternation and fear of the nations are vividly described. The Conqueror is coming for the deliverance of His earthly people. All nature appears demoralized and at a standstill in awe of the scene.

The sun and the moon are eclipsed with the brightness emanating from the matchless Monarch who is riding upon the wings of the wind. He is on the war-path, marching through the land in indignation. The heathen are as the threshing in the day of harvest. The day of vengeance of our God is vividly described. He wounds the head out of the house of the wicked (anti-Christ). The language is so forcible and inspiring that we can almost hear the majestic steppings of Jehovah as He marches on with His triumphant procession as "King of kings." Far different is Habakkuk's vision from the description of His first coming as King - Matthew 21:5-11. Then He marched into the city of Jerusalem, but He was not acknowledged. They saw Him as the poor, despised Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth. Here His power and authority are unquestioned. Habakkuk's vision tells us only of the second coming of the Lord.

The Prophet trembled as the scene unfolded. The awfulness of the day is too much for him. As he looked upon the picture, he was faint with fear. His belly trembled; his lips quivered at the majesty of the Voice he heard, and rottenness entered into his bones. In the midst of these scenes of wrath, and in full view of the famine and resulting evils,

his faith mounts up on eagles' wings and soars above all the distress, trouble and darkness of the great and notable day of the Lord. In one of the greatest bursts of confidence and declared faith in Jehovah, he ends his sublime panegyric. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom neither fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hind's feet and He will make me to walk upon mine high places."

The fig tree that Habakkuk intimates may not blossom, refers to the Jewish nation as the professed people of God, not necessarily a new creation, but all the Jews. The Vine represents the whole house of Israel, the twelve tribes, undivided, one people, as they came up out of Egypt, and as they will be manifested again nationally.

The Olive Tree is the beautiful figure of the true believers out from the whole nation of Israel, whether before Christ's death or later. They were the light of the world (the oil of the olive being the only oil used in the sanctuary), and they will be the true light bringers again, when Christ has grafted them, as individuals, into their own root and filled them with the Spirit.

The End

Sermons On

MALACHI

MALACHI

A.S. Copley

Chapter One

"The burden of the Word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi" - 1:1.

Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets. He prophesied about four hundred years before the time of Christ. There was a period of silence after his message went forth, until the new order of things was introduced by John the Baptist and brought about by the Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah and Malachi are among the prophets who make use of the phrase, "The burden of the Word of the Lord." It means a load - something that weighs us down, or something lifted up. It occurs in connection with judgment.

Now the message of grace is not a burden. It is a delight to speak of God's love, goodness, and grace; but to speak of the wrath or the judgments of God is a burden on the heart of His messenger. We are loath to speak of the terrors of the Lord, because they are so terrible and yet so sure. I have heard men preach about hell and damnation as if they were glad that men would be lost because of their sins. An elderly minister said to a younger minister, "Before you speak on the judgments of God, fill up on the love of God by reading the Word; and be steeped in prayer, fragrant with the mercy and goodness of God."

"Malachi" means "messenger of Jah" or "My messenger, and he was the messenger of the Lord. The two opening chapters are somewhat like the first chapter of Isaiah. They are addressed to Israel, setting forth their pitiful disobedient condition. They are a fitting picture of Christendom today; and the Lord has some Malachis who are speaking forth His Truth. They are His messengers declaring the grace and goodness of God, and also warning people against the judgments that are sure to come upon all the world.

GOD'S FEELINGS EXPRESSED

God says through the prophet, "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob" - 1:2.

He proves that He loved Jacob and hated Esau by adding, "I ... laid his (Esau's) mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." He has no reference here to Jacob and Esau as individuals, but to their posterities. The house of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel, were God's people. He chose Abraham with whom He made a covenant. He renewed that covenant to Isaac and then to Jacob. Hence, He loved them because of His own sovereign choice and covenant. He had not thus chosen Esau. In that sense, He hated Esau. Compare Matthew 10:37 with Luke 14:26. This is Paul's interpretation in Romans 9:10-13. A further word as to why God made this statement: He loved Jacob and hated Esau, because when Malachi wrote this they had both shown forth their characters - Esau of the old creation, the flesh; and Jacob of the new creation, the spirit.

That Divine choice is full of significance. God has always had a people upon earth whom He chose for Himself. They are a new creation. He does not choose individuals arbitrarily against their will, but "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth" - II Thessalonians 2:13.

People have to believe the Truth; for it is not the will of God "that any should perish," but rather that all should turn to Him and live. If any among the descendants of Esau believed the Word as it came to Israel, they were considered proselytes to the faith and were accepted. Thus, Gentiles came into the household of faith under the old covenant; for instance, Ruth who was not an Israelite, and the harlot Rahab. But God here is teaching us a spiritual lesson. Jacob and his family stand for a spiritual house, a new creation; but Esau and his family stand for the flesh, the old creation.

THE FLESH SHALL NOT PREVAIL

Edom (Esau's land) said, "We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places." But the Lord said, "They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever" - 1:4.

Jehovah is against the flesh. When Israel came up out of Egypt and were on their way to Palestine and sought to pass by peaceably, the Edomites persecuted them; but the Lord remembered their persecutions and dealt with them accordingly. Nobody can persecute God's people without suffering for it. "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" - Romans 12:19. He overrules the persecution for the good of the saints. He may use other folks to chastise His own people; but, afterward, He punishes the instrument of chastisement. He also makes His foes to acknowledge Him. He said to Edom, "And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel" - 1:5.

God loved Israel. Therefore, though He chastised them because they were disobedient and unfaithful, yet His eyes were always on them; and a remnant will believe, and He will bring them back into the land of promise. God will fulfill His Word. The fellow that says there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile does not know his Bible; and the teacher that confuses God's dealings with the Jews and the Gentiles does not know his Bible. We are at liberty to draw many lessons from God's dealings with Israel and apply them to the Church. But God says one thing to Israel, and He has one purpose for them. He has another purpose for the Church, and says other things to the Church. Paul's epistles (except Hebrews), for instance, were written to the Church; and most everything in them, except the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Romans, was concerning the Church.

REVERENCE EXPECTED

"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is My fear?" - 1:6.

Here God speaks to them as their Father. This is unusual. The Fatherhood of God was generally unknown under the old covenant. The words - "Thou art our Father" - are prophetic - Isaiah 63:16; 64:8. Israel will address the Lord thus in the near future. When our Lord Jesus shall reign as "King of kings," the Jews will call Him "The everlasting Father" - Isaiah 9:6. Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven." He introduced the Fatherhood of God. The Son had to come and be revealed to men as God's Son, before they could understand their sonship toward God and His Fatherhood toward them. That is why it was postponed. The

Scriptures bring to us a constant unfolding of the Truth. There is a time for certain phases of Truth, and they are dependent on portions of Truth that have come forth before. Four hundred years before His Son was to appear, Jehovah demonstrated that He was their Father and wondered that they did not honor Him as such; for He had treated them as His dear children. They should have revered Him as their Master or Lord.

AGAINST THE PRIESTS

"O priests, that despise My Name" - 1:6.

God's chief complaint here is against His representatives. Chapter two opens with the same charge. In the seven letters in Revelation two and three, the charges or commendations are first of all to the angels or pastors; for they represent the Lord to the people. "And ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy Name?" Six times in this little chapter, we have the "Name" mentioned, referring to the Lord - twice in this sixth verse. How sad it is when the leaders despise the Lord's Name. "And ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy Name?" The Lord answers, "Ye offer polluted bread upon Mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted Thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible" - 1:7. Notice also in the twelfth verse, "But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even His meat, is contemptible."

God held the kings or shepherds and priests responsible for the spiritual condition of the people, for they were His messengers to the people. The kings were to rule as shepherds or caretakers over Israel, and the priests were to bear the people on their hearts to God. They were intercessors. Both kings and priests were types of Jesus Christ. When He was here, He fulfilled the prophetic office for three years. Later, He began the priestly office, which He is still fulfilling. He intercedes for His followers, and bears them on His heart to the Father.

As the Lord had a controversy with the priests in Malachi's time, so He has a controversy with the ministers today. The seven letters to the seven churches indicate His view of Christendom throughout this past nineteen hundred years - Revelation two and three. The letters are all addressed to the angels or messengers; that is, the pastors, because He holds them responsible for the condition of their congregations. Only two out of the seven are found without blame; namely, Smyrna and Philadelphia. A small minority of ministers are walking in the light and will of the Lord. Hence, He arraigns the priests today for permitting error, and for not giving their flocks the whole Truth.

It is no marvel that He removes the candlestick, that is, those saints who have the light and walk in it; and leaves the unfaithful shepherds with those who are lifeless and formal, heady and worldly-minded. This explains why there are come-outers today. Some may come out with a wrong spirit, not being led out by the Lord. That is unfortunate. But, when He leads people out, they gather together in His Name and that Name they honor. They learn His Word, yield to its power, walk in the Spirit, and glorify God in a practical everyday life.

God charged the priests that they despised His Name, and offered polluted bread upon the altar. They said also, "The table of the Lord is

contemptible. The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even His meat, is contemptible ... What a weariness is it!" - 1:7,12,13. And they "snuffed at it." That is the way many people treat the pure Word of God now - they call evil good, and good evil. It wearies them to hear the Truth. They prefer light entertainment. Not only the Catholic priests, but Protestant priests also, are to blame for this perverted appetite. They mix a little truth with much error. As Israel's priests offered blind, lame, and sick animals in sacrifice to God, they were denying that Christ was that perfect holy Lamb of sacrifice and saying that He was lame and sick. Christ was misrepresented to the people. He was not proclaimed as a complete Savior, an all-sufficient Savior, a gracious Savior, who is able to save to the uttermost and heal all who come to Him in simple faith.

It is no marvel if hungry sheep hunt better pasture. They cannot be blamed if they jump over the fence because they smell the sweet clover of the Truth elsewhere. Now and then someone writes like this - "What do you think about it? A few of us are disappointed and discouraged, for the meeting is dead. There is no spiritual life, nor power, nor food. Is it right for us to assemble by ourselves elsewhere and worship the Lord?" "Yes," we say, "it is right."

Doubtless, the Candlestick Examiner is again removing the light-bearers to themselves. They long for liberty to pray in the Spirit and witness for Jesus. They yearn to know the Scriptures and the power of God. The Holy Spirit is grieved with the dearth in the regular meeting; and He is leading the thirsty ones out into the green pastures and by the still waters of peace, plenty, and refreshing. In clarion tones, the Lord is saying, "Come out of her (Babylon), My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins" - Revelation 18:4. Wherever Babylon is, come out. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" - II Corinthians 6:17,18.

"For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My Name, and a pure offering: for My Name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts" - 1:11. God will have His Name honored, magnified, and glorified. The Name of Christ is above every name and deserves our respect. If we deny the virgin birth and the meritorious death of Jesus Christ, we are despising the Name of Jesus. We are saying that the table of the Lord is polluted and the meat is contemptible.

That is what men are saying today. They do not believe in the Deity of Christ; and, of course, they deny the merit of His blood. They say that it is no better than the blood in the veins of anybody else. But blood untainted by sin flowed through the veins of the Son of God, and was poured out for us. Happy are the people that believe this and declare it. Cursed are the people that deny it and decry it. They defame the Name of Jesus, and the curse of God will rest upon them forever.

"Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord" - 1:13. Men snuff at the only Sacrifice that has

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brought salvation to lost souls, and say that it is a weariness. To them reality is a weariness. My heart rejoices in the reality of realities. It is the real Truth of God. It satisfies our hearts and the heart of God also. Thus, we honor His Name. We treat God as our Father, and fear Christ as our Master. We hold Him as our Lord and Head. That gladdens the heart of the Son of God.

Thus, we fulfill the Scriptures to the uttermost, and are able to walk in the light. Of course, the will of God is wrought in us and by us. When we pray, God hears us. When we preach the Truth, it goes home to hearts. It convicts the careless and indifferent, and strengthens the weak. Yes, they say, "It is tiresome to listen to the folks who pray so long and loud, and testify so boisterously, and shout the high praises of God." Well, it is a weariness to us to listen to the fellow that is dry, cold, intellectual, precise, legal, and lifeless. When we are filled with the Truth of God in our minds and hearts and are partakers of the life, spirit, and faith of the Lord, our very flesh recoils from that which is carnal, worldly, cold, intellectual, and fleshly.

Finally, notice verse fourteen - "But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and My Name is dreadful among the heathen." Some priests brought animals that were corrupt. There was some defect in them and they knew it, and they offered them to God. He also knew it, and could not accept them.

That is the kind of a redeemer that some priests recommend to the people - not the Redeemer who is symbolized or typified by those pure offerings of bullocks, or sheep, or goats, or pigeons, under the Old Covenant. Christ was a pure Offering. God was well pleased with His Son because He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," and "knew no sin" - Hebrews 7:26; II Cor. 5:21. He was absolutely "without blemish." God accepted Him. The kind of teaching that some people give out makes Christ a minister of sin. They make it appear that He is not that pure, clean, holy Offering that God accepted; hence, the curse rests upon them.

Happy are the people who honor the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and give Him the place that God has given Him. Happy are the people that enjoy such a Gospel and offer it to others. God's blessing is bound to rest upon all such. God has such a people in these closing days, who are walking in the light and seeking only His will. Sometimes they are scattered. There are individuals who are not known to anybody; but they are known unto the Lord. Known unto the Lord are all His saints, and He is making up His jewels. He is gathering them together.

A LIVING BRIGHT REALITY

*Lord Jesus, make Thyself to me
A living, bright reality;
More pleasant to faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen;
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie.*

Chapter Two

"And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you" - 2:1.

As stated in the first chapter, God's complaint is first and chiefly against the priests. The same is true today. The priests or ministers stand before the people for the Lord. They are His representatives, His servants, His messengers. By choosing the ministry of the Gospel, they assume those relationships. Therefore, God has a right to expect of them good conduct and faithful service; and the people have a right to expect good spiritual food and tender care from them. This chapter is freighted with valuable lessons concerning God's ministers. The chapter falls naturally into five parts, each containing seven significant segments. These segments are double in a number of cases. The language student would term much of this chapter poetic.

A DIVINE THREAT

"If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto My Name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart" - 2:2.

Consider who uttered these words - "the Lord of hosts." This lends weight and solemnity to them. This title of God occurs eight times in the first chapter, six times in the second, and twenty-four times in the entire book. The Name "Lord" is "Jehovah" in the Revised Version. The whole phrase is "Jehovah of hosts." He who speaks herein has just dominion over all created intelligent beings - over angels, good and bad, in heaven; over disembodied spirits in heaven and under the earth; and over all mankind. In a very special sense He is LORD of His own people, His spiritual hosts.

God demands a hearing ear and an attentive heart. Such an attitude commands His favor and kindness. His chief claim upon us is "to give glory" unto His Name. Men - carnal men, wicked men - get plenty of undeserved praise. Our God gets very little. Oh, let us give Him all the glory due to His precious Name. "The LORD of hosts" deserves it; hence, He requires it. For "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" - James 1:17. Neglecting these attitudes toward Jehovah incurs a curse, even upon our blessings. Israel murmured and God gave them flesh to eat till it stuck between their teeth fulfilling this word - "I have cursed them already."

"Behold, I will corrupt your seed" - 2:3. The margin says, "Reprove your seed," because their offspring followed in their steps. The next is still worse - "And spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts." The shame and reproach which enveloped those priests for their conduct before God was as if their faces were covered with refuse. Study the disgraceful conduct of Eli's sons and their deserved end - I Samuel 2 and 4. "And one shall take you away with it" - 2:3. Thus was "the remnant of the house of Jeroboam" taken away - I Kings 14:10.

Finally - "And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that My covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts" - 2:4.

God gives ample proof that His Word is His Word, and not man's puny word. He had chosen Levi and covenanted that his offspring should be the priestly line; and He demonstrated it beyond contradiction. The unyielding sons of Levi, or Aaron, learned that to their deep sorrow and shame. Jehovah, in every age, sovereignly chose and equipped certain persons to know and declare His will and make others to know it. He does the same today. Those who refuse and oppose them suffer for it.

REAL PRIESTS

"My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him that he might fear; and he feared Me, and stood in awe of My Name" - 2:5 Revised Version.

This refers to the day the golden calf was made. God was displeased greatly and judged Israel. Moses exclaimed, "Who is on the Lord's side?" "And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses." They "gathered themselves together unto him." Thus, Levi earned the priesthood. See Exodus 32:19-29. Verses five to seven, of Malachi two, set forth seven important facts about true acceptable priests of God. They contain excellent lessons for us who are ministers today, for the character and qualifications of prophets and priests under both covenants are practically the same.

"Life and peace" were the two main planks of that covenant. Reference is made to the words said to Phinehas and to Ezekiel - Numbers 25:12; Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26. "Life" is omitted in them; only "peace" is named. But we must bear in mind that as the Aaronic priesthood was only typical so was also the covenant. The antitypical covenant was made between the Father and His Son Jesus. Therefore, we read that He was made a priest - "Not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" - Hebrews 7:16. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" - John 1:4. His priesthood is eternal, the guarantee of our eternal salvation. Let the reader look up the three citations named above. God will yet fulfill His covenant to Israel to the uttermost.

Why were life and peace given? "That he might fear; and he feared Me, and stood in awe of My Name" - 2:5 Revised Version. Every true priest did as here stated; but Jesus revered the Name of His Father in a sense and degree beyond all others. He showed no pity to the flesh and recognized no natural ties. Let us ministers be provoked to deep awe and reverence by those Old Testament priests and by the unflinching loyalty of Christ. Let us take Christ in us to stand in awe of His Name and of the Father's Name.

"The law of Truth was in his mouth" - 2:6. Of course, "iniquity was not found in his lips." It is called "the Lord's law" in Exodus 13:9. We are apt always to regard the law as hard, cold, and stern. It simply means the rule or will of God. If our hearts are full of Divine love and our minds full of Divine Truth, iniquity will not be found in our lips either. As Paul admonished, we should be imitators of him as he imitated Christ to whom the above verse ultimately refers.

"He walked with me in peace and equity" - 2:6. What a testimony! A true priest or minister enjoys the covenant of peace to the full. Jesus did nothing apart from His Father; neither should we. Even Enoch walked with God, and had this testimony that he pleased God. Why may not we, who

have Christ in us - our life and strength? Let us, God's servants, persistently say and believe that - "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" - Galatians 2:20. It is "Christ speaking in me," not weak toward others but mighty in them - II Corinthians 13:3. Then we, too, shall walk and please Him. Then the following also will be true of us. "And did turn many away from iniquity." Our testimony and teaching will be effectual. We will bear fruit to God's glory, and results will follow our ministries. The same Holy Spirit, who enabled Jesus to go about doing good and healing the oppressed, will enable us to do the same mighty works.

"For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth" - 2:7. Such was the instruction given to the priests and people at the beginning, as declared in Deuteronomy 17:9. Ezra was a fine example of a true priest - "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" - Ezra 7:10. The ministry of the priests, including Ezra in Nehemiah's day, is praiseworthy. "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly (or with interpretation), and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" - Nehemiah 8:8.

Preachers should ponder this verse and imitate those sons of Aaron. Paul admonished Timothy, and thus admonishes all of us ministers, saying, "Preach the Word. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" - literally, holding a straight course in the Truth - II Timothy 4:2; 2:15. Complaint comes to us continually from the pens and lips of God's people, that the shepherds do not instruct them in the Scriptures. They entertain the people with catchy stories and eloquent statements. What a pity! What a shame! Our blessed Lord set before us an example which we should seek earnestly to heed. Twice we read in Matthew that He went about teaching and preaching and healing all manner of sickness - Matthew 4:23; 9:35. He expects no less of us today. Happy and successful, those who follow in His steps.

"For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" - 2:7. The Lord had definitely chosen Aaron and his sons to be His messengers. No one else could fill the priest's office. If he attempted to do so, he suffered for it. King Saul lost his kingdom because he forced himself to offer a burnt offering when he thought Samuel was not keeping his promise - I Samuel 13. Many men choose the Gospel ministry as an avocation; but they are egregious failures for God has not sent them. They may continue therein, but they do not minister God's Word. They lecture, make religious speeches, and get a following; but they prove to be false prophets. One who is really chosen by the Lord brings the Lord's Message. He does not need credentials from men to advertise him. "A man's gift maketh room for him" - Proverbs 18:16. God approves him, and causes people to give heed to his message and accept it as Divine. The same facts are true of women whom Jehovah may choose and send forth as His ministers.

UNFAITHFUL PRIESTS

Malachi 2:8-10 records seven pitiful facts concerning halfhearted and selfish priests. God said to them:

First: "Ye are departed out of the way" - 2:8. They knew God's way and will, and were responsible for walking in it; for He would have enabled them to do so if they had chosen His will.

Second: As a result of departure, they "caused many to stumble at the law." It is a very solemn fact, that everyone of us exerts an influence over others. Especially is this true of people in an official place. If we go right, others will go right. If we go wrong, others will go wrong.

Third: They "corrupted the covenant of Levi." A minister's misconduct makes it appear that the Truth is evil. It misrepresents the Lord. Peter's compromise with legality, because he feared the Jews, made it appear that Christ was "the minister of sin" - Galatians 2:17. To stand against the Truth is to give God the lie.

Fourth: The Lord esposes such. "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people" - 2:9. Let no minister think that he can continue in his own self-devised way and get by. God will show him up. The spiritual will surely discover his departure from the Truth.

Fifth: The full meaning of the departure of the priests from the way is stated in this fifth point: They were "partial in the law" - 2:9. The margin says, "They lifted up the face against the law," which expresses the will of God. No one can step out of God's way into his own way without going against God's will. It is for the people's safety, that the Lord exposes self-seeking leaders and blows up their religious works.

Sixth: Priests who start in their own way go from bad to worse. They deal treacherously with their fellows, even with their brethren. How can they? "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" the true saint inquires. We are members of the same family. "We be brethren," said Abraham to Lot. Rather than mistreat his nephew or have strife, he suggested a peaceable separation.

Seventh: What a sad climax is God's verdict of the priests' departure from the right way. He calls it, "Profaning the covenant of our fathers" - the covenant which the Lord made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Profanation against that covenant was against God's Son Jesus Christ, who is the very core and ultimate Object thereof. Today, departure into one's own way ends finally in fearful defeat and shame, if not in modernism.

What a warning to the servants of the Lord. Let us take it deeply to heart and flee from the first and smallest intimations of self-will and the faintest desires of going in our own way. Let us shun the ways of supposedly wise men and women who appear to have fabulous success. Young ministers especially need to be wary of Satan's snares. Paul recognized the traps that trip them, some of which he named in I Timothy six. He said concerning them, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness - I Timothy 6:11. Then later he exhorted saying, "Flee also youthful lusts" - II Timothy 2:22. Doubtless, he meant the lusts for an easier place, a ministry with less persecution, popular, promising, and on a larger scale. Others have great

success. Why not I? Persons with strong will, strong personality, self-conceit, and great ambitions are easily trapped by the enemy here. Many young fellows seemingly are making it go today; but, in God's sight, they are on the rocks of spiritual defeat. Let us profit by the failures of others.

"Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem" - 2:11. Judah's failure is briefly described in verses eleven to thirteen. This portion also falls into seven segments. Judah's chief error is expressed in the first statement - she "hath dealt treacherously." We saw that this was one of the last complaints laid against the priests. Now the whole tribe is accused of the same wicked conduct. Five times this charge is mentioned in this chapter. "Treachery" means "deceit, trickery, unfaithfulness to a trust, the breaking of an alliance." How sad that God's people thus mistreat one another; but it is sure to follow a self-chosen path if the old man is not judged. The Lord's estimate of that conduct is expressed in calling it "an abomination"; that is, an impure detestable vice.

"For Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved" - 2:11. The priests had profaned the covenant of the fathers. This charge goes further back; for God's holiness preceded His covenant and gave birth to it. It is a very serious thing to tamper with and belie the holiness of Jehovah. We are exhorted to "praise the beauty of holiness" and "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" - II Chronicles 20:21; Psalm 30:4; 97:12. God's throne is a throne of holiness, and He has sworn by that. We who believe, are partakers of His holiness, having been "created in righteousness and true holiness" - Ephesians 4:24. We are to bring forth "fruit unto holiness" (sanctification), "without which no man shall see the Lord" - Romans 6:22; Hebrews 12:14.

"And hath married the daughter of a strange god" - 2:11. Ezra records a painful description of that transgression - "The holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands" - Ezra 9:2. The princes and rulers were chief in that trespass. They engaged in the abominations of the heathen. Ezra's loyal heart was deeply grieved and heavy. In his fervent prayer, he exclaimed, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" - Ezra 9:6. "Should we again break Thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? Wouldest not Thou be angry with us till Thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?" - Ezra 9:14.

Here is where Paul found his burning material for II Corinthians 6:14-18 - "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Many saints never learn the experimental care of God and His Fatherly love and fellowship. They never become sons of

God in experience because they mix with the world where is found unbelievers, unrighteousness, darkness, infidelity, and idolatry.

"The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this" - 2:12. If we do not cut ourselves away from worldly alliances, we will be cut off from fellowship with the Father and from His protection and service. Even though one be "master and scholar," there is no escape; for God cannot condone such mixture. Sometimes in testimony and preaching, men think to pull the wool over other people's eyes and make them believe that they have the victory; but spiritual listeners discern the emptiness and want of reality in them. Such men are severed, by God's providences, from the faithful flock; for He determines to keep His house clean. The clause "him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts" is explained in Nehemiah thirteen. The Lord cannot accept the worship and service of ministers who continue in unholy and unscriptural associations. An assembly cannot put up with their ministry and go on faithfully with God. Therefore, He raises up a Nehemiah who thrusts them out by the Word of God which is living and energetic.

"And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that He regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand" - 2:13. Have you observed how pious some leaders act? They have a faculty of crying and whining. They seem very religious, make loud and long prayers, squeeze out pious tears and sobs, and fool the people. But God knows the life and the heart. He cannot endorse nor bless apologetic speeches and prayers. They court sympathy, and sometimes get it from the fleshly minded; but not from the spiritual. Neither the Lord nor His faithful flock can receive such service or worship.

FIVE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

"Yet ye say, Wherefore?" - 2:14. These remaining four verses of chapter two record and answer the three selfish and unfair questions propounded by unfaithful priests. God answers by asking two other questions, and explains. Is it not strange that people can insult the Lord, walk in the flesh, and follow their own lusts - then, when chastised and corrected for it, inquire of Him why He punishes them? They even say, "Wherein have we wearied Him? ... or, Where is the God of judgment?" - 2:17. I have heard them say, "Well, what have I done? What harm is there in that? Oh, do you want to put me under law? You are not my boss." If children impudently address their parents after that fashion, generally they slap them in the face and send them away with a severer chastisement; but the Lord in mercy replies to His impudent servants and gives them an opportunity to repent and mend their ways.

The question, "Wherefore?" refers to the scathing Divine threat in verses twelve and thirteen. Why would God cut off such priests? Here is the plain answer - "Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth." Four arguments are given here against unfaithful treatment of a man against his wife. She is his companion, for he chose her to be such. He ought, therefore, to treat her as his companion. She is the wife of his covenant; that is, he made overtures and promises to her. He promised to be faithful to his companion, and would allow no other lover to come

between. That is man's side.

But there are two items on God's side. "And did not He make one?" - 2:15. Yes. Did not the Lord create Adam and Eve two persons, and join them together as one? "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" - Matthew 19:6. If a Christian man has chosen a lady to be his wife, believing that God has joined them, he should not deal treacherously toward her. If she behaves unwisely and leaves him, then he is free - I Corinthians 7.

Jehovah had "the residue (or excellency) of the Spirit," with which He was ready to anoint the priest and enable him to do God's will. Divinely-appointed priests, or ministers, are also Divinely equipped. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," saith the Lord - Deuteronomy 33:25. He has always met His servants, if they were honest and wholehearted toward Him and sought only His glory. He is no different today; hence, He has some unselfish servants now. To everyone who cries out to Him in faith, He gives the excellency of the Spirit.

"And wherefore one? That He might seek a godly seed" - 2:15. Adam and Eve were made one, that sometime down the line of their offspring a Child might be born who should be the great Benefactor of mankind. He should be "a Godly Seed," or "a Seed of God." But they failed the Lord. Adam's immediate descendants were human only and sinful. He begat a son in his own likeness; that is, sinful. But the Seed of God, the Lord Jesus, is "holy, harmless, undefiled" - Hebrews 7:26. The marriage of every priest should be intact and never broken, because his son was a reminder of the promised Seed of God announced in Genesis 3:15. Furthermore, the marriage relation foreshadows the union between God and His people. God is faithful to His own. He never deals treacherously with them. He might possibly have found some brighter and abler folk among the nations, for Jesus said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" - Luke 16:8. But He never flirted with the nations. He loved His people and sought their comfort, happiness, and usefulness. He does so yet. Praise His Name!

Every man who marries should be a type of Christ, the coming glorious Bridegroom. Every woman who marries should be a type of the Bride of Christ. This is the meaning of Paul's injunctions to husbands and wives in Ephesians five. Ministers especially should set the example in this respect before the saints. The God of Israel hates putting away. He divorced Israel, because He was compelled to do so; but there will never be a divorce between Jesus and His heavenly Bride.

"Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied Him?" - 2:17. What a charge Jehovah was compelled to file against His representatives, the priests. Is it possible that men can make the Almighty God weary? Yes. His heart grows tired of His people's insincerity, unfaithfulness, unreality, lightness, and falsehood. He is deeply grieved and pained. Then, what is worse, they ask the impudent question, "Wherein have we wearied Him?" - as if they did not know. God quickly and plainly answers, "When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them." In speaking thus, the priests acknowledged that some of them did wrong. They knew very well that God abomi-

nated all kinds of wrongdoing. "Cease to do evil; learn to do well," is His injunction - Isaiah 1:16,17. He condemns calling evil good, and good evil. He delights only in faith and obedience, for He furnishes the enabling to believe and obey.

One of the most deplorable things today is lasciviousness and treating such conduct lightly, and even teaching that God overlooks and does not hold it against us because He knows we are weak. Paul bewailed such a state of mind. Some sinned, but failed to repent of their uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness - II Corinthians 12:21. Jude wrote of those who are "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" - Jude 4. They take advantage of grace and abuse it. Some fanatics on eternal security teach that we may do as we please, let the natural man run riot, and God does not care. Then some enemies of Divine grace declare that we also teach such a devilish heresy. Nay, we teach a life of victory over the flesh; not only that it is possible, but the Lord requires it, because He has made ample provision for it. Paul's Gospel shows us the way of overcoming, and the Holy Spirit leads us in that way and becomes our enabling to overcome. Malachi taught this triumph over evil. Note the priests' last query -

"Where is the God of judgment?" - as if God were indifferent to their evil conduct. That very question wearied the Lord. Evidently such people have no conscience before God. He is not in their thoughts. They do not believe that - "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" - Proverbs 15:3. If they have read the second and third chapters of Revelation, they must have had their eyes closed. Jesus as Judge is even now walking in the midst of the churches, discerning the evil and the good, condemning the one and confirming the other, threatening chastisement of the former and promising rewards to the latter. Nothing is plainer than that we shall be judged for the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad - II Corinthians 5:10. Men expect the wicked to be judged; but I Peter 4:17 declares that "judgment must begin at the house of God." Oh, let us heed Paul's earnest words - "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity (love), in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" - I Timothy 4:12,13.

THE GIFT OF LIFE

Phyllis D. Robbins

*What joy in the words, "He is risen."
What peace in the knowledge, "He lives."
When we ponder the meaning of Easter
What hope for the future it gives.
For life is the gift that He purchased,
A gift beyond price, yet it's free;
Ours to own, since that first Easter morning
When Christ conquered death gloriously.*

Chapter Three

"Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts" - 3:1.

Two messengers are mentioned in this verse. The first, "My messenger," refers to the incomparable John the Baptist; for the above words are quoted in Matthew 11:10 with reference to him. Jesus there gives a great eulogy of John as His forerunner. It requires more than a casual reading of his career in the Gospels to arrive at a worthy appreciation of him and his ministry. We ministers may learn some very deep and valuable lessons from him.

The other, "the Messenger of the covenant," refers to our adorable Lord Jesus. He is the chief Messenger. The same Hebrew word "malak," here translated "messenger," is often translated "angel" in the Old Testament. See for examples - Genesis 22:15 and Isaiah 63:9. In the New Testament, the Greek word "aggelos" or "angel" is rendered "messenger" fewer than a dozen times. In both Testaments the term means "messenger." The "covenant" refers to Genesis 15:18 where we read that "the Lord made a covenant with Abram." It was the covenant of grace, of which God's Son is the leading Character. He is Abraham's Seed after the flesh.

Two Hebrew words are translated "Lord" in this verse. The first one is "Adon" in Hebrew, and means "Master." David called Him "my Lord" in Psalm 110:1, and it is quoted in Matthew 22:44. He is termed "Lord and Christ" in Acts 2:36, and the "one Lord" in Ephesians 4:5. He is the Head or Master of His Body, the Church. This is one of the trinity of titles which He bears in the New Testament - "the Lord Jesus Christ." The other Hebrew word here for "LORD" is "Adonai," in the Revised Version rendered "Jehovah." "Jehovah of hosts" saith that the Lord, "the Angel of the covenant," will come.

The clauses, "whom ye seek" and "whom ye delight in," are significant. The first advent of the Lord Jesus is not mentioned, not even intimated. The prophet leaps over His human birth and on over this Church Age to His second glorified advent. When Jesus came in lowly guise, the nation rejected Him. They would not accept the Babe of Bethlehem, nor the despised Nazarene. They were looking for a mighty deliverer, who would at once fight their national battles and restore the kingdom to Israel. They despised the Man who could only gain the throne by the way of the Cross, because that meant their death also. They sought for and delighted in a powerful conqueror. Even today, the Jews are looking for such a one as their Messiah and King. But, when He comes, they will be compelled to acknowledge the Man of Nazareth and the Victim of Calvary. He will judge and deliver Israel from the standpoint of the Cross, having died in their stead and risen for their justification.

TO EXECUTE JUDGMENT

The two following verses describe the nature of Jesus' coming. His severe judgment of the nations is here implied. "The day of His coming" is the judgment period mentioned by so many of the Old Testament prophets.

It spans nearly seven years. The question is asked, "Who may abide" that day? Only those who will surrender to God; and some of them will suffer physical death because of their faith in God, but their souls will be saved.

"And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope" - 3:2. The dross of international boast, strength, pomp, and pride will be consumed by the fires of Divine judgment. All the devil-directed nations of the world will be the fuel of just wrath in those dark days. The Lord will not be in a hurry. "He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver" - 3:3. He will kindle the purifying flame and watch over it with a jealous eye.

Through Isaiah, God said, "I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin" - Isaiah 1:25. To what purpose? "That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" - Malachi 3:3. Then Jerusalem will be a holy city and Israel a righteous nation. God's complaints are chiefly against the priests. Therefore, His cleansing chastisements will be applied first to the priests; that is, to the sons of Levi. When they accept the Truth and its saving effects, "then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord" - 3:4.

Verse five of this chapter indicates the Lord's unsparing attitude against those who will not accept the Divine process of purification. He says, "And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, saith the Lord of hosts." The clause, "fear not Me," explains why some will be guilty of the aforementioned wicked things. They will perish with unbelieving Gentiles. He is faithful and just, saying, "For I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. I will fulfill all My covenant promises to you and concerning you. I will punish the nations which sought your destruction, and will save you from your sins and from the thralldom of the Gentiles."

JACOB'S PENURIOUSNESS

"Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?" - 3:7.

The word "ordinances," means also "statutes" or "decrees." In verse fourteen it is another word which means "a watch," "a guard," or "observation." The next three verses indicate what particular statute is meant, and in what they should return. Jehovah answers Israel's query by a significant question.

"Will a man rob God?" - 3:8. It never occurs to people that they are robbers of God. Hence, He says further, "Yet ye have robbed Me." They could not understand, but put another query saying, "Wherein have we robbed Thee?" Then the Lord put His finger on the weak spot, the most touchy spot with most folk - "The love of money is the root of all evil" - I Timothy 6:10. Money is useful and necessary; but it is not to be loved. It is not to be hoarded up as if it were our God. It is to be distributed

according to God's direction. Therefore, the Lord gave the short but pungent answer - "In tithes and offerings." Ever since Jacob took advantage of his uncle Laban, his descendants have been grasping after "filthy lucre." The misuse of it has made it filthy. Gentile Christians have not lagged behind the Jews in this disobedience.

Mark the next scathing verse, the reflex result of withholding from God. "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation" - 3:9. No one but God Himself can compute the great damage and loss which follow penuriousness. The first and chief loss is that of spirituality. No one can be stingy and spiritual at the same time. Liberality and spiritual fatness are twin sisters. They always abide in the same hut or house. People grow cold, lose interest, and quit testifying in power, when they withhold what belongs to the Lord. Sometime later, they lose physically and financially. It is because the heart, the will, is not wholly yielded to God in this matter. A controversy is on. They say, "I do not believe in tithing. That belonged to the Mosaic law. I refuse to be put under bondage. I worked hard for my money. Old age is creeping on." All such is the voice of self-will, of the old creation. Oh, hear the Lord's entreaty.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house" - 3:10. When Israel observed this injunction, there never was any want among the people. Let believers in assemblies in Christ today practice this rule, not as under cold law but as cheerfully obeying a loving Father, and see if every need will not be met. Even the poorest will be provided for, despite hard times. Note Jehovah's challenge - "And prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Five positive practical blessings are promised to the above command: 1. Provision in God's house. 2. An uncontainable blessing - material and spiritual. 3. Rebuke of devourers of fields. 4. Fruit bearing just on time. 5. The eulogy of the nations. All these are certain to come to Israel when they turn to the Lord in the near future. God is faithful and cannot lie. But Christians may be surprised to what astonishing extent these five blessings will become facts to those who heed the Fatherly Voice of God. "PROVE ME," He exclaims. Oh, let no one's words be "stout against" Him. Forbid that any should say, "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" - 3:14.

CONDUCT OF THE CONTRITE

Malachi 3:16,17 are among the most precious verses in the entire Bible. They are true of all such believers from the beginning to the end. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." They comforted and admonished one another. Experience recited, helps experience, and makes it excited to press on. Filial fear longs for fellowship and must have it.

But the root of this fear is that they "thought upon His Name." Pondering the sweet and mighty Name of our Lord begets fear or love toward Him. That Name is "as ointment poured forth" - Song of Solomon 1:3. "Jesus" means "Savior." "Lord" means "Master" - one who tenderly takes charge

of us. He is our wisdom, our strength. Do you know that a great ear is open to every testimony about the Lord?

"And the Lord hearkened, and heard." Now these two verbs mean the same thing. Does the Holy Spirit resort to tautology? No. There is either a shade of difference, or the words are used for special emphasis. Both are true here. The Hebrew "quashab," translated "hearkened," means "to give attention." The word "shamea" means "to hear because deeply impressed and with profound interest." The first is illustrated in Psalm 5:2 - "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King." The second is illustrated in Exodus 2:24 - "God heard their groaning." The Lord gives such close attention to testimonies and conversations concerning His Son, that He is impressed with them and He hears them with special concern. If they are uttered for His glory and for the good of others, He has them recorded.

We have a very pronounced example of this fact in Luke twenty-four. When two men with bleeding hearts were traveling toward Emmaus and lamenting their great loss, a Stranger appeared on the scene. He gave them the heartburn by opening to them the Scriptures. Later, He disclosed Himself as their very loving Lord Jesus. Oh, it pays to speak often one to another of Him who has redeemed and saved us. It pays now to speak often of His coming. Paul exhorts us to "comfort one another with these words" - I Thessalonians 4:18.

ETERNAL SAFETY

"And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels" - 3:17. Over a thousand years before, it was written that "the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" - Deuteronomy 32:9. God will not forget His Word nor His own possession in the end. He will keep them "as the apple of His eye" - Deuteronomy 32:10. He says here, "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." The overlapping days, which close this age and introduce the next, will be a time of sorrow and darkness and waste; but the Lord will arise in behalf of the remnant of Israel.

But who are the "jewels" mentioned here? In the margin, they are called a "special treasure." The Hebrew word "segullah," here translated "jewels," is rendered "peculiar treasure" or "peculiar people" in Exodus 19:5; Deut. 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135:4. In each place, it refers directly to Israel. As compared with the nations, Israel is God's special or peculiar people - even His treasure, His jewels. As a jeweler gathers his costly gems into a beautiful case to preserve them and in due time exhibit them, so the Lord will soon assemble His earthly treasure - the remnant of the Jews - into their longed-for land. I Peter 2:9 is the New Testament answer to these Old Testament citations. He terms them "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." The latter phrase in the margin is "a purchased people." More fully expressed, they are "a people protected, preserved, purchased, and possessed, by being encamped around about." It will not be long until they shall be gathered and placed in their "glorious land," whither every orthodox Jew today is gazing with yearning eyes - Daniel 11:16.

Chapter Four

"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" - 4:1.

The battle of Armageddon will completely overthrow the nations that will be against Israel and against the Lord. God will fight from heaven for His own people and will spare them. The manner of His interference is expressed in the next verse.

"But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall" - during the Millennium - 4:2. The healing power of Christ, "the Sun of righteousness," is set over against the blistering burning heat of the natural sun with which He will consume the wicked. He will also give them power to "tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles" of their feet - 4:3. That will be the crowning day for God's inheritance in the earth. That day is near at hand. We will, no doubt, see more marked evidences of it as that day approaches. Hallelujah, for the hope!

A FINAL WORD

"Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments" - 4:4.

This is the last mention of the law for about four hundred years. The next mention of it is our Lord's spiritual interpretation of the law in His sermon on the mount - Matthew chapters five to seven.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" - 4:5. The ministry of John the Baptist was the fulfillment, at least in part, of this prophecy. Jesus said of him, "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come" - Matthew 11:14. "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist" - Matthew 17:11-13. Luke 1:17 explains how John was the fulfillment of Malachi's words - "And he (John) shall go before Him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Many suppose that Elijah will be one of the two powerful witnesses of Revelation eleven. But not so. Rather, as Luke says John came, so two men will arise and prophesy in the spirit and power of Elijah and Moses. Whoever they may be, they will not be those two prophets; for Elijah was translated, and Moses was raised from the dead. Both have glorified bodies, and it is impossible that they should die. But the two witnesses shall die and lay dead three and a half days in the streets of Jerusalem, then be raised and caught up to God. Will our God be short of men, that He must disturb the rest and mar the glory of two faithful fellows who served their day? Nay.

The first book of the Bible begins with man in a garden, and ends with

him "in a coffin in Egypt." The last book of the Old Testament begins with God's love for His people, and ends with the threat of "a curse" upon the earth. John the Baptist closed the Old Testament canon and opened the new. Four hundred years of Divine silence followed Malachi's unique prophecy. That silence was broken by the announcements of the births of John and Jesus. Two "Js" appeared. John was the last prophet of the Old Covenant. Jesus was the first and chief Prophet of the New Covenant.

The End



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