

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Brief Explanation About the Technical Resources Used in this Commentary Series	i
Brief Definitions of Hebrew Grammatical Forms Which Impact Exegesis	iii
Abbreviations Used in This Commentary	ix
How This Commentary Can Help You	xi
A Guide to Good Bible Reading	xiii
Introduction to Obadiah	1
Obadiah	7
Introduction to Joel	24
Joel 1	29
Joel 2	42
Joel 3	81
Introduction to Haggai	94
Haggai 1	97
Haggai 2	107
Introduction to Malachi	117
Malachi 1	123
Malachi 2	137
Malachi 3	148
Malachi 4	163
Appendix One: Old Testament Prophecy	173
Appendix Two: Hebrew Poetry	178
Appendix Three: Brief Historical Survey of the Powers of Mesopotamia	181
Appendix Four: Chart of the Entire Old Testament	190
Appendix Five: Timeline of the Post-Exilic Period	193
Appendix Six: Doctrinal Statement	194

SPECIAL TOPICS TABLE OF CONTENTS

Names for Deity, Obadiah v. 1	10
Holy, Obadiah v. 17	20
Fire, Obadiah v. 18	21
Biblical Attitudes Toward Alcohol and Alcoholism, Joel 1:5	32
Horns Used by Israel, Joel 2:1	46
Does Any Believer Ever Fall Away?, Joel 2:1	48
Perseverance, Joel 2:1	49
Repentance, Joel 2:12	53
Heart, Joel 2:13	54
Characteristics of Israel's God, Joel 2:13	55
Lovingkindness (<i>Hesed</i>), Joel 2:13	55
Righteousness, Joel 2:23	61
OT Covenant Promises Seem Different from NT Covenant Promises, Joel 2:28	66
The Trinity, Joel 2:28	72
Women in the Bible, Joel 2:28	74
Apocalyptic Literature, Joel 2:30-32	76
This Age and the Age to Come, Joel 2:32	78
Bob's Evangelical Biases, Joel 2:32	80
Israel, Joel 3:1	83
Feasts of Israel, Haggai 1:1	98
Ancient Near Eastern Calendar, Haggai 1:1	100
Glory, Haggai 1:8	103
Spirit in the NT, Haggai 1:14	105
The Remnant, Three Senses, Haggai 1:14	106
Covenant, Haggai 2:5	109
Forever (<i>'Olam</i>), Malachi 1:4	126
The Fatherhood of God, Malachi 1:6	129
Anthropomorphic Language for God, Malachi 1:6	131
Abomination, Malachi 2:11	142
Effective Prayer, Malachi 2:13	144
Where Are the Dead?, Malachi 3:3	152
Terms For God's Revelation, Malachi 3:7	156
Tithe In the Mosaic Legislation, Malachi 3:8	158
Tithing, Malachi 3:10	159
Heaven, Malachi 3:10	161
Wealth, Malachi 3:14	164
Mt. Sinai, Malachi 4:4	170

Brief Explanations of the Technical Resources Used in the “You Can Understand the Bible” Old Testament Commentary Series

I. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by William Gesenius. It is known by the abbreviation BDB.
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. It is known by the abbreviation KB.
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon (#A).
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.

Where there is significant lexical variety, I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both “word-for-word” and “dynamic equivalent” translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

II. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of “You Can Understand the Bible” Series is “The Helps for Translators Series” from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled “A Handbook on _____.”

III. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied ancient texts, there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of the following:

- A. *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings have been lost)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-semitic semantic field of Hebrew’s limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE, pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition:

1. The Samaritan Pentateuch
2. The Dead Sea Scrolls
3. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing), but for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic Text (A.D.

900's) see “The Reliability of the Old Testament Text” by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67.

The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A .D. 1009). Occasionally, the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of southwest Asian languages. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality, some Semitic languages are used by the nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14): Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group:

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18th century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15th century in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14th century in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)

The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirach) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are

1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
5. Maccabean coins and seals
6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (triconsonantal root). It is an inflected language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (later vowels, cf. Sue Green, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are quite common (*paronomasia*).

II. Aspects of Predication

A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged.

VERBS are inflected to show

1. number—singular, plural, dual
2. gender—masculine and feminine (no neuter)
3. mood—indicative, subjunctive, imperative (relation of the action to reality)

4. tense (aspect)
- a. PERFECT, which denotes completed, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding, of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says

“The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure” (p. 36).

 S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, describes it as,

“The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependent upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially of Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense” (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).

 Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, defines this verbal form as one that

“. . .views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context” (p. 86).
 - b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of present and future action.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says,

“All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, or partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete” (p. 55).

 Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition*, says,

“It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on” (p. 89).
 - c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).
 - d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
 - e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorially-intended time orientations.
- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
1. *Qal (Kal)*, the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.
 2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.

3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal* - *Niphal*; *Piel* - *Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to illustrate the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

VOICE or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	<i>Qal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Piel</i>
MIDDLE PASSIVE	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Pual</i>
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Hithpael</i>

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp.354-359).

R. H. Kennett, *A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses*, has provided a needed warning:

"I have commonly found in teaching, that a student's chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many of these fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, 'tense' shows, being to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew's mind.

The name 'tenses' as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew 'tenses' do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for the confusion that would arise through the application of the term 'state' to

both nouns and verbs, ‘states’ would be a far better designation than ‘tenses.’ It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (viz of time) which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form” (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us,

“There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars’ reconstruction of semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew” (p. 128).

C. Moods (Modes)

1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
 - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
 - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), first person IMPERFECT form which normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
 - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), third person IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
 - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule*
These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
 - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu*
Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; I Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. pp. 76-77).

D. *Waw* - Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre. The reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of their own native languages. When this proved difficult, they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a “supposed” ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter *waw* being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.

1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.
2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERBS chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, notes the distinctiveness of Hebrew in its use of the *waw* before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of *waw* often projects it into future time. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of *waw* places it into the past. It is

this unusual time shift which explains the *waw*'s addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The *waw* PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the *waw* IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition,

“As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence” (p. 103).

E. INFINITIVE - There are two kinds of INFINITIVES

1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are “strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . .as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb ‘to be’ being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone” J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*” (p. 92).
2. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS, which are “related grammatically to the sentence by prepositions, possessive pronouns, and the construct relationship” (p. 91).
J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, describes the construct state as:
“When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state” (p. 44).

F. INTERROGATIVES

1. They always appear first in the sentence.
2. Interpretive significance
 - a. *ha* - does not expect a response
 - b. *halo'* - the author expects a “yes” answer

NEGATIVES

1. They always appear before the words they negate.
2. The most common negation is *lo'*.
3. The term *'al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.
4. The term *lebhilit*, meaning “in order that. . .not,” is used with INFINITIVES.
5. The term *'en* is used with PARTICIPLES.

G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. There are four kinds of conditional sentences which are basically paralleled in Koine Greek.
 - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
 - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)
 - c. something which is possible or even probable (THIRD CLASS)
 - d. something which is less probable, therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
 - a. the assumed-to-be-true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and the protasis is usually introduced by
 - (1) *'im*
 - (2) *ki* (or *'asher*)
 - (3) *hin* or *hinneh*

- b. the contrary-to-fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICLE *lu* or *lule*
- c. the more probable condition always uses IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, *'im* or *ki* are usually used as introductory PARTICLES
- d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses *'im* as an introductory PARTICLE

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	<i>Anchor Bible Commentaries</i> , ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	<i>Analytical Key to the Old Testament</i> by John Joseph Owens
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> by James B. Pritchard
BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	<i>The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation</i> (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	<i>The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts</i> (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	<i>A New Translation of the Bible</i> by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version

NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	<i>Old Testament Parsing Guide</i> by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	<i>Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Robert Young
ZPBE	<i>Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia</i> (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession, and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal, cultural, or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us is an objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing four interpretive principles structured to help us attempt to overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose and a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal, or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit’s leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide a brief introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase, or word level—is the key in following the biblical author’s intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author’s thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing the paragraphing of modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

- A. The United Bible Society’s Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS⁴). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.
- B. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.

- C. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between NKJV and NJB. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- D. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS⁴ and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
- E. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
- F. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this text.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

Fourth Principle

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
East Texas Baptist University
June 27, 1996

A Guide to Good Bible Reading: A Personal Search For Verifiable Truth

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience—an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Recognize Your Presuppositions

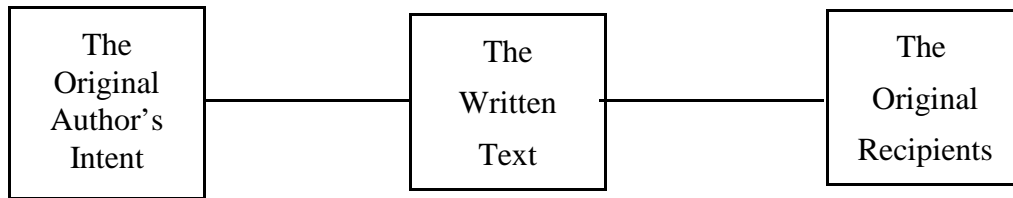
- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 6. the words chosen to present the message
 7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

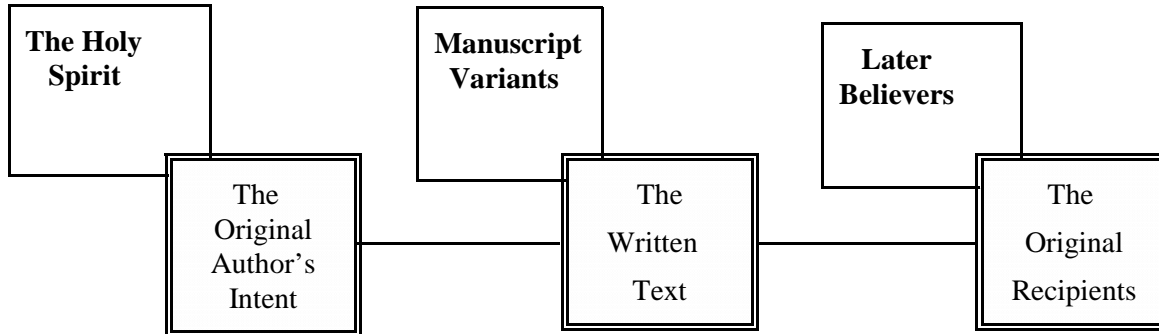
II. Recognize Modern Day Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components, but to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications, but how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. An Approach to Good Bible Reading

At this point, I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan. My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text, and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author’s
 - a. historical setting
 - b. literary context

2. the original author's choice of
 - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
 - b. contemporary word usage
 - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
 - a. relevant parallel passages

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- A. The first reading cycle
 1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
 3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
 4. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Hebrew narrative
 - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - (4) Law codes
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - (2) Parables (Gospels)
 - (3) Letters/epistles
 - (4) Apocalyptic literature
- B. The second reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- C. The third reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - a. the author
 - b. the date
 - c. the recipients

- d. the specific reason for writing
- e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
- f. references to historical people and events
- 3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
- 4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
- D. The fourth reading cycle
 - 1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 - 2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - c. contrasting concepts
 - 3. List the following items
 - a. significant terms
 - b. unusual terms
 - c. important grammatical structures
 - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
 - 4. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - (1) "systematic theology" books
 - (2) reference Bibles
 - (3) concordances
 - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
 - 5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - a. study Bibles
 - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - c. Bible introductions
 - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

"The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."

- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard, the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible *as God's word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in

conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."

C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

"No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

VI. This Commentary's Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
 - 1. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS⁴)
 - 2. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
 - 3. The New King James Version (NKJV)
 - 4. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
 - 5. Today's English Version (TEV)
 - 6. The Jerusalem Bible (JB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 - 1. literary context
 - 2. historical, cultural insights
 - 3. grammatical information
 - 4. word studies
 - 5. relevant parallel passages

- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”
 2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 3. The Today’s English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 4. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
1. manuscript variations
 2. alternate word meanings
 3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 4. ambiguous texts
- Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO OBADIAH

I. Name of the Book

A. Named after the prophet/author

B. His name means “servant of YHWH” (BDB 715). Obed (BDB 715) means “servant.” The covenant name for deity, YHWH, is abbreviated by “iah” and added to another NOUN (i.e., Isaiah, Jeremiah and here, Obadiah). YHWH’s name (BDB 217) is commonly added to NOUNS

1. “iah” ending to a proper name
2. “y” and a vowel at the beginning of a proper name

C. It was a common Hebrew name referring to thirteen different people in the OT

1. the governor of King Ahab of Israel’s house, I Kgs. 18:3-7,16
2. descendant of King David, I Chr. 3:21
3. person of the tribe of Issachar, I Chr. 7:3
4. person of the tribe of Benjamin, in the line of King Saul, I Chr. 8:38; 9:44
5. a Levite living near Jerusalem, I Chr. 9:16
6. a Gadite who became part of David’s fighting men at Ziklag, I Chr. 12:9
7. a leader of the tribe of Zebulun in David’s day, I Chr. 27:19
8. a leader of the tribe of Judah in King Jehoshaphat’s day, II Chr. 17:7
9. a Levite who worked on the temple in Jerusalem in King Joash’s day, II Chr. 34:12
10. a leader who returned from Babylonian exile with Ezra, Ezra 8:9
11. a priest active in Nehemiah’s day, Neh. 10:5
12. a gate keeper in Nehemiah’s day, Neh. 12:25
13. the author of this small prophetic book, Obadiah v. 1

II. CANONIZATION

A. The Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections that are connected to the time of their writing and compilation:

1. The Law (Torah) which included Genesis – Deuteronomy
2. The Prophets (*nevi'im*), which is divided into two sections:
 - a. the Former Prophets, Joshua – Kings (not including Ruth)
 - b. the Latter Prophets, Isaiah – Malachi (not including Daniel and Lamentations)
3. The Writings (*kethubim*), which can logically be divided into three genres or categories:
 - a. the Five Scrolls (*Megilloth*) which are special festival books read at certain feast days
 - (1) Ruth (read at Pentecost)
 - (2) Song of Songs (read at Passover)
 - (3) Ecclesiastes (read at Tabernacles)
 - (4) Lamentations (read to annually commemorate the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.)
 - (5) Esther (read at Purim)

- b. historical books
 - (1) Daniel
 - (2) Ezra
 - (3) Nehemiah
 - (4) Chronicles
- c. Wisdom Literature
 - (1) Job
 - (2) Psalms
 - (3) Proverbs

B. This book is part of the “latter prophets” (*Ecclesiasticus* 49:10)

C. It is part of “the Twelve,” a grouping of minor prophets” (*Baba Bathra* 14b)

1. they, like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, fit on one scroll
2. they represent the twelve tribes by the use of the symbolic number for organization
3. they reflect the traditional view (*Baba Bathra*) of the books’ time period

D. The order of “the Twelve,” or Minor, Prophets has been linked by many scholars to a chronological sequence. However, there are problems with this view:

1. The first six books are listed differently in the Hebrew Masoretic Text and Septuagint.

<u>MT</u>	<u>LXX</u>
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Amos
Amos	Micah
Obadiah	Joel
Jonah	Obadiah
Micah	Jonah

2. Internal evidence puts Amos chronologically before Hosea
3. The date for Joel is highly debated. I list him as an early post-exilic prophet along with Obadiah

III. GENRE (this is classical Hebrew prophetic poetry). This book is the shortest book in the OT.

IV. AUTHORSHIP

A. Nothing is known about the Prophet

B. There are several theories about the time in which he lived and wrote:

1. Sanhedrin 39b (Talmud) said he was King Ahab’s servant (cf. I Kgs. 18:3-16)
2. Pseudo-Epiphanius (early church) in his “Lives of the Prophets” said he was a high military official of King Ahaziah (842 B.C., cf. II Kgs. 1:12ff)
3. John Calvin said he was an eyewitness to the destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar II or Babylon, cf. NRSV, p. 1183, TEV, p. 818).

C. The name could be a title.

V. DATE

- A. This book is linguistically related to Jeremiah 49:7-16 (Obad. vv. 1-9) and Joel 2:32 (Obad. v. 17):
1. E. J. Young put them in this order: Obadiah, Jeremiah
 2. R. K Harrison lists them in this order: Jeremiah, Obadiah, (450 B.C.) and Joel (400 B.C.). This makes the book early post-exilic.
 3. Keil put them in this order: Obadiah, Joel, Jeremiah
 4. The UBS, *A Translator's Handbook on the Books of Obadiah and Micah*, pp. 39-41, spells out the similarities in detail:
 - a. Obad. 1a - Jer. 49:7
 - b. Obad. 1b-4 - Jer. 49:14-16
 - c. Obad. 5 - Jer. 49:9
 - d. Obad. 6 - similar to Jer. 49:10
 - e. Obad. 8 - similar to Jer. 49:7
 - f. Obad. 9a - similar to Jer. 49:22b
 - g. Obad. 16 - similar to Jer. 49:12
- B. It is obvious that the book relates to an invasion of Judah and harassment of the people of Jerusalem by the nation of Edom. Some possible dates
1. Jerusalem taken by Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt in fifth year of Rehoboam, 922-915 B.C. (cf. I Kgs. 14:25-28; II Chr. 12:2-10).
 2. Jerusalem taken by Arab league and the Philistines in the reign of Jehoram, 849-842 B.C. (cf. II Kgs. 8:20ff; II Chr. 21:16-17; 22:1).
 3. Jerusalem taken by Syrians in the reign of Joash, 837-800 B.C. (cf. II Chr. 24:23-24).
 4. Jerusalem taken by Israel (Jehoash) after defeat of Edom in the reign of Amaziah (cf. II Kgs. 14:7-14 (842 B.C.))
 5. Judah attacked by Edomites (cf. II Chr. 28:17; 19:8-9; II Kgs. 16:1-20).
 6. Jerusalem taken by Nebuchadnezzar several times, 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.:
 - a. 605 B.C. Jehoiakim's reign (cf. Dan. 1:1-2)
 - b. 597 B.C. Jehoiachin's reign (cf. II Kgs. 24:8-17; II Chr. 36:9-10; Ezekiel)
 - c. 586 B.C. Zedekiah's reign (cf. II Kgs. 24:18-25:21; II Chr. 36:11-21; Lamentations 4; Ps. 137:7)
 - d. 582 B.C. Gedaliah, Babylonian Governor (cf. II Kgs. 25:22-26)
- C. Of the possible historical settings (see above), there have been two dates most advocated by scholars:
1. an early date in Jehoram's reign (849-842 B.C.) because:
 - a. the position of the book in "the Twelve"
 - (1) 8th century grouping: Amos, Hosea, Micah, (Joel?), and Obadiah
 - (2) 7th century grouping: Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah
 - (3) post-exilic grouping: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

- b. Obadiah does not mention the destruction of the Temple (586 B.C.)
 - c. the nations mentioned are pre-exilic, not post-exilic
 - d. the sins are similar to those enumerated by the 8th century prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah)
 - e. no Aramaic words, idioms or expressions
2. a late date relating to Nebuchadnezzar II's invasion of Jerusalem
 - a. vv. 11-14 seem to fit the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
 - b. Edom participated in this invasion
 - (1) rejoiced at Judah's fall
 - (a) Ps. 137:7
 - (b) Lam. 2:15-17; 4:21
 - (c) Ezek. 36:2-6
 - (d) I Esdras 4:45, 50
 - (2) helped in Judah's fall:
 - (a) Ezek. 25:12-14
 - (b) Ezek. 35:1-15

VI. HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. Edom, Object of the Prophecy, vv. 1-9, 18, 21
 1. Edom is the nation east of the Dead Sea; it is made up of the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, (cf. Gen. 25-29; 32-33). Edom means "red" while Esau means "hairy" (cf. Gen 25:25, 30).
 2. Israel was commanded to respect Edom (cf. Deut. 23:7)
 3. Israel and Edom had continuing problems
 - a. Num. 20:14-21
 - b. Jdgs. 11:16-17
 - c. I Sam. 14:47-48
 - d. II Sam. 8:14
 - e. I Kgs. 11:14-25
 - f. II Kgs. 14:22; 16:5-6
 - g. II Chr. 20:10-30; 21:8ff
 - h. Amos 1:6, 9
 4. Other prophecies against Edom
 - a. Isa. 34:5ff; 63:1ff
 - b. Jer. 49:7-22
 - c. Lam. 4:21-22
 - d. Ezek. 25:12-17; 35:1-15; 36:2-6
 - e. Amos 1:11-12
 5. Edom was condemned because of
 - a. her pride, vv. 3-4
 - (1) in geographical security
 - (2) in political alliances and military power
 - (3) in commercial wealth

- (4) in traditional wisdom
 - b. her violation of Judah, her kinsman, vv. 10-14
 - (1) rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem (Lam. 2:15-17; 4:21)
 - (2) refused to help (v. 15)
 - (3) active support of enemy (v. 14)
 - (4) took Judah's property (Jer. 13:19)
 - c. her rejection and disdain of YHWH (v. 16)
- B. Edom may be a symbol (type) for all nations who rebelled against God and His people, vv. 15-21 (cf. Psalm 2).
- C. Possible historical fulfilment of this prophecy
 1. destruction of Edom by Neo-Babylon about 5 years after the fall of Jerusalem, 580 B.C.
 2. displacement of Edom from Petra by Nabatean Arabs about 550-449 B.C. (cf. Mal. 1:2-5). Edom not mentioned in Nehemiah's list of surrounding enemies but is replaced by Arab tribes. Edom moved to the Negev.
 3. defeat of Edom by Alexander's general Antigonus in 312 B.C. (recorded in Diodorus Seculus)
 4. defeat of Edom in the Negev by Judah Maccabaeus around 175 B.C. (cf. I Maccabees 5:3,15; II Maccabees 10:15; Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 12:8:1; 13:9:1)
 5. Edom forced to accept Judaism by John Hyrcanus in 125 B.C. They are now called Idumeans.
 6. The Roman General, Titus, completely destroyed the Idumean influence in A.D. 70.

VII. LITERARY UNITS

Brief outline taken from *The New International Commentary* series on "Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah" by Allen, p. 142

- A. The Destruction of Edom (2-9)
 1. Edom's downfall (2-4)
 2. the completeness of Edom's overthrow (5, 6)
 3. the treachery of Edom's allies (7)
 4. Edom's loss of wisdom and warriors (8, 9)
- B. The Wrongdoing of Edom (10-14, 15b)
 1. Edom's unbrotherliness (10, 11)
 2. Edom's mockery (12)
 3. Edom's trespassing (13)
 4. Edom's collaboration and coming retribution (14, 15b)
- C. Edom on the Day of Yahweh (15a, 16-21)
 1. the Day of Yahweh (15a, 16)
 2. the role of the remnant (17, 21)
 3. Judean fire and Edomite stubble (18)
 4. the land regained (19, 20)

VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. God's enemies and God's people's enemies will be punished. Edom is a type of a rebelling, unbelieving nation (cf. v. 15)
- B. God will glorify His people according to His covenant promises. Holiness is YHWH's goal for His people.
- C. The historical situation will be reversed. Edom will be destroyed; God's people will be blessed.

OBADIAH

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Edom Will be Humbled	The Coming Judgment of Edom	Introduction		Title
1:1-9	1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1a	1:1a
	(1)		The Lord Will Punish Edom	Prologue
			1:1b-9	1:1b
			(1b-4)	Sentence Pronounced on Edom
				1:1c-4
				(1c-2)
	(2-4)			(3-4)
		The Pillaging and Betrayal of Edom		The Annihilation of Edom
	1:5-9	1:5-14	(5-7)	1:5-9
	(5)			(5)
	(6-7)			(6-7)
	(8-9)		(8-9)	(8)
				(9)
	Edom Mistreated His Brother		Reasons for Edom's Punishment	The Guilt of Edom
1:10-14	1:10-14		1:10-14	1:10-15
				(10)
				(11)
				(12)
				(13)
The Day of the Lord and the Future		The Day of the Lord's Judgment	God Will Judge the Nations	(14-15)
1:15-21	1:15-16	1:15-18	1:15-16	The Day of Yahweh, Israel Revenged on Edom
				1:16-18
	Israel's Final Triumph		The Victory of Israel	(16)
	1:17-18		1:17-21 (17-18)	(17)
				(18)
		The Division of the Land, and the Lord's Kingship		The New Israel
	1:19-21	1:19-21	(19-21)	1:19-21

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-9

¹The vision of Obadiah.

**Thus says the LORD God concerning Edom—
We have heard a report from the LORD,
And an envoy has been sent among the nations saying,
"Arise and let us go against her for battle—**

**²Behold, I will make you small among the nations;
You are greatly despised.**

**³The arrogance of your heart has deceived you,
You who live in the clefts of the rock,
In the loftiness of your dwelling place,
Who say in your heart,
'Who will bring me down to earth?'**

**⁴Though you build high like the eagle,
Though you set your nest among the stars,
From there I will bring you down," declares the LORD.**

**⁵If thieves came to you,
If robbers by night—
O how you will be ruined!—**

Would they not steal *only* until they had enough?

If grape gatherers came to you,

Would they not leave *some* gleanings?

⁶O how Esau will be ransacked,

And his hidden treasures searched out!

⁷All the men allied with you

Will send you forth to the border,

And the men at peace with you

Will deceive you and overpower you.

They who eat your bread

Will set an ambush for you.

(There is no understanding in him.)

⁸Will I not on that day," declares the LORD,

"Destroy wise men from Edom

And understanding from the mountain of Esau?

⁹Then your mighty men will be dismayed, O Teman,

So that everyone may be cut off from the mountain of Esau by slaughter.

v. 1

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB "vision"

TEV "prophecy"

This refers to a divinely communicated message (sometimes in a trance state of sleep). These are not the thoughts of Obadiah but of God. This term is often associated with (1) "burden" or (2) "the word of YHWH came."

The word "vision" (BDB 302) is related to the VERB "to see" (BDB 302). It can refer to

1. that which is seen (cf. Ezek. 12:27; 13:16; Dan 8:2,15; 9:21)
2. that which is heard (cf. I Sam. 3:1; I Chr. 17:15; Hos. 12:10; Hab. 2:1)
3. that which is written (cf. II Chr. 32:32, Nahum 1:1; Hab. 2:2).

▣ **"Obadiah"** This is "the servant of" or "the worshiper of" YHWH (BDB 715). This can either be a title or a name. It is a very common name in the OT (cf. Introduction I. C.)

▣ **"the LORD God"** This is literally "*Adonai* YHWH." These two words are usually translated "Lord God" (i.e., Gen. 15:2,8; Exod. 23:17; 34:23; Deut. 3:24; 9:26; Josh. 7:7; Jdgs. 6:22; 16:28). YHWH is used alone in the next line.

See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

A. *El*

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
 - a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
 - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself”), Gen. 16:13
 - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the all Compassionate One” or “God of the mountain”), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
 - d. *El-Olam* (God Eternal), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
 - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant”), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
 - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
 - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
 - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
 - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
 - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31; “faithful” in Deut. 7:9; 32:4
 - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
 - g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
 - h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
 - i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
 - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
 - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
 - l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
 - m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
 - n. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated)

B. *Elyon*

1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* - Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* - Gen. 14:22; II Sam. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* - Ps. 91:1,9

- d. *El* - Num. 24:16
 - e. *Elah* - used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
- a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
 - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
 - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)
- C. *Elohim* (plural), *Eloah* (singular), used primarily in poetry
1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
 2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham’s family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
 3. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7. It can refer to human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6)
 4. In the Bible it is the first title/name for deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Psalm 104). It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Psalm 14 (*Elohim*) is exactly like Psalm 53 (YHWH), except for the change in divine names.
 5. Although plural and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
 6. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
 - c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8
 7. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is plural! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
 - a. Hebrew has many plurals, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the plural is used to magnify a concept.
 - b. This may refer to the angelic council, which God meets with in heaven and that does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
 - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; in Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods; and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).

D. YHWH

1. This is the title/name which reflects deity as the covenant making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, His promise, His covenant (cf. Psalm 103). This title/name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.
2. In Gen. 4:26 it is first recorded that “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).
 - a. from an Arabic root “to show fervent love”
 - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
 - c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
 - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
 - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
 - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
 - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning “the ever living, only living One”
 - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67)

The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form:

 - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah)
 - (2) *Yahu* (names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) *Yo* (names, e.g., Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. Here are some of the many possible combinations terms

- a. *YHWH - Yireh* (YHWH will provide), Gen. 22:14
- b. *YHWH - Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer), Exod. 15:26
- c. *YHWH - Nissi* (YHWH is my banner), Exod. 17:15
- d. *YHWH - Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you), Exod. 31:13
- e. *YHWH - Shalom* (YHWH is Peace), Jdgs. 6:24
- f. *YHWH - Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets)
- g. *YHWH - Ro'I* (YHWH is my shepherd), Ps. 23:1
- h. *YHWH - Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness), Jer. 23:6
- i. *YHWH - Shammah* (YHWH is there), Ezek. 48:35

▣ **“Edom”** This term means “red.” There seems to be a play on (1) Jacob’s red soup (cf. Gen. 25:30), for which Esau sold his birthright or (2) the reddish rocks of Edom’s high plateau. This same play on the word “red” (BDB 10) can be seen in v. 13, where the term “their calamity” (BDB 15) is used (cf. Ezek. 35:5). The kingdom of Edom is made up of the descendants of Esau whose name means (1) “red” (BDB 10, cf. Gen. 25:25) and (2) “hairy” (BDB 972, cf. Gen. 25:25).

▣ **“We have heard”** Many suppose that the prophet was from Judah because of this phrase. However, the Septuagint has “I heard” (cf. Jer. 49:14-16). Verses 1-4 of Obadiah are obviously related to Jer. 49:14-16. It is assumed in this commentary that Obadiah is using Jeremiah (see Introduction, V. A).

▣ **“envoy”** This (BDB 851) is not the usual term “for messenger” (BDB 521). This is found in Isa. 18:2 and is the exact term found in Jer. 49:14. The “envoy” is an official spokesman for YHWH (cf. TEV, NJB). YHWH is gathering the surrounding nations to attack Edom. In a sense this is “eye-for-eye” justice!

▣ **“Arise and let us go against her for battle”** The VERB “arise” (BDB 877, KB 1086) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. It is repeated in the phrase, “let us go,” which is a *Qal* COHORTATIVE of the same VERB. The IMPERATIVE is found in Jer. 49:14, but not the COHORTATIVE.

The prophecy deals with God’s judgment of Edom because of her prideful, vengeful attack on her kinsmen, Judah. It seems that she is betrayed by her political alliances, as was Judah.

v. 2 “I will make you small among the nations” “Small” (BDB 892) is from Jer. 49:15. It has the connotation of insignificance and weakness, the opposite of their self-estimation! The opposite connotation is found in Isa. 60:22 (from “small” to thousands).

The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT) is exactly what is found in Jer. 49:15. It is a PROPHETIC PERFECT (there are several in these opening verses). A future event (i.e., Edom’s judgment) is described as if it had already occurred because the word of YHWH is sure!

▣ **“You are greatly despised”** The term “despised” (BDB 102, KB 117, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) also appears in Jer. 49:15. Obadiah adds the modifier “exceedingly” (BDB 547). This is a very common idiomatic way to intensify an idea. It is used in this way 298 times in the OT.

Edom's judgment seems to be related to three areas: (1) her pride, v. 3, 4; (2) her violence against her brother, v. 10-14; and (3) her despising of YHWH, v. 16.

v. 3 “The arrogance of your heart” This same root (BDB 267 and 268) is used in the Genesis account to relate to Esau selling his birthright to Jacob for a boiling bowl of soup (i.e., Gen. 25:29). This exact CONSTRUCT (BDB 268 and 524) is taken from Jer. 49:16.

▣ **“deceived you”** This VERB, “deceive” or “beguile” (BDB 674, KB 728, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. v. 7) is also found in Jer. 49:16. It is the same VERBAL form found in Gen. 3:13! Eve was seduced, but Edom seduced herself (shows the power and pervasiveness of Eve's rebellion).

▣ **“You who live in the clefts of the rock”** The word “rock” (BDB 700 I) is the term *sela*, which seems to relate metaphorically to a capital of Edom, Petra (BDB 701 II, cf. II Kgs. 14:7). Edom was proud because of the geographical and topological security of her cities (i.e., located on a high plateau). Bozrah was the earlier capital of Edom (cf. Jer. 49:22).

▣ **“Who say in your heart,**

‘Who will bring me down to earth’” Arrogance is often related to God's judgment (cf. Isa. 14 and Ezek. 28). Notice that in the Jer. 49:16 parallel, it is YHWH who brings Edom to destruction! The same VERB (BDB 432, KB 434, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is used in Amos 9:2.

v. 4 “Though you set your nest among the stars” The first two lines of v. 4 are in a synonymous parallel relationship. Edom was located on an easily defended high plateau. She thought no one could effectively attack her.

This line of poetry is a good example of hyperbole. Neither eagles nor men build nests/ homes among the stars. This is one of four parallel lines of poetry about Edom's false security based on her location (i.e., v. 3, lines 2,3; v. 4, lines 1,2).

v. 5 “thieves. . . robbers. . . grape gatherers” These are used as metaphors of complete destruction and total loss (cf. Jer. 49:9). There is no compassion!

Notice the violence described in v. 5:

1. thieves came, i.e., “attacked,” BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PERFECT (twice)
2. robbers, i.e., “deal violently with,” BDB 994, KB 1418, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
3. you will be ruined, i.e., “cut off completely,” BDB 198, KB 225, *Niphal* PERFECT
4. steal, i.e., “steal everything,” BDB 170, KB 198, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. grape gatherers, i.e., “cut off completely,” BDB 130, KB 148, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (i.e., Edom known for its vineyard)
6. would they not leave. . . i.e., “they would leave nothing,” BDB 983, KB 1375, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

v. 6 “ransacked” Although this VERB (BDB 344, KB 341, *Niphal* PERFECT) does not occur in Jeremiah 49, the concept surely does in Jer. 49:10!

There are two VERBS in this verse that basically mean “searched out”:

1. “ransacked,” (above)
2. “searched out,” BDB 126, KB 141, *Niphal* PERFECT

The cities of Edom will be pillaged and destroyed!

▣ **“his hidden treasures”** The term (BDB 861) occurs only here in the OT. Edom was a commercial center because of its copper mines, its rich soil, and its geographical location on a major trade route. This phrase may refer to its hidden, commercial storehouses (i.e., *Diodorus Siculus*).

v. 7 “All the men allied with you” This verse seems to refer to the betrayal by political alliances who were supposedly friends. This is exactly what happened to Judah, at which Edom rejoiced. Now, this same betrayal turns to them (cf. Matt. 7:2, Gal. 6:7).

▣ **“ambush”** This term (KB 565) occurs only here in the OT. There are two possible roots:

1. KB 565 I, sore, ulcer, boil, cf. Jer. 30:15
2. KB 565 II, ambush, trap, snare
3. BDB 561, to spread out (i.e., like a net)

This is a good example of how context must be the determiner of meaning. It is possible there is a manuscript problem, but often it is a lack of lexical information that makes the translation of ancient Hebrew difficult, especially on words:

1. used only once
2. same tri-lateral root has various meanings

This is why for ancient Hebrew the cognate languages of the ancient Near East and the ancient versions provide a guide on the meaning of rare words.

▣

NASB “(There is no understanding in him)”

NKJV “No one is aware of it”

NRSV “there is no understanding of it”

TEV “where is all the cleverness he had”

NJB “He has quite lost his wits”

Apparently Edom was totally surprised by these events.

v. 8 “on that day” There is a play on the phrase “that day” throughout the remainder of the prophecy. It deals with the day of temporal judgment as an example of a coming day of eschatological judgment, which will surely come against all those who are against God and His people.

▣ **“I will destroy”** YHWH Himself (cf. Deut. 8:20) will bring total destruction on Edom. The VERB (BDB 1, KB 2, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is also found in Jer. 46:8.

▣ **“wise men from Edom”** Eliphaz, Job’s friend, was from Teman, which was a major city of Edom (cf. Job 2:11). Apparently Edom was known for her traditional wisdom (Job was probably an Edomite). It is possible that Job himself was from this area, yet God removes their wisdom (cf. v. 7, line 7; Jer. 49:7).

▣ **“the mountain of Esau”** The Edomites originally displaced the Horites and the area became known as Mount Seir. In this prophecy the mountains (i.e., high plateau) of Esau are played off against the mountains of Zion.

v. 9 **“Teman”** The word is literally “what is on the right hand,” i.e., the south (BDB 412 I). This city got its name from the grandson of Esau (BDB 412 II, cf. Gen. 36:11, 15, 42). In Obadiah’s day it is both a city (cf. Jer. 49:7,20) and a name for a region in Edom (cf. Amos 1:12).

▣ **“by slaughter”** This NOUN (BDB 881) appears only here in the OT. The Septuagint moves it to the beginning of verse 10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:10-14

¹⁰**“Because of violence to your brother Jacob,
You will be covered *with* shame,
And you will be cut off forever.**

¹¹**On the day that you stood aloof,
On the day that strangers carried off his wealth,
And foreigners entered his gate
And cast lots for Jerusalem —
You too were as one of them.**

¹²**Do not gloat over your brother's day,
The day of his misfortune.
And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah
In the day of their destruction;
Yes, do not boast In the day of *their* distress.**

¹³**Do not enter the gate of My people
In the day of their disaster.
Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity
In the day of their disaster.
And do not loot their wealth
In the day of their disaster.**

¹⁴**Do not stand at the fork of the road
To cut down their fugitives;
And do not imprison their survivors
In the day of their distress.”**

v. 10 **“Because of violence to your brother Jacob”** Israel was commanded to be kind to Edom because they were relatives (cf. Deut. 23:7). However, Edom violated this traditional kinship tie (for when see Introduction V. B).

▣ **“You will be covered *with shame*”** This term (BDB 102) denotes the violation of expected group behavior. Edom and Israel were relatives. This demanded certain actions.

In the section of Jeremiah which condemns the surrounding actions it is used of

1. Israel’s relatives
 - a. Moab, 48:1(twice),13(twice),20,39
 - b. Edom, in Obadiah v. 10
 - c. Ammon, not used in Jer. 48:1-6
2. Israel’s enemies
 - a. Egypt, 46:24
 - b. Syria, 49:23
 - c. Babylon, 50:2(twice),12; 51:17,47,51

The term had serious emotional connotations in Near Eastern countries where loss of “face” was emotionally devastating!

▣ **“You will be cut off forever”** This VERB (BDB 503, KB 500, *Niphal* PERFECT) means to be totally destroyed, completely cut off (i.e., Ps. 37:9,22,28,34,38; Pro. 2:22).

For the theories on when and how this prophecy was fulfilled see Introduction VI. C.

v. 11 **“On that day”** See note at v. 8.

▣

NASB, NRSV	“carried off his wealth”
NKJV	“carried captive his forces”
TEV	“carried off Jerusalem’s wealth”
NJB	“carried off his riches”
JPSOA	“carried off his goods”

The VERBAL (BDB 985, KB 1382, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) means “to take captive,” but what did they take? The OBJECT of the INFINITIVE (BDB 298) has several meanings:

1. strength
2. ability, efficiency
3. wealth (NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB)
4. force, army (LXX, PESHITTA, NKJV)

Number 3 fits best in v. 13, where the same term is repeated, so it probably means the same in v. 11.

▣ **“And foreigners entered his gate
And cast lots for Jerusalem—**

You too were as one of them” This seems to imply that Edom aligned themselves with an invading army and divided the booty of Judah (cf. Joel 3:3; Neh. 3:10).

The phrase “casting lots” (BDB 391, KB 388, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Joel 3:3 and Nahum 3:10) was an ancient way of (1) dividing land and/or spoils or (2) determining divinely led choices.

vv. 12-14 There is a series of negated JUSSIVE forms:

1. “do not gloat,” v. 12 (lit. “see,” cf. NKJV), BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* JUSSIVE (negated)
2. “do not rejoice,” v. 12, BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (negated)

3. “do not boast,” v. 12, BDB 152, KB 178, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE (negated)
4. “do not enter,” v. 13, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (negated)
5. “do not gloat,” v. 13, same as #1
6. “do not loot,” v. 13, BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (negated)
7. “do not stand,” v. 14, BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (negated)
8. “do not imprison,” v. 14 (lit. “delivered up,” cf. NKJV), BDB 688, KB 742, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE (negated)

v. 12 “Do not rejoice. . .do not gloat. . .do not boast” Apparently Edom rejoiced at Judah’s calamity (cf. Ps. 137:7; Lam. 2:15-17; 4:12; Ezek. 36:2-6; I Esdras 4:45, 50). What they did to Judah, YHWH will allow/send others to do to them! We reap what we sow! See note at v. 15.

v. 13 “their calamity” This (BDB 15) is a play on the Hebrew word for “red” (BDB 10, cf. Ezek. 35:5). Bloodshed is coming!

v. 14 The word translated “fork in the road” (BDB 830, KB 974) has two distinct usages:

1. Obadiah 14, “crossroads,” “fork in the road”
2. Nahum 3:1, “plunder”

The VERB’s (KB 973) basic meaning is to “separate” or “divide” from the root’s usage in Akkadian and Arabic. The Targums and Peshitta have “crossroads.” See note on word origins at v. 7.

This refers to Edom’s blockades or ambushes at the mountain passes which led to the desert to the south which the Judeans tried to use while fleeing from the invading enemy. No one escaped (cf. Lam. 2:22)! Some scholars see this as referring specifically to II Kgs. 25:3-7 (i.e., the flight of King Zedekiah from the army of Nebuchadnezzar II).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:15-21

¹⁵“For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations.

As you have done, it will be done to you.

Your dealings will return on your own head.

¹⁶Because just as you drank on My holy mountain,

All the nations will drink continually.

They will drink and swallow

And become as if they had never existed.

¹⁷But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape,

And it will be holy.

And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.

¹⁸Then the house of Jacob will be a fire

And the house of Joseph a flame;

But the house of Esau *will be* as stubble.

And they will set them on fire and consume them,

So that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau,"

For the LORD has spoken.

**¹⁹Then *those of* the Negev will possess the mountain of Esau,
And *those of* the Shephelah the Philistine *plain*;
Also, possess the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria,
And Benjamin *will possess* Gilead.**

**²⁰And the exiles of this host of the sons of Israel,
Who are *among* the Canaanites as far as Zarephath,
And the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad
Will possess the cities of the Negev.**

**²¹The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion
To judge the mountain of Esau,
And the kingdom will be the LORD's.**

v. 15 “For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations” Edom is used as a type of all nations who are against God’s people. This is a moral universe and God will set all things straight one day (i.e., eschatological judgment)!!!

For “the day of the Lord,” see note at v. 8. It is a recurrent theme, especially in Joel (cf. 1:15; 2:1,11,31) and Amos (cf. 5:18,20).

▣ **“As you have done, it will be done to you”** This is a spiritual principle. God is ethical-moral and so is His creation. Humans break themselves on God’s standards. We reap what we sow. This is true for believers (but does not affect salvation) and unbelievers (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

v. 16 “Because just as you drank on My holy mountain” The question is how many groups are being addressed in this verse:

1. Edom (v. 15b), the invading nations (MASCULINE PLURAL, cf. 15a)
2. Israel (line 1)
Edom (line 3)
All invading nations (lines 2,3)

If #1 is right, then line 1 must refer to Edom getting drunk in Jerusalem after the victory of the invading foreign army.

In context #2 fits best. Edom was part of a multi-national invading army (i.e., the Babylonian army). This reflects Psalm 2 and Zech. 12:2-3. YHWH will one day judge all nations and all but His people will be destroyed (i.e., Isa. 51:22-23; Matt. 5:5).

▣ **“All the nations will drink continually”** The terms “drink” (BDB 1059, KB 1667, repeated three times) and “cup” (used in other places, i.e., Jer. 49:12; 44:26) refer to God’s judgment (cf. Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17, 23; Jer. 25:15, 16, 27, 18; Ezek. 23:32-3 Matt. 20:22-23; 26:39, 42; John 18:11; Rev. 14:10; 16:19; 19:15).

▣ **“become”** The VERB “to be” (BDB 224, KB 243) is repeated twice in v. 16 and twice more in v. 17. It is a role reversal emphasis. Edom was, but will cease to exist. Israel, though on the verge of non-existence, will blossom again!

v. 17 “Mount Zion” Mount Zion was the site of the ancient Jebusite citadel (cf. II Sam. 5:7; I Chr. 11:5). The temple was located on Mount Moriah (cf. Gen. 22:2,8,14; I Chr. 21:18-27; II Chr. 3:1). However, the term “Mount Zion” came to be the designation for the entire city of Jerusalem (especially in Psalms and the Prophets), see ABD, vol. 6, pp. 1096-1097).

▣ **“holy”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY

- I. Old Testament Usage
 - A. The etymology of the term (*kadosh*, BDB 871, KB 1072) is uncertain. Some possibilities:
 1. “To cut,” “to divide,” which would denote a “separation from,” “to set apart.”
 2. “To shine,” which denotes the concept of “new” or “pure.”
 3. “to devote,” which is derived from its relationship to *herem*; both denote “a separation to”
 4. “to be clean,” “free of claims,” from an Akkadian root
 - B. It relates to cultic things, places, times, and persons. It is common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
 - C. In the prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized, comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy; His name representing His character is Holy; His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).
 - D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenant, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.
- II. The New Testament
 - A. The writers of the NT are Hebrew thinkers (except Luke), but influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT that controls their vocabulary, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion.
 - B. Jesus is holy because He is of God and like God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5).
 - C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy, His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Peter 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness.

▣ **“possess their possessions”** Many see this as referring to a future day of abundance and restoration (cf. Isa. 14:1-2; Amos 9:11-12,13-15). There is a possible alternate translation of “and the house of Jacob shall take for an inheritance those that took them for an inheritance” (cf. LXX, NRSV).

v. 18 “the house of Jacob. . .the house of Joseph” This apparently refers to the unification of the tribes of Israel. The divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah (i.e., 922 B.C.) have become one again (cf. v. 20)!

▣ **“the house of Esau will be as stubble”** Fire is often a symbol of judgment (cf. Exod. 15:7; Matt. 3:12; I Cor. 3:10-15).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

A. Positive

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Pro. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God’s leadership (cf. Exod. 12:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God’s empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)

B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

C. God’s anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 13:13; 16:8)

D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion), fire can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the context.

▣ **“there will be no survivor of the house of Esau”** See Jer. 11:23; Amos 1:8; and Mal. 1:2-5.

vv. 19-20 This verse describes how the defeated Israelites “will possess its inheritance” (v. 17). The remnant will spread out and possess the land given to them by God (i.e. Deuteronomy).

This possession of the land by those to whom it was promised becomes a universal fulfilment in v. 21. All the earth belongs to YHWH and one day He will be King over it all!

v. 19 “the Negev” This (BDB 616) means “the dry land” and thereby “south country,” referring to the arid land south of Beersheba (cf. Josh. 15:21-32) extending into the area south and west of the Dead Sea. See Blaiklock and Harrison, *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, pp. 335-336. It is first mentioned in Gen. 12:9; 13:1,3; 20:1; 24:62. In Gen. 13:14 and 28:14 it is best translated “south” (cf. Exod. 26:18; 27:9; 36:23; 38:9; 40:24).

▣ **“shephelah”** This (BDB 1050) means “lowlands” and refers, in this context, to the western foothills of the Judean plateau (cf. Josh. 15:33-34). The area is about ten miles wide and fifty miles long (ABD, vol. 5, p. 1204).

▣ **“the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria”** This refers to the land area of the northern Ten Tribes.

v. 20 “Zarephath” This refers to a city of the coastal plain north of Israel in Phoenicia (cf. I Kgs. 17:9-10). See Blaiklock and Harrison, *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, p. 483.

▣ **“Sephared”** This (BDB 709) seems to be a metaphor for the farthest place of exile. There has been much discussion over its exact locale

1. the capital of Lydia because of the use of the term in Persian inscriptions (Blaiklock and Harrison, *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, p. 399)
2. the islands off of Libya
3. southwest Media because of the inscriptions of the Assyrian kings, Sargon and Esarhaddon
4. Spain (this is the interpretation of the Targums, the Rabbis and the Peshitta)
5. the Bosphorus, which is the interpretation of the Vulgate
6. Sparta (the interpretation of Keil and Delitzsch based on I Maccabees, chapter 12 and 14). Obviously no one knows!

v. 21 “the deliverers” The Septuagint has “those who have been saved” (cf. Isa. 45:22). It refers to those set free from exile (cf. Isa. 52:10). This term (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) may refer to military leaders (cf. Neh. 9:27).

▣ **“the kingdom will be the LORD’s”** This refers to God’s sovereignty over all history (cf. Ps. 22:28; 47:7-9; 67:4; Zech. 14:9) and to the coming and reign of God’s Messiah (cf. Ezek. 34:23-24; Mic. 5:2-5a). Even the NT denotes that the Messiah will eventually turn the Kingdom over to the Father (i.e., I Cor. 15:24-28).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the central theme of the book of Obadiah?
2. Why was Edom judged so severely?
3. Why is Edom used as a symbol for all the nations?

INTRODUCTION TO JOEL

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. Named after the prophet/author.
- B. His name (BDB 222) is a combination of two names for God:
 - 1. YHWH - the Covenant name for God
 - a. Any Hebrew name that began with “J” plus a vowel was usually an abbreviation for YHWH.
 - b. Any Hebrew name that ends in “iah” is also an abbreviation for YHWH (Isaiah).
 - 2. *El* - the general name for God in the ancient Near East.
 - 3. Between these two Hebrew names a verb must be inferred YHWH (is) *El*.
- C. This was a very common Hebrew name. There are at least thirteen mentioned in the historical books:
 - 1. Samuel’s firstborn son, I Sam. 8:2
 - 2. person from the tribe of Simeon, I Chr. 4:35
 - 3. person from the tribe of Reuben, I Chr. 5:4,8
 - 4. person from the tribe of Gad, I Chr. 5:12
 - 5-7. Levites from the sons of Kohath
 - a. I Chr. 6:33; 15:17
 - b. I Chr. 6:36
 - c. II Chr. 29:12
 - 8. person of the tribe of Issachar, I Chr. 7:3
 - 9. one of David’s mighty men, I Chr. 11:38
 - 10-11. Levites from the sons of Gershon
 - a. I Chr. 15:7,11; 23:8
 - b. I Chr. 26:22
 - 12. prince of the tribe of Manasseh, I Chr. 27:20
 - 13-14. persons involved in the return from Babylonian exile
 - a. Ezra 10:43
 - b. Neh. 11:9
 - 15. the prophet Joel of unknown family and unknown date

II. CANONIZATION

- A. This book is part of the divisions of the Hebrew canon called “the latter Prophets.”
- B. It was part of a scroll called “the Twelve.” These are known as the minor prophets because of the length of their writings.
- C. See fuller note in Introduction to Obadiah

III. GENRE

- A. This book is half prose and half classical Hebrew poetry.
- B. Joel seems to allude to several other prophets (partial list):
 - 1. Joel 1:15c - Amos 4:9; Isa. 13:6
 - 2. Joel 2:3 - Isa. 51:3 or Ezek. 36:35
 - 3. Joel 2:10 - Isa. 13:10
 - 4. Joel 2:32 - Obad. v. 17
 - 5. Joel 3:10 - Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3
 - 6. Joel 3:16 - Isa. 13:13; Amos 1:2
 - 7. Joel 3:18 - Amos 9:13
- C. Joel's end time imagery is expressed in the apocalyptic term, "the day of the LORD" (cf. Acts 2).
- D. Theories of how to interpret the locust plague, 1:4; 2:25.
 - 1. symbolic/allegorical
 - a. Jewish Targum at 2:25
 - (1) peoples
 - (2) languages
 - (3) rulers
 - (4) kingdoms
 - b. Marginal note in 6th century A.D. Greek MSS
 - (1) Egyptians
 - (2) Babylonians
 - (3) Assyrians
 - (4) Greece
 - (5) Romans
 - c. Christian Commentators (18th century A.D.)
 - (1) Assyrian
 - (2) Chaldea
 - (3) Macedonia
 - (4) Rome
 - 2. past historical
 - a. the prophet uses the past tense of the Hebrew VERB
 - b. this was a characteristic prophetic technique to take events in the life of the prophet and project them into a future setting. Israel's future was dependent on her faith-repentant choices in the present
 - 3. future historical
 - a. there is a coming literal invasion because of Israel's sins
 - b. the locusts are used because of the military metaphors used to describe them:
 - (1) look like horses
 - (2) sound like chariots
 - (3) march in order

4. apocalyptic
 - a. the mention of “the day of the LORD” signals this type of genre
 - b. the use of colors and animals is characteristic of this genre
 - c. Joel possibly relates to Revelation 9:3-11

IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. Nothing is known about this prophet except his name and that of his father, “Joel, son of Pethuel,” 1:1.
- B. There have been two later traditions about the prophet:
 1. from the tribe of Reuben (Pseudo-Epiphanius)
 2. from Judah because of his knowledge of the Temple routine

V. DATE

- A. There is no way to exactly date the book (G. Campbell Morgan said it was one of the earliest or one of the latest of the prophets):
 1. from internal evidence two dates have been suggested:
 - a. a post-exilic date
 - (1) it must be related to a threatened invasion of Judah in the metaphor of a locust plague.
 - (2) 3:2 implies that Israel has already been exiled. The name “Israel” is now used for Judah, 2:27; 3:1-2,16.
 - (3) 3:6 speaks of a Greek slave trade, which implies a post-exilic date.
 - (4) 3:1,17 implies that Judah has already been exiled and is in danger of being invaded again if her sin continued.
 - (5) there is no mention of a king, which implies a post-exilic setting. Joel addressed his message to the elders and priests.
 - (6) the invaders are called “northerners,” which implies a Mesopotamian (Assyria, Babylon, Persia) invasion, 2:20.
 - (7) Baal worship characteristic of the pre-exilic period is not mentioned.
 - b. a pre-exilic date
 - (1) there seems to be a reference to the Temple, 1:9, 13-14; 2:17.
 - (2) the enemies mentioned in 3:4,6,8 (Phoenicia, Philistia, Edom, Sabeans) are pre-exilic, not post-exilic.
 2. from external evidence
 - a. The location of the book in the Hebrew canon implies a pre-exilic date.
 - b. It may have been placed next to Amos because they both speak of the “day of YHWH” and use locust invasions as symbols of judgment. Also, the book alludes to a positive visitation for blessing, not judgment. This fits the post-exilic setting.
 3. I think an early post-exilic date fits the evidence best (B., 4).

- B. Theories as to the date based on an invasion of Palestine:
 1. during the reign of Joash (837-800 B.C.)
 2. during the reign of Uzziah (783-742 B.C.)
 3. during the reign of Zedekiah (598-586 B.C.)
 4. during the time of Zerubbabel (during reign of Darius I, 522-486 B.C.)
 5. during the time of Malachi (430 B.C.)
 6. a futuristic eschatological invasion of God's people

- C. There is a literary relationship between
 1. Joel 2:32 and Obadiah 17. They are both early post-exilic.
 2. Joel 3:16 and Amos 1:2. Joel quotes so many prophets; Joel probably quotes Amos.

- D. John Calvin made a good point about the date of Joel: "As there is no certainty it is better to leave the time in which he taught undecided; and as we shall see, this is of no great importance. Not to know the time of Hosea would be to readers a great loss, for there are many parts which could not be explained without a knowledge of history; but as to Joel there is less need of this, for the import of his doctrine is evident, though his time be obscure and uncertain."

VI. HISTORICAL SETTING — *The National Geographic Magazine* of December, 1915 (XXVIII, No. 6) records a locust plague in Palestine. This article is very helpful in understanding the prophet's allusions.

VII. LITERARY UNITS

- A. A vision of a devastating locust plague as a symbolic representation of an invading army, 1:1-2:27
- B. The day of the Lord as a blessing not a curse to a repentant people of God, 2:28-3:21 (Zephaniah is just the opposite.)

VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. The prophet sees the events of his day as a foreshadowing of future events.
- B. Joel calls for a national day of repentance (1:13-14; 2:12-17)
- C. If God's people repent, God will bring a new day of prosperity, both physically and spiritually (Deuteronomy 27-28).
- D. God will judge the surrounding nations! (3:1-17)
- E. This new day of spiritual renewal (cf. 2:28-29) will affect
 1. men and women
 2. old and young
 3. slave and free (cf. Acts 2; Gal. 3:28)

- F. “The day of the LORD” is a characteristic phrase of Amos, Joel and Zephaniah. How we respond to God now, determines if it is a day of blessing or judgment.
- G. God’s character is described in 2:13 (cf. Exod. 34:6; Ps. 103:8-13 and Neh. 9:17).
- H. The pouring out of the Spirit in 2:28-32 reflects the New Covenant Age (cf. Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:26-27).

JOEL 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Devastation of Locusts		The Locust Plague (1:1-2:27)		Title
		Superscription		The Plague of Locusts (1:1-2:27)
1:1-3	1:1	1:1	1:1	
	The Land Laid Waste		The People Mourn the Destruction of the Crops	Liturgy of Mourning and Entreaty
	1:2-3	1:2-7 (2-3)	1:2-20 (2-3)	1:2-12 (2-3)
1:4-7	1:4	(4)	(4-5)	(4)
	1:5-7	(5-7)		(5-7)
			(6-7)	
1:8-12	1:8-12	1:8-14 (8-10)	(8-10)	(8-12)
		(11-12)	(11-15)	
Starvation and Drought	Mourning for the Land			A Call to Repentance and Prayer
1:13-20	1:13-20 (13-14)	(13)		1:13-20 (13-15)
		(14)		
	(15-18)	1:15-20 (15)		
		(16)	(16-20)	(16-18)
		(17-18)		
	(19-20)	(19-20)		(19-20)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There has been much discussion about the meaning of this locust (BDB 160) invasion
1. some see it as symbolic
 - a. the Targums at 2:25 use these types of locusts as metaphors for peoples, languages, rulers and kingdoms
 - b. the 6th Century LXX “Q” uses these as invading armies (Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman)
 - c. it is obvious from Amos 7 :1-3 and Rev. 9:3, 7-9 that locusts are used as a metaphor in an eschatological sense
 2. others see these as literal locusts. The graphic description of these invading insects fits with historical descriptions of invading locusts (nine different Hebrew roots for locusts) in the Middle East. Those who view these as literal have taken four different interpretations:
 - a. stages of development of the locust (i.e., gnawing [BDB 451], swarming [BDB 916], creeping [BDB 410], stripping [BDB 340], cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 494)
 - b. stages of invasion (Kimchi)
 - c. different species of locusts (Rashi and Eben Ezra)
 - d. intensive literary style
 3. others take the locusts in an eschatological sense following Rev. 9:3-11.

It seems to this author that because the gnawing locust is listed first and the stripping locust listed fourth, that both refer to adult locusts and that we are dealing with subsequent waves of invading insects. Although the third name, “creeping locust,” can be used for an intermediate stage of a locust’s life, the order of these locusts is changed in chapter 2, which seems to discredit the developmental stage theory.
- B. Joel addresses four groups within society:
1. the drunkards, vv. 5-7
 2. Jerusalem herself, vv. 8-9
 3. farmers and agriculturists, vv. 11-12
 4. the priests, vv. 9,13-14
- This judgment was to affect all of the people (as in v. 2a and b).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-3

¹The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:

²Hear this, O elders,

And listen, all inhabitants of the land.

Has *anything like this* happened in your days

Or in your fathers' days?

³Tell your sons about it,

And *let* your sons *tell* their sons,

And their sons the next generation.

1:1 “The word of the LORD that came” This shows that the prophecy did not come from the prophet, but from God. This is a common prophetic introduction (i.e., Jer. 1:2; Ezek. 1:3; Hosea 1:1).

▣ **“to Joel”** His name means “Whose God is YHWH” or “YHWH is God.” See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Obad. v. 1. This is a very similar name in meaning to Elijah. Joel is a common name in the OT. See Introduction I. C.

▣ **“son of Pethuel”** The Septuagint and the Peshita have “Bethuel” (a name found in Gen. 22:22,23; 24:15,24,47,50; 25:20; 28:2,5).

1:2 “Hear. . .listen” These two IMPERATIVES (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVES and BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) are often used together (cf. Gen. 4:23; Num. 23:18; Isa. 1:2; 32:9). They imply a hearing that results in action. Truth demands a response!

▣ **“O elders”** The King James has “old men.” This may, however, refer to the tribal leaders (BDB 278) known as elders. It is parallel to “all inhabitants of the land.” The meaning is, “everyone listen!”

▣ **“Tell your sons”** This IMPERATIVE (BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) is used to magnify the unique thing YHWH is about to do (i.e., bring locusts). There had been many locust invasions throughout Israel’s history, but this one was very severe and was symbolic of a devastating military invasion!

YHWH’s coming judgment was to be retold and retold by succeeding generations as

1. covenant violations on the part of God’s people
2. God’s mercy to restore those who repent
3. a type of God’s judgment on all unbelieving nations (like Obadiah)

The spiritual education of Israel’s children is mandated in Deuteronomy (cf. 4:9-10; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 31:13; 32:46; also note Exod. 10:2; 12:26; 13:8,14). This mandate is continued in later Judaism by a time of special training in the Torah (Genesis - Deuteronomy) and its interpretation (i.e., Talmud). For boys it was *bar mitzvah* at age 13 and for girls, *bat mitzvah* at age 12. This knowledge of God’s will becomes the basis of covenant rewards and punishments in the person’s life. Knowledge brings responsibility!

Faith runs through families (cf. Deut. 5:10; 7:9)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:4-7

**⁴What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten;
And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten;
And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.**

**⁵Awake, drunkards, and weep;
And wail, all you wine drinkers,
On account of the sweet wine
That is cut off from your mouth.**

**⁶For a nation has invaded my land,
Mighty and without number;
Its teeth are the teeth of a lion,
And it has the fangs of a lioness.**

**⁷It has made my vine a waste
And my fig tree splinters.
It has stripped them bare and cast *them* away;
Their branches have become white.**

1:4 “locusts” It must be understood that this plague of locusts is a direct result of the Covenant people rejecting their Covenant God (cf. Deut. 28:38). They are sent by YHWH! They are under His control!

1:5 “awake. . .weep. . .wail” The foolish people of the land are addressed in three IMPERATIVES (which symbolize a call to spiritual awakening):

1. “awake” - BDB 884, KB 1098, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE; related to drunkenness in Pro. 23:35
2. “weep” - BDB 113, KB 129, *Qal* IMPERATIVE; related to rebellion in Jer. 22:10
3. “howl” - BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1:11,13; used of destruction of Babylon, Isa. 13:6; of Moab, Jer. 48:20; of Egypt, Ezek. 30:2; of God’s people, Zech. 11:2 (cf. Hosea 7:14; Micah 1:8; Zeph. 1:11)

▣ **“drunkards. . .wine drinkers”** The prophetic word is not directed to alcoholics, but to God’s people, drunk on the wine of covenant rebellion. The only cure is radical detoxification (i.e., judgment, cf. 1:6).

▣ **“On account of the sweet wine”** Many have tried to make “sweet wine” (BDB 779) a non-alcoholic beverage, but this verse and Isa. 49:26 show that this refers to an alcoholic beverage. The Bible says that God gives wine as a gift to humans (cf. Gen. 27:28 [BDB 440]; Psalm 104:14-15[BDB 406]). Wine is not evil, but like all physical things, it can be abused! It is the drink of the eschaton (cf. 3:18; Amos 9:13).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM

- I. Biblical Terms
 - A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* - This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* - This is “new wine” (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* - This is obviously alcoholic beverages (“sweet wine” BDB 779, e.g., Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* - This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.” It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Pro. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* - the Greek equivalent of *yayin*
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) - the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) - wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

II. Biblical Usage

A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Judg. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Pro. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah- Gen. 9:21; Lot- Gen. 19:33,35; Samson- Judg. 16:19; Nabal- I Sam. 25:36; Uriah- II Sam. 11:13; Ammon- II Sam. 13:28; Elah- I Kin. 16:9; Benhadad- I Kin. 20:12; Rulers- Amos 6:6; and Ladies- Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (Priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Num. 6; and Rulers, Pro. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (*Ecclesiasticus* 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed.” (BB 58b).

C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter was accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).

5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine is used in eschatological settings (Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 11:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

III. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Cor. 8-10; Rom. 14).

B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God's gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.
- B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called "new wine" or "sweet wine."
- C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered "aged wine" and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good but had to be strained well before use.
- F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called "old wine" and had to be diluted with water.
- G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

V. Closing Statements

- A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation do not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total abstainers.
- B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible's position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/ denominational bias.
- C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom

or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.

- D. If we push total abstinence as God's will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

1:6 “For a nation has invaded my land” In 2:4-11 the locusts are described as the army of God. This is why they are used as a metaphor for an invading foreign army of divine judgment (cf. 2:4-11, i.e., Assyria and Babylon).

▣ **“invaded”** The literal phrase is “come up” (BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* PERFECT), which is used for a military invasion in Jdgs. 6:3 and I Kgs. 14:25.

They are described in several ways:

1. mighty
2. without number
3. lion's teeth
4. lioness' fangs

Numbers 1 and 2 are parallel, as are numbers 3 and 4 (“lions” and “locusts” were regularly compared in Mesopotamia; both symbolized armies).

1:7 “It has made my vine a waste, and my fig tree splinters” The prophet is speaking for YHWH, for these agriculture products were gifts from Him (cf. Hosea 2:8, 9). Covenant violations removed YHWH's blessing (i.e., “waste,” BDB 1031 I, cf. Deut. 28:37). Now they are totally taken away by the locusts (i.e., an army invasion).

▣ **“It has stripped them bare”** This is a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Qal* PERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 362, KB 359), which is a grammatical way of expressing intensification.

▣ **“Their branches have become white”** This is an agricultural allusion to the locusts destroying (by eating the green tips) the small branches of the trees. When the sun comes out it bleaches them white.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:8-12

⁸Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth

For the bridegroom of her youth.

⁹The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off

From the house of the LORD.

The priests mourn,

The ministers of the LORD.

¹⁰The field is ruined,

The land mourns;

For the grain is ruined,

The new wine dries up,

Fresh oil fails.

¹¹Be ashamed, O farmers,

Wail, O vinedressers,

For the wheat and the barley;

Because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

¹²The vine dries up

And the fig tree fails;

The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree,

All the trees of the field dry up.

Indeed, rejoicing dries up

From the sons of men.

1:8 “Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth” The VERBALS in this verse are all FEMININE SINGULAR (“wail,” BDB 46, KB 51, *Qal* IMPERATIVE and “gird,” BDB 291, KB 291, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE used of putting on sackcloth, cf. Isa. 15:3; 22:12; Jer. 4:8; 6:26; 49:3; Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 7:18; 27:31), which may imply that Jerusalem as a whole is being addressed. The cultural setting is a betrothal in Jewish society. Apparently, betrothal was seen as marriage although unconsummated (cf. Mary and Joseph for the binding aspect of betrothal). Here the bride wears a sign of mourning (i.e., sackcloth, BDB 974) instead of a wedding garment. The social life of the people will be totally disrupted (cf. v. 12, lines 5,6; Isa. 24:8-23).

1:9 “The grain offering and the libation are cut off

From the house of the LORD” This seems to refer to the daily offerings. A lamb was offered in the morning (the Continual) and in the evening and was accompanied by a meal offering, wet with oil, and a wine libation. Therefore, the normal functions of the Temple were being disrupted. This was a sign of covenant violations and invasion (cf. Deut. 28:49-53).

1:10 Israel’s agriculture was totally destroyed by the locusts (i.e., military invasion, cf. Isa. 16:10; 24:4,7).

▣ **“the land mourns”** The Prophets regularly use personification to heighten their metaphors:

1. Isaiah
 - a. “gates shall lament and mourn,” 3:26
 - b. “the earth mourns,” 24:4; 33:9
 - c. “the new wine mourns,” 24:7
2. Jeremiah
 - a. “earth mourns,” 4:28
 - b. “land mourns,” 12:4
3. Hosea - “land mourns,” 4:3

It is possible that “mourns” (BDB 5, KB 6, *Qal* PERFECT) can mean “dry up” (KB 7 II) from an Akkadian root. If so, it (the land) would parallel “the new wine,” both being dried up. The VERB “dried up” (BDB 386, KB 384, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used several times in this context.

1:11 “Be ashamed, O farmers,

Wail, O vinedressers” These are both IMPERATIVES. The first one may come from

1. “dry up,” BDB 386, KB 384, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. 1:10,12(thrice),17,20
2. “be ashamed,” BDB 101, KB 115, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. 2:26,27

The repeated use of “dry up” in this chapter causes one to think that the *waw* has been accidentally misplaced, but most English translations prefer “be ashamed.”

The second IMPERATIVE, “howl,” was used in v. 5 (same form).

▣ **“for the wheat and the barley”** Wheat (BDB 334) and barley (BDB 972) were the two major agricultural products in Palestine. The wheat was used for the bread of the wealthy and the barley for the bread of the poor.

1:12 Notice the different kinds of agricultural products from trees (or vines) mentioned as being destroyed:

1. grapes (BDB 172)
2. figs (BDB 1061)
3. pomegranates (BDB 941)
4. date palm (BDB 1071 I)
5. apple (or apricot, BDB 656 I)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:13-20

¹³**Gird yourselves with sackcloth**

And lament, O priests;

Wail, O ministers of the altar!

Come, spend the night in sackcloth

O ministers of my God,

For the grain offering and the drink offering

Are withheld from the house of your God.

¹⁴**Consecrate a fast,**

Proclaim a solemn assembly;

Gather the elders

And all the inhabitants of the land

To the house of the LORD your God,

And cry out to the LORD.

¹⁵**Alas for the day!**

For the day of the LORD is near,

And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

¹⁶**Has not food been cut off before our eyes,**

Gladness and joy from the house of our God?

¹⁷**The seeds shrivel under their clods;**

The storehouses are desolate,

The barns are torn down,

For the grain is dried up.

¹⁸How the beasts groan!

The herds of cattle wander aimlessly

Because there is no pasture for them;

Even the flocks of sheep suffer.

¹⁹To You, O LORD, I cry;

For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness

And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field.

²⁰Even the beasts of the field pant for You;

For the water brooks are dried up

And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

1:13 “O priests. . .O ministers of the altar. . .O ministers of my God” The fourth group addressed are the leaders of the cultus. They are encouraged to repent and turn to God because the removal of agricultural blessings was related to Israel’s spiritual problems.

▣ Notice the IMPERATIVES related to repentance:

1. “gird” (i.e., with sackcloth) - BDB 291, KB 291, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “lament” - BDB 704, KB 763, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “wail” - this is a repeat from vv. 5 and 11!

Also in this same verse are two more IMPERATIVES, which are a call to spend the night in mourning in the temple.

1. “come” - BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “spend the night in sackcloth” - BDB 533, KB 529, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Repentance was to be initiated by the priests themselves. There was nothing to offer God! He had taken everything Himself!

1:14 “Consecrate a fast,

Proclaim a solemn assembly;

Gather the elders” The priest must (three IMPERATIVES) call the people to a holy convocation of repentance:

1. “consecrate a fast,” BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. 2:15; Josh. 7:13
2. “proclaim a solemn assembly,” BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 2:15; I Kgs. 21:9,12; Jer. 36:9; Jonah 3:5
3. “gather the elders” (i.e. all the inhabitants of the land), BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 2
4. “cry out to the LORD, BDB 277, KB 277, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Jdgs. 3:9,15; 6:6,7; 10:10; I Sam. 7:8,9; 12:8,10; 15:11; II Chr. 20:9; Ps. 107:13,19

Joel is calling on Israel to do what she had done again and again in the past: call out to her God. He will forgive, deliver, and restore (cf. 2:12-14). Sin is not a permanent barrier, but stubborn unbelief and

intransigence is! God is waiting to act, but His people must act first in repentance and contrition. Biblical faith is a relationship. It involves initial and continuing

1. repentance
2. faith
3. obedience
4. perseverance!!

1:15 “Alas for the day” This INTERJECTION (BDB 13), usually translated “alas,” is found

1. by itself, Jdgs. 11:35; II Kgs. 3:10; 6:5,15
2. connected to “Adon YHWH,” Josh. 7:7; Jdgs. 6:22; Jer. 1:6; 4:10; 14:13; 32:17; Ezek. 4:14; 9:8; 11:13; 21:5
3. in Joel uniquely to “for the day,” which denotes “the day of YHWH,” which can be for blessing or judgment. The use of “also” clearly shows here it relates unexpectedly to God’s judgment of His own people!
4. both Isaiah (i.e. Isa. 13:6,9) and Ezekiel (i.e. Ezek. 7:19; 13:5; 30:2) use the phrase, “the day of the LORD,” but without “Alas” (cf. Joel 2:1,11,31; 3:14)

▣ **“For the day of the LORD is near”** This is the eschatological phrase which is so common in the prophets (cf. Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; 22:5; 34:8; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 7:10; 13:5; 30:3; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:7, 14-18; Obad. 15; and Zech. 14:1). It denotes God’s breaking into His world for judgment (i.e., temporarily and eschatologically). This allusion is found in Ezek. 30:2, 3 and Isa. 13:6, where it is addressed to Babylon and she is told to wail for the coming of this day! It is usually addressed to foreigners, but the shocking account here and in Jer. 30:7 is that it is addressed to God’s people. God was not only absent from them, but actively against them!

The concept of a day on which humans meet God face to face and give an account of their actions (i.e., eschatological judgment) has been affected by progressive revelation. In the OT God’s visitation could be either

1. temporal
2. at the end (eschatological)

Also it could be for blessing as well as judgment. In the NT the focus of God’s judgment shifts from human performance of the covenant to personal faith (i.e., a new heart, a new mind, a new spirit, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) which issues in covenant obedience. The goal is still a people who reflect YHWH’s character so that a world that does not know YHWH can come to know Him. Both OT and NT involve faith and repentance, but the focus has shifted from human performance to Messianic performance. Gratitude, not merit, motivates obedience! A national covenant has been universalized to an offer to all the sons and daughters of Adam! The first step is belief, not parentage (i.e., family, tribe). The national covenant of Moses has transitioned to the international covenant of the gospel!

Judgment is still an eschatological event, but the basis of that judgment has changed (i.e., Rom. 3:18-31)! And the focus is now on unbelievers vs. believers. There will still be an evaluation and reward ceremony (i.e., II Cor. 5:10).

▣ **“And it will come as destruction from the Almighty”** The term “Almighty” is the term *Shaddai* (BDB 994, first found in Gen. 17:1, but very common in Job; only twice in Psalms). The etymology of this term

is uncertain, but from the Septuagint and the Vulgate tradition it seems to mean “the Omnipotent One” or “the Almighty.” See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Obad. v. 1.

There is a play on the word “destruction” and the word “Almighty.” In Hebrew the two words are *Shod* and *Shaddai* (cf. David Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, p. 50).

1:16 “joy” This term (BDB 162 I) is often associated with worship at the central shrine (cf. Deut. 12:6,7; Ps. 43:4). YHWH has taken away His gift of fertility and, therefore, the sacrifices and offerings have ceased (cf. vv. 9,13). The Israelites came to God’s temple, but not to rejoice but to cry out for forgiveness and mercy because of their covenant rebellion (cf. vv. 13-14,19-20).

1:17 There are four words in this verse that occur only here in the entire OT. This has made translation very difficult (cf. *Twenty-six Translations of the Holy Bible*, published by AMG, for a variety of translations).

1. “seeds,” BDB 825, possibly stored seeds for the next planting
2. “shrivel,” BDB 721, KB 783, *Qal* PERFECT
3. “clods” (lit. “shovels”), BDB 175
4. “barns,” BDB 158

There is an interesting alternate understanding of the first two rare words. For many years the Septuagint’s translation, “the heifers have leaped in their mangers,” sounded so different from the MT until a similar translation of this verse was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, “the heifers decay in *their mangers*.”

The details of many poetic texts are uncertain, but the larger context, cognate languages, ancient versions, and parallel passages from the Bible help moderns understand the main truths of the ancient inspired text. Inerrancy at the word level is problematic, but at the truth level is possible.

Verses 17-18 have five *Niphal* stem VERBS. YHWH is bringing the consequences of covenant disobedience! We reap what we sow (in this case, there is nothing to reap).

1:18 “How the beasts groan” All life is affected by human sin (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 8:18-25). This includes animal and plant life. Verse 18 implies that a drought preceded the locust plague (cf. v. 20; Deut. 28:22). In history these two often occur together.



NASB, TEV “flocks of sheep suffer”

NKJV “flocks of sheep suffer *your* punishment”

NRSV “flocks of sheep are dazed”

NJB “flocks of sheep bear punishment too”

The VERB’s (BDB 79, KB 95, *Niphal* PERFECT) basic meaning is “bear guilt” or “bear iniquity.” It is used predominantly in the *Qal* stem and in the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

It appears in the *Niphal* stem only twice (here and Ps. 5:10), but the meaning is the same. It is possible that the land and flocks bear the guilt of their human (i.e., Israelite) inhabitants. This is reflected in Genesis 3 and Rom. 8:18-25 (“the curse,” cf. Rev. 22:3). This truth is reflected in the “cursing and blessing” section of Deuteronomy 27-29. How we live affects our land!

1:19-20 This is a lament prayer formula that Joel gives to the priests to be prayed, along with the people, possibly at the called fast of vv. 13-14. YHWH is willing to forgive and restore if His people are responsive to Him (faith) and obedient (covenant).

1:19 “fire has devoured the pastures” This same allusion to fire is used in 2:5. It is either a metaphor of destruction or it refers to the redness on the underside of the wings of the locust. As they move en masse it looks like a red dawn or a coming fire.

1:20 “Even the beasts of the field pant for Thee” See Ps. 42:1 where the word “pant” means “great desire” (BDB 788, KB 881, *Qal* IMPERFECT). Again Joel uses personification to heighten the picture of devastation! Humans “cry out” (v. 19), domestic beasts “groan” (v. 18), and beasts of the field “pant” (v. 20)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the date of Joel?
2. Are the locusts literal, symbolic or eschatological and why?
3. What is the theological reason for the locust invasion?
4. Explain and define the phrase “the day of the LORD” as it used in the OT and in the NT.

JOEL 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB [follows MT]
The Terrible Visitation	The Day of the LORD	The Locust Plague (1:1-2:27)	The Locusts as a Warning of the Day of the LORD	The Plague of Locusts (1:1-2:27)
2:1-17	2:1-11 (1-2)	2:1-11 (1-2)	2:1-11 (1-2)	A Warning About the Day of Yahweh 2:1-2 (1) (2)
	(3-5)	(3)	(3-9)	The Invasion of Locusts 2:3-9 (3-5)
	(6-9)	(4-5) (6-9)		(6-9)
	(10-11)	(10-11)	(10-11)	A Vision of the Day of Yahweh 2:10-11
	A Call to Repentance		A Call to Repentance	A Call to Repentance
	2:12-17 (12-14)	2:12-17 (12-14)	2:12-17 (12-13a) (13b-14)	2:12-17 (12-14)
	(15-17)	(15-16) (17)	(15-17)	(15-17)
Deliverance Promised	The Land Refreshed		God Restores Fertility to the Land	Yahweh's Answer
2:18-20	2:18-27 (18-19)	2:18-27 (18-19)	2:18-27 (18-20)	2:18-32[3:5]
	(20)	(20)		The Plague Stops 2:19-20
2:21-27	(21-24)	(21-22)	(21-22)	A Vision of Plenty 2:21-27 (21-22)
		(23-24)	(23-27)	(23-24)
	(25-27)	(25)		(25)
		(26-27)		(26)
				(27)
				The New Age and the Day of Yahweh [3:1-4:21]

The Promise of the Spirit	God's Spirit Poured Out	The Day of the LORD (2:28-3:21)	The Day of the LORD	The Outpouring of the Spirit
2:28-32	2:28-32 (28-29)	(28-29)	2:28-32 (28-29)	2:28-32 [3:1-5] (28-29)
The Days of the LORD				
(30-32)	(30-32)	(30-32)	(30-32)	(2:30-32) [3:4-5]

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There is disagreement among scholars on how to relate the locust plague of chapter 1 with the invading army of chapter 2. For me, they are parallel. Joel is using locusts as a military metaphor of YHWH's invading army (literal, as foreign invaders, or figurative, as locusts).
- B. This chapter has powerful NT implication because of Peter's use of 2:28-32 in his Pentecost sermon of Acts 2.
- C. There are several issues that cause difficulty for understanding this text:
 1. how OT texts are used by NT writers
 2. the nature of apocalyptic language
 3. the Hebrew speakers' use of hyperbole and paradox
- D. Several books have helped me in these areas. I highly recommend them to you:
 1. in the area of proper hermeneutics:
 - a. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*

- b. D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*
2. in the area of Hebrew imagery, G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, esp. pp. 107-117
3. in the area of apocalyptic and prophetic language, D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*
4. in the area of utilizing contemporary literature:
 - a. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*
 - b. John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature In Its Cultural Context*
5. in the area of apostolic usage of OT texts, Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-17

¹Blow a trumpet in Zion,

And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
 Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
 For the day of the LORD is coming;
 Surely it is near,

²A day of darkness and gloom,
 A day of clouds and thick darkness.
 As the dawn is spread over the mountains,
 So there is a great and mighty people;
 There has never been *anything* like it,
 Nor will there be again after it
 To the years of many generations.

³A fire consumes before them
 And behind them a flame burns.
 The land is like the garden of Eden before them
 But a desolate wilderness behind them,
 And nothing at all escapes them.

⁴Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;
 And like war horses, so they run.

⁵With a noise as of chariots
 They leap on the tops of the mountains,
 Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble,
 Like a mighty people arranged for battle.

⁶Before them the people are in anguish;
 All faces turn pale.

⁷They run like mighty men,

They climb the wall like soldiers;
And they each march in line,
Nor do they deviate from their paths.

⁸They do not crowd each other,
They march everyone in his path;
When they burst through the defenses,
They do not break ranks.

⁹They rush on the city,
They run on the wall;
They climb into the houses,
They enter through the windows like a thief.

¹⁰Before them the earth quakes,
The heavens tremble,
The sun and the moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.

¹¹The LORD utters His voice before His army;
Surely His camp is very great,
For strong is he who carries out His word.
The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome,
And who can endure it?

¹²"Yet even now," declares the LORD,
"Return to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting, weeping and mourning;

¹³And rend your heart and not your garments."
Now return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness
And relenting of evil.

¹⁴Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent
And leave a blessing behind Him,
Even a grain offering and a drink offering
For the LORD your God?

¹⁵Blow a trumpet in Zion,
Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,

¹⁶Gather the people, sanctify the congregation,
Assemble the elders,
Gather the children and the nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom come out of his room
And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.

¹⁷Let the priests, the LORD's ministers,
 Weep between the porch and the altar,
 And let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD,
 And do not make Your inheritance a reproach,
 A byword among the nations.
 Why should they among the peoples say,
 'Where is their God?'"

2:1 “Blow” The prophet is announcing YHWH’s message that the day of the Lord is coming. This is done by the parallel IMPERATIVES.

1. “blow,” BDB 1075, KB 1785, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, meaning
 - a. “blow a trumpet” or
 - b. “clap your hands”
2. “sound an alarm,” BDB 929, KB 1206, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, which denotes a loud shout
 - a. for battle (i.e., Josh. 6:10,20; Jdgs. 7:21; I Sam. 17:52; Isa. 42:13)
 - b. for royalty (i.e., I Sam. 10:24; Zech. 9:9)
 - c. shout of YHWH (i.e., 2:11)

This, too, becomes a pattern for NT teaching about eschatological events (i.e., I Thess. 4:16). Both a trumpet and a shout were probably (1) part of an annual coronation service in Jerusalem of YHWH as King (cf. Ps. 47:5; 98:6; Isa. 18:3) or (2) a stylized warning (cf. Isa. 58:1; Jer. 4:5; 6:1; 51:27; Ezek. 33:3-6; Amos 2:2).

Many of the allusions that Joel uses for the invading locusts (i.e., army) became standard apocalyptic symbols of the end-time:

- a. blow the trumpet
- b. day of darkness (cf. 2:30-31)
- c. earthquakes/trembles
- d. fire
- e. thunder/YHWH’s voice
- f. day of the Lord is awesome/dreadful

▣ **“the trumpet”** This is the *sophar* (BDB 1051, cf. 2:1,15). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL

There are four words in Hebrew in association with horns/trumpets:

1. “the ram’s horn” (BDB 901) - turned into an instrument of sound, cf. Josh. 6:5. This same word is used for the ram caught by his horns which Abraham will substitute for Isaac in Gen. 22:13.

2. “trumpet” (BDB 1051) - from an Assyrian term for wild sheep (ibex). This is the horn that was used in Exod 19:16,19 at Mt. Sinai/Horeb. Options #1 and #2 are parallel in Josh. 6:5. It was used to communicate times to worship and time to fight (i.e., Jericho was both, cf. 6:4).
3. “ram’s horn” (BDB 385) - from Phoenician word for ram (cf. 6:4,6,8,13). It also is used in the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:13,28,40,50,52,54; 27:17,18,23,24).

The first three seem interchangeable, with no distinction intended. The Mishnah (RH 3.2) allowed most animal horns—sheep, goat, or antelope, but not from a cow.

4. “trumpets” (BDB 348) - possibly from the VERB “stretch out,” implying a straight bone (not curved, as the animal horns). These were made of silver (after the shape and form of Egypt). These are used:
 - a. in worship rites (cf. Num. 10:2,8,10)
 - b. for military purposes (cf. Num. 10:9; 31:6; Hosea 5:8; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:35,41)
 - c. for royal purposes (cf. II Kgs. 11:14)

One of these metal horns is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome; Josephus also describes them in *Antiq.* 3.12.6.

▣ **“My holy mountain”** This could refer to the events on Mount Sinai at the inauguration of the covenant, but in context it seems to refer to Mount Moriah (cf. Genesis 22), on which Solomon’s temple was later built. “Zion” (BDB 851) is parallel to “My holy mountain.” Zion, although one of six hills in Jerusalem, became the general name for the whole city.

▣ **“the day of the LORD”** This seems to refer to God’s coming in temporal judgment or blessing (cf. 1:15). The phrase is used repeatedly in chapter 2 and may reflect Amos 5:18-20. However, it is also used as historical foreshadowing of the ultimate judgment of the end-time (cf. Matt. 7:22; 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:36; Acts 17:31; I Thess 5:4; Heb. 10:25; II Pet. 2:9; 3:7; I John 4:17; Jude 6).

The concept of judgment has developed through progressive revelation. In the OT YHWH’s judgment fell on

1. sinful non-covenant people (“the nations”)
2. rebellious and sinful covenant people (“Israel”)

However, in the NT this changes somewhat. Judgment comes to unbelievers (Jew and Gentile). Believers will not experience the wrath of God (or Christ, cf. Rom. 2:16), but they will experience the judgment seat of Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10,12; Eph. 6:8). Scripture does not tell us about this judgment. Believers are cleansed from all sin (cf. Heb. 9:14; I John 1:7), so this must be an evaluation for rewards!

In the OT YHWH’s coming visitation to His people could be for

1. blessing (i.e., His presence, His abundance)
2. judgment

The NT has turned this day into a day of

1. resurrection and reunion for believers
2. eternal lostness for unbelievers

In the Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matthew 25) and the White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20) there is a marked distinction between the saved (believers) and lost (unbelievers). The sin of the believers has been

dealt with by Christ's death and resurrection! This is not to imply that believers will not give an accounting of the stewardship of the gospel in their lives, but that the OT judgment on covenant people has been removed in Christ (cf. Galatians 3; Romans 5-8). Human non-performance has been trumped by divine performance (cf. Rom. 3:18-31; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38)!

However, at this point in the theological discussion the issue of apostasy must be dealt with. See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DOES ANY BELIEVER EVER FALL AWAY (i.e. APOSTASY)?

The theology question is were these ever believers? Often our theological or denominational traditions answer this question without reference to specific Bible texts (except the proof-text method of quoting a verse out of context to supposedly prove one's bias).

There are persons in the Bible who are involved in the people of God and something happens.

I. Old Testament

- A. Korah, Num. 16
- B. Eli's sons, I Sam. 2, 4
- C. Saul, I Sam. 11-31
- D. False prophets (examples)
 - 1. Deut. 13:1-5 18:19-22
 - 2. Jeremiah 28
 - 3. Ezekiel 13:1-7
- E. False prophetesses
 - 1. Ezekiel 13:17
 - 2. Nehemiah 6:14
- F. Evil leaders of Israel (examples)
 - 1. Jeremiah 5:30-31; 8:1-2; 23:1-4
 - 2. Ezekiel 22:23-31
 - 3. Micah 3:5-12

II. New Testament

- A. Apparent faith
 - 1. Judas, John 17:12
 - 2. Simon Magus, Acts 8
 - 3. Those spoken of in Matt. 7:21-23
 - 4. Those spoken of in Matt. 13
 - 5. Alexander and Hymenaeus, I Tim. 1:19-20
 - 6. Hymenaeus and Philetus, II Tim. 2:16-18
 - 7. Demas, II Tim. 4:10
 - 8. False teachers, II Peter 2:19-20; Jude 12-19
 - 9. Antichrists, I John 2:18-19

B. Fruitless faith

1. Matthew 7
2. I Corinthians 3:10-15
3. II Peter 1:8-11

We rarely think about these texts because our systematic theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, etc). dictates the mandated response. Please do not pre-judge me because I bring up this subject. My concern is proper hermeneutical procedure. We must let the Bible speak to us and not try to mold it into a preset theology. This is often painful and shocking because much of our theology is denominational, cultural or relational (parent, friend, pastor), not biblical. Some who appear to be in the People of God turn out to not be in the People of God (e.g. Rom. 9:6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

The biblical doctrines related to the Christian life are difficult to explain because they are presented in typically eastern dialectical pairs. These pairs seem contradictory, yet both are biblical. Western Christians have tended to choose one truth and ignore or depreciate the opposite truth. Let me illustrate.

1. Is salvation an initial decision to trust Christ or a lifetime commitment to discipleship?
2. Is salvation an election by means of grace from a sovereign God or mankind's believing and repentant response to a divine offer?
3. Is salvation, once received, impossible to lose, or is there a need for continual diligence?

The issue of perseverance has been contentious throughout church history. The problem begins with apparently conflicting passages of the NT

1. texts on assurance
 - a. statements of Jesus (John 6:37; 10:28-29)
 - b. statements of Paul (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13; 2:5,8-9; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 1:12; 4:18)
 - c. statements of Peter (I Pet. 1:4-5)
2. texts on the need for perseverance
 - a. statements of Jesus (Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,24-30; 24:13; Mark 13:13; John 8:31; 15:4-10; Rev. 2:7,17,20; 3:5,12,21)
 - b. statements of Paul (Rom. 11:22; I Cor. 15:2; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:6; 3:4; 5:4; 6:9; Phil. 2:12; 3:18-20; Col. 1:23)
 - c. statements of the author of Hebrews (2:1; 3:6,14; 4:14; 6:11)
 - d. statements of John (I John 2:6; II John 9)
 - e. statement of the Father (Rev. 21:7)

Biblical salvation issues from the love, mercy, and grace of a sovereign Triune God. No human can be saved without the initiation of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). Deity comes first and sets the agenda, but demands that humans respond in faith and repentance, both initially and continually. God works with mankind in a covenant relationship. There are privileges and responsibilities!

Salvation is offered to all humans. Jesus' death dealt with the fallen creation's sin problem. God has provided a way and wants all those made in His image to respond to His love and provision in Jesus.

If you would like to read more on this subject from a non-Calvinistic perspective, see

1. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth*, Eerdmans, 1981 (pp. 348-365)
2. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, Bethany Fellowship, 1969
3. Robert Shank, *Life in the Son*, Westcott, 1961

The Bible addresses two different problems in this area: (1) taking assurance as a license to live fruitless, selfish lives and (2) encouraging those who struggle with ministry and personal sin. The problem is that the wrong groups are taking the wrong message and building theological systems on limited biblical passages. Some Christians desperately need the message of assurance, while others need the stern warnings! Which group are you in?

▣ **“Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble”** This VERB (BDB 919, KB 1182) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. This word can denote anger or fear. In this context, it is fear (e.g., Exod. 15:14; Isa. 32:11; Hab. 3:7).

▣ **“it is near”** Here is another OT theme (cf. 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; cf. Deut. 32:35; Isa. 13:6,22; Ezek. 7:7-8; Obad. v. 15), which becomes part of NT eschatological language (cf. Matt. 24:33; Mark 13:28-29; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20).

There is a purposeful ambiguity. OT prophecy challenged the people who heard/read the prophet to repent or else the predicted outcome would occur. It often took a current event (here a locust plague) and used it as an end-time event! Prophecy was primarily meant to change the generation that heard the message, not predict future events (i.e., Jonah).

The “nearness” of YHWH’s personal presence was meant to rally the people to righteous living. Judgment was the last option. Nearness may denote certainty as much as time! A helpful book on how to interpret biblical prophecy and apocalyptic language is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*.

2:2 “A day of darkness and gloom” From chapter 1 we learn that Joel is using a locust plague as a metaphor for God’s judgment (cf. the darkness of Exod. 10:21-23; Deut. 28:29; Ps. 105:28). Several texts specifically speak of YHWH as controlling darkness for His purposes (cf. Gen. 1:2,4,5,18; Jer. 13:16; Amos 4:13; 5:8). This is an allusion to a swarm of locusts that covers the sun by day and the moon and stars by night!

▣ **“As the dawn is spread over the mountains”** Many who have experienced the locust plagues of Palestine relate that the redness of the underside of the of the insect’s wings looks like the morning sun (cf. NIV).

▣ **“a great and mighty people”** This is an allusion to YHWH’s army (cf. vv. 5,7-9,11,25). Locusts are metaphorical for an invading army (cf. 2:5).

▣ **“There has never been anything like it”** This is an allusion to 1:2a,b.

2:3 “A fire consumes before them” This refers to 1:19-20.

▣ **“The land is like a garden of Eden before them”** This emphasizes that the fertility of the land (metaphorically–Eden) will now be destroyed by these insects. The opposite use of this metaphor can be seen in Isa. 51:3 and Ezek. 36:35.

2:4 “Their appearance is like the appearance of horses” The head of the locust resembles the head of a horse (cf. Job 39:20, or lion). The basic metaphor of v. 4 is one of speed.

2:5 “With the noise as of chariots” As v. 4 speaks of speed, v. 5 describes the chewing sound of the locusts’ mandibles (cf. Rev. 9:9), which sound like chariot wheels on the streets (as does the crackling of a fire in v. 5, line 3. See Special Topic at Obad. v. 8).

2:6

NASB “all faces turn pale”

NKJV “all faces drained of color”

NRSV “all faces grow pale”

TEB “every face turns pale”

NJb “every face grows pale”

This term (BDB 802, KB 909) occurs only twice in the OT (here and at Nahum 2:10). The key term can mean several different things:

1. beauty
2. glory/radiance
3. redness
4. blackness (LXX, KJV)
5. boiling

When all is said and done in lexical research, context is the deciding factor. The first line of v. 6 denotes pain or anguish (also Nah. 2:10), so this term must in some way parallel this thought:

1. face grows red with emotion (fear or anticipation)
2. face grows pale (i.e., no color) with fear

2:7-9 Here the locusts are likened to an army. The advance of the locust horde is described in a series of IMPERFECT VERBS:

1. they run, v. 7, BDB 930, KB 1207, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. they climb, v. 7, BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. they march, v. 7, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. they do not deviate, v. 7. The Hebrew word is uncertain in this context and stem
 - a. BDB 716, “take a pledge” (*Piel*), cf. Deut. 24:10
 - b. KB 778 II (*Piel*), “lose the way” (Arabic and Akkadian roots)
 - c. Septuagint, Peshitta, Vulgate, “deviate”
5. they do not crowd, v. 8, BDB 191, KB 219, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Jdgs. 2:18
6. they march, v. 8, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT
7. they burst through, v. 8, BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERFECT
8. they do not break ranks, v. 8, BDB 130, KB 147, *Qal* IMPERFECT

All of these actions describe insects as if they were a disciplined army moving forward (vv. 7-8) over/through every obstacle (v. 9).

2:10 “Before them the earth quakes” With thousands insects covering the ground, the earth seemed to move.

▣ **“The sun and the moon grow dark”** This may refer to the swarms of insects that cover the sky night and day (cf. Isa. 13:10, 13; Ezek. 32:7, 8).

2:11 “For strong is He who carries out His word” This is the foundational truth that believers trust in the veracity of God’s promises and warnings (cf. Job 23:11; Ps. 33:11; Isa. 14:24; 25:1; 40:8; 45:23; 46:10-11; 55:11; Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33; I Pet. 1:25). The hope of believers is in (1) the unchanging, merciful character of God; (2) the trustworthiness of His promises; (3) the finished work of the Messiah; and (4) the drawing/wooing of the Holy Spirit.

▣

NASB “very awesome”
NKJV, NJB “very terrible”
NRSV “terrible indeed”
TEV “terrible”

This is a *Niphal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 431, KB 432), which is used in several senses in the OT:

1. to describe Israel’s wilderness wandering experience, Deut. 1:19; 8:15
2. to describe YHWH’s presence and help during this period, Deut. 10:21; II Sam. 7:23; I Chr. 17:21; Ps. 106:22; Isa. 64:3
3. to describe YHWH’s redemptive acts in Israel’s liturgy, Ps. 65:5; 66:3,5; 145:6
4. to describe YHWH’s eschatological intervention into history (i.e., the day of the LORD), Joel 2:11,31; Mal. 4:5
5. to describe YHWH Himself, Exod. 15:11; Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Ps. 68:35; 89:7; Dan. 9:4 (describe His name, Deut. 28:58; Ps. 99:3; 111:9)

▣ **“who can endure it”** This VERB (BDB 465, KB 463, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) basically means to “seize,” or “lay hold of.” Here it denotes the mental and physical fear that the coming of the Lord brings (cf. v. 10)! In this context it refers to YHWH and His end-time army of invasion. See Ezek. 22:14.

2:12 “Return to Me with all your heart” This verse emphasizes the purpose of God in temporal judgment (cf. Deut. 4:29-31). The term “turn” or “repent” (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE [twice in this verse]) in Hebrew primarily refers to a change of action.

The specific actions mentioned are

1. fasting, BDB 847. Fasting was not a common religious observance in the OT, except for Leviticus 16, the annual fast day (i.e., Day of Atonement). Communal fasting was done at crisis events (cf. I Sam. 7:6; II Chr. 20:3; Ezra 8:21; Neh. 9:1; Esther 4:16; Jer. 36:6,9; Jonah 3:5).
2. weeping, BDB 113, as a symbol of repentance, cf. Isa. 22:12; Jer. 3:21; 31:9
3. mourning, BDB 704, as a symbol of contrition, cf. Isa. 22:12; Zech. 12:11

These acts represent a whole-hearted trust in and love for God (i.e., Gen. 15:6; Deut. 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 30:6), but to this internal aspect is an accompanying outward life of faith and obedience (i.e., Deut. 6:6-9; 10:13; 26:16; 30:2,10) because of YHWH's character (cf. Deut. 6:10-15; 10:12-22). He wants the world to know Him through His covenant people. Therefore, His people must repent (cf. Jer. 3:22-4:2, turn from and turn to) and turn from evil (i.e., Isa. 1:16-20; 55:6-8; Ezekiel 18; Amos 5:14-15). He can easily be found (i.e., Jer. 24:7; 29:13). God's people (OT and NT) are meant to be a kingdom of priests to bring the world to YHWH (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

It is ironic that the God of judgment is also the only hope of restoration. He devastated the Promised Land in judgment (i.e. locusts, army), but will renew it in abundance if His people will repent and turn to Him. It must be remembered that physical creation is only the stage (i.e., opportunity) for God and mankind to interact! The physical is never the focus!! See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This concept is crucial, but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, a "set" theological definition is usually imposed on several Hebrew (and Greek) words which do not specifically imply this "set" definition. It must be remembered that NT authors (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers using Koine Greek terms, so the place to start is the Hebrew terms themselves, of which there are primarily two.

1. *nhm* (BDB 636, KB 688)
2. *swb* (BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant "to draw a deep breath," is used in several senses.

- a. "rest" or "comfort" (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:12; often used in names, cf. II Kgs. 15:14; I Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)
- b. "grieved" (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)
- c. "changed mind" (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)
- d. "compassion" (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses this term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to "repent" (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error; it is rather a literary way of showing God's compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek.24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantic field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means "to turn" (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are "repentance" and "faith" (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one's sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to turning from sin and turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos 4:6-11, "you have not returned to Me" [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, "seek Me. . .seek the Lord. . .seek good and not evil").

The first great example of the power of repentance is David's sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Sam. 12; Ps. 32, 51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. II Chr. 33:12-13).

These terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

2:13 “rend your heart and not your garments” The VERB (BDB 902, KB 1146, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) refers to an OT mourning rite of tearing one's garment at the neck. God wants our whole heart, not simply ritual or legalistic action (cf. Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; II Kgs. 19:1). God always looks at the motive first!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb*. It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Cor. 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual life (i.e., moral)
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind's spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
6. the unique place of the Spirit's activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms
 - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, “God was grieved to His heart” (also notice Hosea 11:8-9)
 - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, “with all your heart and all your soul”
 - c. Deut. 10:16, “uncircumcized heart” and Rom. 2:29
 - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, “a new heart”
 - e. Ezek. 36:26, “a new heart” vs. “a heart of stone”

▣ **“He is gracious and compassionate”** This is a description of God which is based on Exod. 34:6-7 and repeated in Ps. 103:8 and Neh. 9:17-21. Verse 13 encompasses five characteristics of the Creator, Redeemer, Covenant-making God:

1. gracious, BDB 337. This ADJECTIVE is used only of YHWH, cf. Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4; 116:5; 145:8; II Chr. 30:9; Neh. 9:17,31; Jonah 4:2
2. compassionate, BDB 933. This ADJECTIVE is often used of YHWH, cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; II Chr. 30:9; Neh. 9:17,31; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8; Jonah 4:2
3. slow to anger, CONSTRUCT (BDB 74 and 60 I). Anger is not characteristic of YHWH, cf. Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Pro. 14:20; 15:18; 16:32; Jonah 4:2; Nah. 1:3; James 1:19
4. abounding in lovingkindness, CONSTRUCT (BDB 912 I and 338). Like the others, this is first used in Exod. 34:6, cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:5; 103:8; Jonah 4:2
5. relenting of evil, BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE and BDB 948. This means YHWH is willing to forgive and not bring the judgment He has foreseen, cf. Jer. 42:10; Amos 7:3,6.

See Special Topics below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL’S GOD

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Compassionate (BDB 933) | - | Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 2. Gracious (BDB 337) | - | Exod. 34:6; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 3. Slow to anger (BDB74 CONSTRUCT BDB 60) | - | Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 4. Abounding in steadfast love - (BDB 912 I CONSTRUCT BDB 338) | - | Exod. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 5. Faithful (BDB 54) | - | Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15 |
| 6. Abundant forgiveness (BDB 699) | - | Neh. 9:17 |
| 7. Did not forsake them (BDB 736 I) | - | Neh. 9:17,31 |
| 8. Repents of evil (BDB 636, KB 688, <i>Niphal</i> PARTICIPLE + BDB 948) | - | Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2 |
| 9. The great God (BDB 42, 152) | - | Neh. 1:5; 9:32 |
| 10. Great and terrible (BDB 152, 431) | - | Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32 |
| 11. Keeps covenant (BDB 1036, 136) | - | Neh. 1:5; 9:32 |
| 12. Steadfast love (BDB 338) | - | Neh. 1:5; 9:32 |

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339).

- A. Used in connection with human beings

1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., I Sam. 20:14; II Chr. 24:22)
 2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
 3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
 4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)
- B. Used in connection with God
1. covenant loyalty and love
 - a. “in redemption from enemies and troubles” (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 27:28; 9:9)
 - b. “in preservation of life from death” (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)
 - c. “in quickening of spiritual life” (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,150)
 - d. “in redemption from sin” (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:3)
 - e. “in keeping the covenants” (e.g., II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)
 3. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
 3. kindness of God
 - a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
 - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
 - c. “everlasting” (e.g., I Chr. 16:34,41; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
 4. deeds of kindness (e.g., II Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

2:14 YHWH’s visitation is certain. It can bring blessing, judgment, or as here, possibly both. The judgments of God (except for the last one) are meant to bring repentance and recommitment to the covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29; II Sam. 12:22).

▣ **“Who knows whether”** See II Kgs. 19:4 and Amos 5:15, which use “perhaps.” Humans do not always understand God or His acts (cf. Isa. 55:8-11).

▣ **“turn and relent”** These two VERBS (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT and BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PERFECT) are often used of humans repeating and changing their actions. Does God “repent”?

God is often spoken of in the Bible as being sorry or repenting (cf. Gen. 6:6-7; Exod. 32:14; I Sam. 15:11; II Sam. 24:10; Jer. 18:7,8; 26:13,19; Jonah 3:10). However, other passages assert that God never repents or changes His mind (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Jer. 4:28; Ps. 132:11). This is the tension that always occurs when we use human terms to describe God. God is not a man, but the only words we have to describe Him and His feelings are human terms. It must be asserted that God is not fickle! He is steadfast and longsuffering in His redemptive purpose for humanity, but mankind’s response in repentance of sin often determines God’s actions in a particular situation (cf. II Sam. 24:10,16; Ps. 106:45; Jonah).

Theologically it is God who changes, not mankind. God chooses to work with sinful humanity. His goal is the same—a righteous people who reflect His character. This will only be accomplished by a new heart, a new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-38). God chooses grace over judgment!

▣ **“the LORD your God”** This is covenant language. YHWH has reestablished His rightful place among His people.

2:15-17 As the different groups of society were called on to gather for a holy convocation in 1:13-14,19-20, so too, here in chapter 2, even the women (brides) and children (also infants) were to attend.

The commands of chapter 1 are repeated (there is an intentional parallel between chapters 1 and 2).

- v. 15
 - 1. blow a trumpet, BDB 1075, KB 1788, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 2:1
 - 2. consecrate a fast, BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1:14
 - 3. proclaim a solemn assembly, BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1:14
- v. 16
 - 1. gather the people, BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1:14
 - 2. “sanctify the congregation,” BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1:14
 - 3. “assemble the elders,” BDB 867, KB 1062, a synonym of #1
 - 4. gather - different group, but same VERB as #1, cf. 1:14
 - 5. “let the bridegroom come out,” BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a JUSSIVE sense

Verse 17 is similar to chapter 1 in its call to repentance and prayer:

- v. 17
 - 1. “weep,” BDB 113, KB 129, *Qal* IMPERFECT, used in a JUSSIVE sense, similar to 1:13
 - 2. “say,” BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT, used in a JUSSIVE sense, similar to the prayer of 1:19-20
 - 3. “spare Thy people,” BDB 299, KB 298, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, a new element, cf. Neh. 13:22
 - 4. “do not make thine inheritance a reproach,” BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Isa. 37:20

2:15 “Blow a trumpet in Zion” This is the exact phrase used in v. 1 in the sense of preparing for battle, but here it is used in a religious sense for assembling for a holy convocation (i.e., time of prayer and repentance).

The same trumpet can be used as a

- 1. warning for battle (i.e., Jer. 4:5; 6:1)
- 2. call to religious event (i.e., Lev. 23:24; 25:9; Num. 10:10; Ps. 81:3)

How we respond to God determines which one characterizes our culture!

▣ **“Consecrate a fast”** There is only one fast day in the Mosaic legislation, the Day of Atonement (cf. 1:14). It is described in Lev. 16. Later rabbinical Judaism developed special fast days either because of, or in memory of, crisis events.

2:17 In the ancient Near East national events (pro and con) reflected on the national deity. Judah’s historical situation reflected on the power of Judah’s God. However, God was willing for His own reputation to be impugned (cf. Exod. 32:12; Num. 14:13; Deut. 9:28; Josh. 7:9; Ps. 79:10; 115:2; Micah 7:10) so that His people might return to Him!

Theologically it must be emphasized again and again that YHWH chose Abraham (i.e., Israel) to be a light to the nations. Monotheism and humans made in God’s image for fellowship both dictate a universal love and redemptive purpose! God chose one man, one family, one nation to choose a world (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 60:1,3; Acts 13:47).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:18-20

¹⁸Then the LORD will be zealous for His land

And will have pity on His people.

¹⁹**The LORD will answer and say to His people,**
"Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil,
And you will be satisfied *in full* with them;
And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.

²⁰**But I will remove the northern *army* far from you,**
And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,
And its vanguard into the eastern sea,
And its rear guard into the western sea.
And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up,
For it has done great things."

2:18-20 YHWH hears Israel's repentant prayer and promises to restore, protect, and never again allow His people to be a reproach among the nations!

As we look at the history of the Jewish people, past and present, this promise (and many like it) seem hollow and impotent! We must remember that the covenant is

1. conditional
2. reciprocal
3. continual

If His word is obeyed in faith, He will do all He has said, but if sin and rebellion return, then discipline is necessary and sure. The vast majority of God's promises are conditional! Biblical faith is a two-way, personal relationship. Repentance, faith, and obedience are all initial and ongoing! Perseverance through time is crucial. See Special Topic at 2:1. Biblical faith is not sacramental or liturgical, but relational!

2:18 Notice that as YHWH promised Abraham a land and a seed (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-4; 17:1-8), so now v. 18 mentions both the restoration of His land and the spiritual renewal of His people! In a sense the covenant with Abraham and His seed, both individual (cf. II Samuel 7) and collective, continues!

▣ **"the LORD will be zealous"** This VERB (BDB 888, KB 1109, *Piel* IMPERFECT) denotes YHWH's activity toward His promises and people (cf. Exod. 20:56; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Josh. 24:19; see NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 938). Zealous is a love word.

2:20 "that I will remove the northern *army* far from you" The north came to be a symbol of destruction and invasion to the Hebrews. This was because the only direction from which Palestine was accessible by land was the north or the south. The powers of the Fertile Crescent, Assyria, Babylon and Persia, repeatedly invaded Palestine from the north (e.g., Jer. 1:14; 4:6; 10:22; Ezek. 38:6,15; 39:2). It became proverbial for trouble (cf. Jer. 1:13-15; 4:6; Ezek. 38:6,15; 39:2).

▣ **"its stench will arise"** As with so many verses in Joel, one can interpret this in light of

1. a locust invasion where
 - a. all the dead insects began to rot and stink (BDB 93)
 - b. all the live insects are blown into the sea, drown and are washed up on the shores (i.e., Exod. 10:19)

2. an invading army is being slaughtered by YHWH (cf. Isa. 34:3; Amos 4:10). This becomes the source of many of the Armageddon texts (i.e., valley of Megiddo)

▣ “eastern sea” This refers to the Dead Sea.

▣ “western sea” This refers to the Mediterranean. As these two are parallel, so also are “vanguard” (BDB 815, “front”) and “rear guard” (BDB 693, “rear”).

▣

NASB **“For it has done great things”**
NKJV **“Because he has done monstrous things”**
NRSV **“Surely he has done great things”**
TEV **“because of all they have done to you”**
NJB **“(for what he made bold to do)”**

To whom or what does this refer? Grammatically it is a *Hiphil* PERFECT MASCULINE SINGULAR (BDB 152, KB 178) plus a *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 793 I, KB 889).

In context it could refer to

1. the army (cf. NKJV, TEV)
2. the leader of the northern army (cf. NJB)
3. the Lord (cf. v. 21 repeats the VERB)
4. the locusts

It may seem that the invader is powerful and invincible (v. 20), but he/they are not; only YHWH is awesome and wonderful (v. 21). As terrible as the invasion will be, YHWH’s restoration will be more wondrous!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:21-27

**²¹Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad,
For the LORD has done great things.**

**²²Do not fear, beasts of the field,
For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green,
For the tree has borne its fruit,
The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.**

**²³So rejoice, O sons of Zion,
And be glad in the LORD your God;
For He has given you the early rain for *your* vindication.
And He has poured down for you the rain,
The early and latter rain as before.**

**²⁴The threshing floors will be full of grain,
And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.**

**²⁵Then I will make up to you for the years
That the swarming locust has eaten,
The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.**

²⁶You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied

And praise the name of the LORD your God,

Who has dealt wondrously with you;

Then My people will never be put to shame.

²⁷Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,

And that I am the LORD your God,

And there is no other;

And My people will never be put to shame.

2:21-27 These verses describe YHWH's assurance of restoration and abundant fertility. The regular cycles of rain and harvest will return. YHWH's presence is His greatest gift (cf. v. 27). The covenant with Israel is restored!

Notice the commands:

1. "do not fear," v. 21, BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT (negated) but used in a JUSSIVE sense, FEMININE SINGULAR (Israel)
2. "rejoice," v. 21, BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT, FEMININE SINGULAR (Israel)
3. "be glad," v. 21, BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, FEMININE SINGULAR (Israel)
4. "do not fear," v. 22, same as v. 21, but here MASCULINE PLURAL (the beasts of the field)
5. "rejoice," v. 23, same as v. 21, MASCULINE PLURAL (sons of Zion)
6. "be glad," v. 32, same as v. 21, MASCULINE PLURAL (sons of Zion)

2:21 "O land" This verse is a personification (three imperatives) of the Promised Land. It had been devastated by YHWH's judgment on His people's sin, but now it is being restored and renewed (cf. Rom. 8:18-25).

2:22 "beasts of the field" As the land was personified in v. 21, now it is the beasts of the field. Fertility has been restored to

1. pastures
2. fruit trees
3. grapes

2:23 "O sons of Zion" This refers to the people of Jerusalem. The land and beasts are not to fear and the populace is to rejoice and be glad at YHWH's forgiveness and restoration.

☐ **"the early rain"** There are three rainy seasons in Palestine:

1. October - November, which begins the end of the dry season (i.e., June - September)
2. December - February, which are the regular heavy rains. This is the period when the largest amount of rain comes to Palestine.
3. March - May, which marks the end of the wet season. The warmer temperatures and the moisture cause abundant crops (cf. v. 24). When they stop, harvest begins.

These two rainy periods (#1, #3) are referred to several times in the Bible:

1. Deut. 11:14 (28:12)
2. Jer. 5:24 (3:3)

3. Hosea 6:3
4. Joel 2:23
5. James 5:7

It is their timing that is crucial!



NASB, NRSV	“the early rain for <i>your</i> vindication”
NKJV	“the former rain faithfully”
TEV	“the right amount of autumn rain”
NJB	“autumn rain as justice demands”
LXX	“food fully”
Peshitta	“food of righteousness”
REB	“food in due measure”
NIV	“the autumn rains in righteousness”
NAB	“the teacher of justice”

The term “early rain” (BDB 435 I, cf. Ps. 84:6) has the same Hebrew letters as “teacher” (BDB 435 II, cf. Job 36:22; Pro. 5:13; Isa. 30:20[twice]). This phrase is the source of the Essene community’s eschatological leader, the “teacher of righteousness.”

The lexicon KB has three terms listed for this same root:

1. archers, 560 I, cf. I Sam. 31:3; II Sam. 11:24
2. rain, 560 II
3. teacher, 560 III

There is real confusion over how to translate this phrase:

1. the context seems to fit a literal understanding of the “early rain” because of the agricultural contextual setting from vv. 21-26, (also Kimchi and Calvin)
2. the Septuagint and Peshitta translate the word as “food”
3. the translation “teacher of righteousness” is supported by the Targums, the Zadokite fragment, the Vulgate and many early church fathers (cf. NAB)
4. because the term “vindication” or “righteousness” (BDB 842) is used in this phrase, some commentators have thought that it does not relate to literal rain, but to the promised rain of the Mosaic covenant (i.e., to “the rain of righteousness,” blessings for covenant faithfulness, cf. Deuteronomy 28).

See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous.” The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted

His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind's loyalty was tested (cf. Gen. 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God's first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind's repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. It is based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called "justification by faith." The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term "righteousness" in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaio sunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy, there was no clear delineation between the secular (society's norms) and the sacred (God's will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as "justice" (relating to society) and "righteousness" (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father's love, mercy, and grace; the Son's life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit's wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine's position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and the Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term "the righteousness of God" is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view, all of the Bible, from Genesis 4 through Revelation 20, is a record of God's restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God's image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group:

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
 - a. Romans 3:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
 - c. II Timothy 4:8
 - d. Revelation 16:5
2. Jesus is righteous
 - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
 - b. Matthew 27:19
 - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
 - a. Leviticus 19:2
 - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
 - a. Romans 3:21-31
 - b. Romans 4
 - c. Romans 5:6-11
 - d. Galatians 3:6-14
 - e. Given by God
 - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
 - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
 - f. Received by faith
 - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
 - 2) I Corinthians 5:21
 - g. Through acts of the Son
 - 1) Romans 5:21-31
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
 - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
 - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
 - c. I Timothy 6:11

- d. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
 - e. I John 3:7
 - f. I Peter 2:24
6. God will judge the world by righteousness
- a. Acts 17:31
 - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

- 1. a decree of God
- 2. a gift of God
- 3. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the Parousia!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* published by IVP:

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects:

- 1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
- 2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
- 3. the gospel is a changed life (emphasis of the Roman Catholic church)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

2:25 Are the locusts God’s judgment, or are they a symbol of a future invading foreign army? The answer is yes! Prophecy regularly takes a current event and projects it into a future setting. YHWH uses natural means to cause His people to repent; if they do not, more severe judgments are certain!

2:26 “And praise the name of the LORD your God” The VERB “praise” (BDB 237 II; KB 248, *Piel* PERFECT) is the source of the Hallel Psalms (cf. 113-118). It basically means “to shout for joy,” usually denoting a time of corporate worship (i.e., Ps. 148:5).

The “name” is an idiomatic way of referring to the person. The Israelites are praising YHWH for His restored covenant blessings, which means the ancient covenant has been restored!

The phrase “the LORD your God” is a covenantal phrase. The Mosaic covenant, with its blessings and responsibilities, has been restored. He is their God and they are His people!

▣ **“My people will never be put to shame”** The shame (BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT) refers to crop failure (i.e., Jer. 12:13). This shame can refer to

1. agriculture (here)
2. military (cf. Isa. 45:14-17)

In this specific context it seems to be agricultural, but in light of the larger context of chapters 1-2, it could be military.

This is one of the benefits of being in covenant with YHWH (cf. v. 27). It is meant to be an everlasting promise (cf. Isa. 45:17), but it is conditional on repentance, obedience, and perseverance (i.e., Jer. 6:15 [thrice]; ;8:12 [thrice]).

2:27 “I am in the midst of Israel” What a tremendous covenant promise (cf. 3:17,21)! In the wilderness God’s presence was noted by the *Shekinah* Cloud of Glory, in the conquest by the Ark of the Covenant, and in the book of the Revelation by the throne of God. This is what the Messianic title *Emmanuel* means (God with us)!

▣ **“there is no other”** This expresses the biblical affirmation of monotheism. It is first introduced in Deuteronomy (cf. 4:35,39; 5:7; 6:4-5). It is fully developed in Isaiah (cf. 43:9-13; 44:6,8; 45:5-6,18,21-22; 48:16; Jer. 2:11; 5:7,10; Hos. 13:4; Joel 2:27). It is reaffirmed in the NT (cf. Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; I Tim. 2:5; James 2:19).

It is this truth that makes Israel’s faith unique among all the religions of the ancient world.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:28-32

²⁸“It will come about after this

**That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.**

²⁹Even on the male and female servants

I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

³⁰I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,

Blood, fire and columns of smoke.

³¹The sun will be turned into darkness

And the moon into blood

Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

³²And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD

Will be delivered;

For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem

There will be those who escape,

As the LORD has said,

Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.”

2:28-32 The Masoretic Text begins chapter 3 at this point, but the English Bible, following the Septuagint and the Vulgate, continues chapter 2.

This stanza becomes the OT referent for Peter's Pentecostal sermon (the first gospel sermon of the church) recorded in Acts 2. Several powerful eschatological truths are noted:

1. YHWH pouring out His Spirit on all flesh (2:28-29, cf. Isa. 44:3-4; Ezek. 39:29)
2. apocalyptic signs in the heavens (positive, 2:3-31; negative, Amos 5:18,20)
3. salvation/deliverance through calling on YHWH's name (cf. Ps. 50:15; Isa. 55:6-7; Jer. 29:12; 33:3; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:8-13)
4. the presence of a believing remnant

Notice that Peter does not mention any promises to national Israel! Israel is not the focus of the NT or the new age. The New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) has a different focus. At this point I am going to insert the introductory material from my commentary on Revelation, which deals with these OT issues.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY OT COVENANT PROMISES SEEM DIFFERENT FROM NT COVENANT PROMISES

Through the years of my study of eschatology, I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God's eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
2. the tension between the Bible's monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises ("if. . .then") and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind's redemption
4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
5. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future.
6. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.

Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but neither Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focused on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezek. 37-39; Dan. 7-12; Zech.)

3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5; I Thess. 4-5; II Thess. 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope (“the mystery of Christ,” cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion); it is projected into the NT as a term expressing God’s acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God’s promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham’s call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God’s people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are
 - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
 - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
 - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
 - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., “Israel,” cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., “kingdom of priests,” cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus’ or Paul’s eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

SECOND TENSION (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen.1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Genesis 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Romans 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. 1:6; II Pet.2:5,9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

THIRD TENSION (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The "if...then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isaiah 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Galatians 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Romans 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

FOURTH TENSION (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thessalonians 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillment of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark.13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4-5; and II Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

“Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)” (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

“No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books’ frame of reference is the reader’s contemporary age rather than the author’s. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes” (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

“Today’s readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine ‘what will happen when,’ thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message” (p. 35).

FIFTH TENSION (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ’s first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ’s offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ's comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Daniel 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Daniel 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign's manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Revelation 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ's reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus' preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Revelation 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Revelation 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

SIXTH TENSION (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Revelation 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

2:28 "And it will come about after this" The question is, "what is the time frame?":

1. post-exilic restoration
2. interbiblical (Maccabean)
3. eschatological

Peter's use of this material in Acts 2 shows that for NT believers #3 is the proper period in which to interpret this wonderful prophecy.

▣ **"I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind"** The coming of the Spirit (sent by YHWH) is the sign of the New Age, the New Covenant, the Messianic period (cf. Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38; 39:29).

It is surely true that the full personality and deity of the Holy Spirit is not revealed in the OT, but through progressive revelation He is in the NT (see Special Topic: The Trinity below). Probably this is because of the culturally surprising and theologically unique monotheism of the OT. This is demonstrated by all causality being attributed to YHWH (cf. Deut. 32:39; Job 5:18; Isa. 45:7; Hosea 6:11; Amos 3:6).

What a tremendous universal element (cf. Isa. 40:5; 42:6; 45:22; 49:6; 51:4; 52:10; Luke 2:32). This same theme is repeated in v. 32, “that whoever calls on the LORD.”

The Spirit in the OT is depicted in several ways:

1. *Elohim*'s active force in creation, Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:29-30; 147:14-18
2. YHWH's personal influence, Gen. 6:3; Isa. 63:10
3. God's empowering influence
 - a. artistic, Exod. 28:3; 31:3; 35:31
 - b. leadership
 - (1) Moses, Num. 11:17; Isa. 63:11
 - (2) 70 elders, Num. 11:25
 - (3) Joshua, Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9
 - (4) Saul, I Sam. 10:6,10; 11:6
 - (5) David, I Sam. 16:13,14; II Sam. 23:2
 - c. military deliverers, Jdgs. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14,19
 - d. prophecy, Num. 24:2; I Sam. 19:20,23; I Kgs. 18:12; 22:24; II Kgs. 2:16; II Chr. 15:1; 18:23; 20:14; 24:20; Ps. 143:11; Isa. 48:16; Ezek. 11:5,24; Micah 3:8
4. uniquely in the Messiah, Isa. 11:2; 42:4; 59:21; 61:1

It is not until the NT that the personality and deity of the Spirit is developed.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

1. the Gospels
 - a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
 - b. John 14:26
2. Acts - Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
3. Paul
 - a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 - b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 - c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
 - d. Gal. 4:4-6
 - e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
 - f. I Thess. 1:2-5
 - g. II Thess. 2:13
 - h. Titus 3:4-6
4. Peter - I Pet. 1:2
5. Jude - vv. 20-21

It is hinted at in the OT

1. Use of plurals for God
 - a. Name *Elohim* is PLURAL, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB

- b. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
 - c. “One” in the *Shema* (BDB 1033) of Deut. 6:4 is PLURAL (as it is in Gen. 2:24; Ezek. 37:17)
2. The angel of the Lord as a visible representative of deity
 - a. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 - b. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
 - c. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - d. Zechariah 3:1-2
 3. God and Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
 4. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12
 5. Messiah and Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10
 6. All three mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers:

1. Tertullian - subordinated the Son to the Father
2. Origen - subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
3. Arius - denied deity to the Son and Spirit
4. Monarchianism - believed in a successive manifestation of God

The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

1. The full deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, was affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea
2. The full personality and deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)
3. The doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine’s work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

2:28-29 “your sons and daughters. . .old men. . .young men. . .male and female servants” Notice the elements of equality mentioned: (1) no difference in sex; (2) no difference in age; and (3) no difference in social standing (cf. Rom. 3:22; I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). God will pour out His Spirit on all mankind. This inclusion is a fulfillment of Moses’ prayer in Num. 11:29 and a sign that the New covenant has come (cf. Jer. 31:34).

The inclusion may also reflect the fact that all ages and both sexes had been called to the special holy convocation for repentance (cf. 2:16). Now all of them would receive the Spirit!

It is surely true that in context this refers to the covenant people, but in the NT (Peter’s use of this text in Acts 2) the covenant people is widened to include all people (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6; Gal. 3:7-9,29; 6:16; I Pet. 3:6; Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9; 14:6). See Special Topic at 2:32.

The mutuality of Gen. 1:26-27 is restored. All flesh comes to YHWH (cf. Isa. 66:23)! This has always been the goal!! This is demonstrated by prophecy through dreams and visions (2:28-29). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

I. The Old Testament

A. Culturally women were considered property.

1. included in list of property (Exod. 20:17)
2. treatment of slave women (Exod. 21:7-11)
3. women's vows annulable by socially responsible male (Num. 30)
4. women as spoils of war (Deut. 20:10-14; 21:10-14)

B. Practically there was a mutuality

1. male and female made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27)
2. honor father and mother (Exod. 20:12 [Deut. 5:16])
3. reverence mother and father (Lev. 19:3; 20:9)
4. men and women could be Nazarites (Num. 6:1-2)
5. daughters have right of inheritance (Num. 27:1-11)
6. part of covenant people (Deut. 29:10-12)
7. observe teaching of father and mother (Pro. 1:8; 6:20)
8. sons and daughters of Heman (Levite family) led music in Temple (I Chr. 25:5-6)
9. son and daughter will prophesy in new age (Joel 2:28-29)

C. Women were in leadership roles

1. Moses' sister, Miriam, called a prophetess (Exod. 15:20-21)
2. women gifted by God to construct Tabernacle (Exod. 35:25-26)
3. a woman, Deborah, also a prophetess (cf. Jdgs. 4:4), led all the tribes (Jdgs. 4:4-5; 5:7)
4. Huldah was a prophetess whom King Josiah asked to read and interpret the newly-found "Book of the Law" (II Kings 22:14; II Chr. 34:22-27)
5. Ruth, godly woman, was ancestress of David
6. Esther, godly woman, saved Jews in Persia

II. The New Testament

A. Culturally women in both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world were second class citizens with few rights or privileges (the exception was Macedonia)

B. Women in leadership roles

1. Elizabeth and Mary, godly women available to God (Luke 1-2)
2. Anna, godly woman serving at the Temple (Luke 2:36)
3. Lydia, believer and leader of a house church (Acts 16:14,40)
4. Philip's four daughters, prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)
5. Phoebe, deaconess of church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
6. Prisca (Priscilla), Paul's fellow-worker and teacher of Apollos (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3)
7. Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus' sister, several women co-workers of Paul (Rom. 16:6-16)

8. Junia (KJV), possibly a woman apostle (Rom. 16:7)
9. Euodia and Syntyche, co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3)

III. How does a modern believer balance the divergent biblical examples?

- A. How does one distinguish historical or cultural truths, which only apply to the original context, from eternal truths valid for all churches, all believers of all ages?
 1. We must take the intent of the original inspired author very seriously. The Bible is the Word of God and the only source for faith and practice
 2. We must deal with the obviously historically conditioned inspired texts
 - a. the cultus (i.e., ritual and liturgy) of Israel
 - b. first century Judaism
 - c. Paul's obviously historically conditioned statements in I Corinthians
 - (1) the legal system of pagan Rome
 - (2) remaining a slave (7:20-24)
 - (3) celibacy (7:1-35)
 - (4) virgins (7:36-38)
 - (5) food sacrificed to an idol (8; 10:23-33)
 - (6) unworthy actions at Lord's Supper (11)
 3. God fully and clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, a particular day. We must take seriously the revelation, but not every aspect of its historical accommodation. The Word of God was written in the words of men.
- B. Biblical interpretation must seek the original author's intent. What was he saying to his day? This is foundational and crucial for proper interpretation, but then we must apply this to our own day. Now, here is the problem with women in leadership (the real interpretive problem may be defining the term. Were there more ministries than pastors who were seen as leadership? Were deaconesses or prophetesses seen as leaders?) It is quite clear that Paul, in I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:9-15, is asserting that women should not take the lead in public worship! But how do I apply that today? I do not want Paul's culture or my culture to silence God's Word and will. Possibly Paul's day was too limiting, but also my day may be too open. I feel so uncomfortable saying that Paul's words and teachings are conditional, first century, local situational truths. Who am I that I should let my mind or my culture negate an inspired author?!

However, what do I do when there are biblical examples of women leaders (even in Paul's writings, cf. Romans 16)? A good example of this is Paul's discussion of public worship in I Cor. 11-14. In 11:5 he seems to allow women's preaching and praying in public worship with their heads covered, yet in 14:34-35, he demands they remain silent! There were deaconesses (cf. Rom. 16:1) and prophetesses (cf. Acts 21:9). It is this diversity that allows me freedom to identify Paul's comments (as relates to restrictions on women) as limited to first century Corinth and Ephesus. In both churches, there were problems with women exercising their new-found freedom (cf. Bruce Winter, *Corinth After Paul Left*),

which could have caused difficulty for their church in reaching their society for Christ. Their freedom had to be limited so that the gospel could be more effective.

My day is just the opposite of Paul's. In my day the gospel might be limited if trained, articulate women are not allowed to share the gospel, not allowed to lead! What is the ultimate goal of public worship? Is it not evangelism and discipleship? Can God be honored and pleased with women leaders? The Bible as a whole seems to say "yes"!

I want to yield to Paul; my theology is primarily Pauline. I do not want to be overly influenced or manipulated by modern feminism! However, I feel the church has been slow to respond to obvious biblical truths, like the inappropriateness of slavery, racism, bigotry, and sexism. It has also been slow to respond appropriately to the abuse of women in the modern world. God in Christ set free the slave and the woman. I dare not let a culture-bound text reshackle them.

One more point: as an interpreter I know that Corinth was a very disrupted church. The charismatic gifts were prized and flaunted. Women may have been caught up in this. I also believe that Ephesus was being affected by false teachers who were taking advantage of women and using them as surrogate speakers in the house churches of Ephesus.

C. Suggestions for further reading

How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart (pp. 61-77)

Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics by Gordon Fee

Hard Sayings of the Bible by Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce and Manfred T. Branch (pp. 613-616; 665-667)

2:30-32 This is apocalyptic language (see D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, pp. 177-196) attempting to describe God breaking into history either for judgment or blessing! See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

- A. Revelation is a uniquely Jewish literary genre, apocalyptic. It was often used in tension-filled times to express the conviction that God was in control of history and would bring deliverance to His people. This type of literature is characterized by
1. a strong sense of the universal sovereignty of God (monotheism and determinism)
 2. a struggle between good and evil, this evil age and the age of righteousness to come (dualism)
 3. use of secret code words (usually from the OT or intertestamental Jewish apocalyptic literature)
 4. use of colors, numbers, animals, sometimes animals/humans
 5. use of angelic mediation by means of visions and dreams, but usually through angelic mediation and interpretation

6. primarily focuses on the soon-coming, climatic events of the end-time (new age)
7. use of a fixed set of symbols, not reality, to communicate the end-time message from God
8. Some examples of this type of genre are:
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Isaiah 13-14; 24-27; 56-66
 - (2) Ezekiel 1; 26-28; 33-48
 - (3) Daniel 7-12
 - (4) Joel 2:28-3:21
 - (5) Zechariah 1-6, 12-14
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and I Corinthians 15 (in some ways)
 - (2) II Thessalonians 2 (in most ways)
 - (3) Revelation (chapters 4-22)
 - c. Daniel 7-12 and Rev. 4-22 are the classic examples of this genre in the Bible
9. non-canonical (taken from D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, pp. 37-38)
 - a. I Enoch, II Enoch (the Secrets of Enoch)
 - b. The Book of Jubilees
 - c. The Sibylline Oracles III, IV, V
 - d. The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs
 - e. The Psalms of Solomon
 - f. The Assumption of Moses
 - g. The Martyrdom of Isaiah
 - h. The Apocalypse of Moses (Life of Adam and Eve)
 - i. The Apocalypse of Abraham
 - j. The Testament of Abraham
 - k. II Esdras (IV Esdras)
 - l. II & III Baruch
10. There is a sense of duality in this genre. It sees reality as a series of dualisms, contrasts, or tensions (so common in John's writings) between:
 - a. heaven - earth
 - b. evil age (evil humans and evil angels) - new age of righteousness (godly humans and godly angels)
 - c. current existence - future existence

All of these are moving toward a consummation brought about by God. This is not the world God intended it to be, but He is continuing to plan, work, and project His will for a restoration of the intimate fellowship begun in the Garden of Eden. The Christ event is the watershed of God's plan, but the two comings have brought about the current dualisms.

2:31 “will be turned” This VERB (BDB 245, KB 253, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is often used of

1. YHWH overturning the wicked
2. YHWH transforming nature
 - a. mountains, cf. Job 9:5
 - b. floods, cf. Job 12:15; Ps. 66:6
 - c. natural cycles of light and dark, cf. 2:31; Amos 5:10
3. YHWH turning festival into mourning, cf. Amos 8:10
4. YHWH turning mourning into dancing, Ps. 30:11
5. YHWH turning mourning into joy, cf. Jer. 31:13
6. YHWH changing the wicked, cf. Zeph. 3:9

▣ **“comes”** This (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used several times to denote the “coming” of the day of the Lord, especially in the post-exilic prophets (cf. Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; and also Isa. 13:9). YHWH is coming to be with His people. For some that will mean judgment and for some restoration. The goal has always been God with His people (i.e., *Emmanuel*). The purpose of creation was an intimate personal relationship between the Creator and His special creation (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The fellowship of Eden (Genesis 1-2) will be restored (Revelation 21-22). Everything from Genesis 3 through Revelation 20 is God cleaning up the mess of human rebellion.

F. F. Bruce, *Questions and Answers*, p. 75, makes a good point about this apocalyptic language having been partially fulfilled in the supernatural darkness that accompanied Jesus’ death in Jerusalem. Peter’s hearers on Pentecost would have recognized

1. the OT apocalyptic imagery
2. the recent literal fulfillment

2:32 “whoever calls on the name of the LORD” In an OT setting this denotes an act of personal, public, covenantal affirmation (i.e., Gen. 4:26; 12:8; Ps. 116:4). It was a liturgical way of asserting one’s trust in the covenant God of Israel and His word, promises, and warnings.

This phrase is used several times in the NT: (1) Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14-21; 37-30; (2) Peter’s message to Cornelius, Acts 10:45; (3) Paul’s emphasis in Rom. 10:13.

If this new day of salvation, this new age of the Spirit, this Messianic period, has begun, why is there still sin and suffering?

To answer this question, see the Special Topic following and also Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart’s *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 145-148.

TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

The OT prophets viewed the future as an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e. I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this “progressive revelation.” The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e. a temporal dualism):

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Hebrews</u>
Matthew 12:32	Romans 12:2	1:2
Matthew 13:22 & 29	I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18	6:5
Mark 10:30	II Cor. 4:4	11:3
Luke 16:8	Galatians 1:4	
Luke 18:30	Eph. 1:21; 2:1,7; 6:12	
Luke 20:34-35	I Timothy 6:17	
	II Timothy 4:10	
	Titus 2:12	

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age. However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53), humble and meek (cf. Zech. 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Revelation 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet!

▣ **“LORD”** In context this refers to the Covenant name for God, YHWH. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Obadiah 1. However, in the NT (cf. Rom. 10:13) it refers to Jesus the Messiah. This is a tremendous invitation of salvation to all mankind who will trust in the trustworthiness of God, which is fully revealed in Jesus the Messiah.

▣ **“Will be delivered”** The VERB (BDB 572, KB 589, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) can mean

1. escape, Jdgs. 3:29; I Sam. 19:10,12,18; Jer. 46:6; 48:8,19; Joel 2:32; Amos 9:1; Mal. 3:15
2. be delivered/rescued, Jdgs. 6:23; II Sam. 19:9; Ps. 22:5; 107:19; Pro. 28:26

When this concept of physical deliverance by God’s power is brought into the NT the spiritual aspect becomes predominant. The deliverance is still accomplished by God’s Spirit, but it is not for a period of time, but for eternity!

▣ **“As the LORD has said**

Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls” It is uncertain to what OT text Joel is referring. It seems that this same statement is mentioned in Obad. v. 17. See Introduction, Date.

There are two theological issues in this statement:

1. “The remnant theology” - God will maintain a faithful remnant through time and judgment. His desire to redeem all the nations depends on a continuing witness to the covenant God!
2. “Predestination” - There is an eternal redemptive plan which involves national Israel and the nations.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB'S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but Great Commission evangelism. I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-32), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)!

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture (i.e., Jonah). I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but I believe it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Is “the day of the LORD” for judgment or blessing?
2. Why does Joel use a locust plague to describe God’s judgment?
3. What is significant about the definition of God found in verse 13?
4. Why is verse 23 such a translation problem?
5. What does verse 28 have to say to our day concerning the question of women in the ministry?

JOEL 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB [follows MT]
The Nations Will Be Judged	God Judges the Nations (all poetry)	The Day of the LORD (2:28-3:21)	God Will Judge the Nations	The Judgment of the Nations
		2:30-3:3 (prose)		3:1-17[4:1-7] (all poetry)
3:1-8 (1-3 poetry)	3:1-3		3:1-15 (1-3 poetry)	The Judgment Announced 3:1-3 [4:1-3]
(4-8 prose)	3:4-8 (4-6) (7-8)	3:4-8 (prose)	(4-8 prose)	Charges Against the Phoenicians and Philistines 3:4-8 [4:4-8]
3:9-17 (poetry)	3:9-17 (9-11)	3:9-12 (poetry) (9-10)	(9-11 a poetry)	A Summons to the Nations 3:9-14 [4:9-14]
		(11)	(11b, poetry)	
	(12-13)	(12)	(12-13, poetry)	
		3:13-17, (poetry) (13)		
	(14-16)	(14-15)	(14-15, poetry)	The Day of Yahweh 3:15-17 [4:15-17] (15-16a)
		(16)	God Will Bless His People 3:16-21 (poetry) (16-18)	(16b)
	(17)	(17)		(17)
Judah Will Be Blessed	God Blesses His People			The Glorious Future of Israel
3:18-21 (poetry)	3:18-21 (18)	3:18-21 (poetry) (18)		3:18-21 [4:18-21]
	(19-21)	(19-21)	(19-21)	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

- A. The book of Joel is divided into two halves: 1:2-2:17, God's judgment of His people, and 2:18-3:21, God's restoration of His repentant people and judgment on their oppressors. It is obvious that we are breaking into a literary context as we begin chapter 3. The literary context of this chapter is the eschatological event of 2:28-32 where God pours out His Spirit on all mankind in the end-time.
- B. Joel 3 is a drama drawn from different OT texts: Psalm 43, the prophets of Amos, Isaiah and Zechariah 9-14.
- C. Many modern commentators have asserted that verses 4-8 are a later assertion because they are prose while the rest of chapter 3 is poetry. However, this structural analysis seems to be modern and presuppositional in my opinion.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-8

**¹For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,
²I will gather all the nations
And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.
Then I will enter into judgment with them there
On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
And they have divided up My land.
³They have also cast lots for My people,
Traded a boy for a harlot
And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.**

4"Moreover, what are you to Me, O Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia? Are you rendering Me a recompense? But if you do recompense Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your recompense on your head. 5Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples, 6and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory, 7behold, I am going to arouse them from the place where you have sold them, and return your recompense on your head. 8Also I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a distant nation," for the LORD has spoken.

3:1 “in those days and at that time” This refers to the eschatological event of 2:28-32.



NASB, NRSV,

NJB, JPSOA “I will restore the fortunes”

NKJV “I will bring back the captives”

TEV “I will restore the prosperity”

The Septuagint, Peshita, and King James have “I shall bring again the captivity.” However, context seems to demand a positive statement (i.e., bring Judah and Jerusalem back from exile, e.g., Deut. 30:3) rather than a negative one (cf. NIV’s translation). Other places where this phrase is used are Jer. 30:18 and 32:44.

The VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT, but Jewish scribes recognized a problem and read it as a *Hiphil* IMPERFECT.

The *kethib* (“what is written,” i.e., the MT text) has “return the captivity (i.e., the captives,” cf. Jer. 30:18; 32:44), while the *qere* (“what is read,” i.e., the suggestions of the Masoretic scholars) has “restore the fortunes,” cf. Job 42:10; Hosea 6:11; Zeph. 3:20.

▣ **“Judah and Jerusalem”** It is obvious from reading vv. 1 and 2 in context that God is asserting His ownership of the Promised Land and His promise to the descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1,18; 17:1-5). In v. 2 he uses the word “Israel” to describe Judah and Jerusalem, which are mentioned in v. 1. This shows me that we are in a post-exilic period where Israel has become the collective name for the returning people of God, not the northern ten tribes.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL (the name)

- I. The Name’s meaning is uncertain (BDB 975).
 - A. *El* Persisteth
 - B. Let *El* Persist (JUSSIVE)
 - C. *El* Persevereth
 - D. Let *El* Contend
 - E. *El* Strives
 - F. He who strives with God (Gen. 32:28).
- II. Usages in the OT

- A. Jacob's name (supplanter, heel grabber, BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) is changed after wrestling with the spiritual personage at the river Jabbok (cf. Gen. 32:22-32; Exod. 32:13). Often the meanings of Hebrew names are sound plays, not etymologies (cf. 32:28). Israel becomes his name (e.g., Gen. 35:10; 32:13).
- B. It came to be used as a collective name for all of his twelve sons (e.g., Gen. 32:32; 49:16; Exod. 1:7; 4:22; 28:11; Deut. 3:18; 10:6).
- C. It came to designate the nation formed by the twelve tribes before the exodus (cf. Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:22; 5:2) and after (cf. Deut. 1:1; 18:6; 33:10).
- D. After the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon the tribes split under Rehoboam (cf. I Kings 12).
 - 1. the distinction starts even before the official split (e.g., II Sam. 3:10; 5:5; 20:1; 24:9; I Kgs. 1:35; 4:20)
 - 2. it designates the northern tribes until the fall of Samaria to Assyria in 7:22 B.C. (cf. II Kings 17).
- E. Used of Judah in a few places (e.g., Isaiah 1; Micah 1:15-16).
- F. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles it became the collective name for all of Jacob's descendants again (e.g., Isa. 17:7,9; Jer. 2:4; 50:17,19).
- G. Used of laity in contradistinction from priests (cf. I Chr. 9:2; Ezra 10:25; Neh. 11:3).

3:2 “I will gather the nations” The “nations” (i.e., all humanity) has always been the focus of God's activity (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5). Because of human sin and rebellion the nations are dealt with in two ways:

- 1. judgment, Psalm 2 (see Acts 4:25-26); 46; 83; Isa. 66:18-24; Ezekiel 32; 38; 39; Zeph. 3:8; Zech. 14:2
- 2. salvation, Isa. 42:5-9; 45:22-23; 49:6; 51:4-8; 56:6-8; 60:1-3; Zeph. 3:9

Peter's use of Joel 2:28-32 shows the priority of #2. If there is only one God, if He created the world for fellowship with humans, if humans are made uniquely in the image and likeness of God, then God chose Abraham to choose all humanity, not just part of it!

Note the VERBS: YHWH “will gather” (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* PERFECT), the nations “scattered” (BDB 808, KB 921, *Piel* PERFECT). In reality it was YHWH who did both! The exile of God's people was allowed/engineered by YHWH Himself. The nations are His instruments of judgment as well as the object of judgment! Not only this, but they are the focus of salvation. See Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 2:32.

▣ **“bring them down”** This VERB (BDB 432, KB 434, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used

- 1. literally of YHWH bringing someone into a physical valley
- 2. figuratively of YHWH bringing low (i.e., judging, cf. Isa. 10:13; 43:14; Jer. 49:16; 51:40; Ezek. 26:20; Hosea 7:12; Amos 9:2; Obad. 4)

▣ **“the valley of Jehoshaphat”** His name means “YHWH judges” (BDB 221). I personally believe that this is not so much a geographical location related to King Jehoshaphat as it is a play on the word “Jehoshaphat.” We see a similar designation in v. 14, “the valley of decision.”

Some visitors to Jerusalem in 333 A.D. record that the Kidron Valley was known as the valley of Jehoshaphat, but Eusebius, an early church historian, says that it was specifically the valley of the sons of Hinnom (just south of Jerusalem).

▣ **“I will enter into judgment with them there”** This refers to the very army that YHWH has brought against His own people (i.e., Assyria, Babylon). YHWH uses these foreign armies for His purposes, but they are responsible for their acts. YHWH is in control of human history for His purposes! If this is true (and I believe it is) then all history is a result of human rebellion (cf. Genesis 3) and God’s plan to restore it!

▣ **“My people and My inheritance, Israel”** This is a series of three covenant terms. God used the family of Abraham to

1. reveal Himself to the nations
2. bring the Messiah into the world

The benefits (and responsibilities) of these chosen, covenant people are spelled out in Romans 9.

“My inheritance” alludes to YHWH’s unique ownership of the Promised Land (cf. Lev. 25:23; Isa. 14:25; Jer. 2:7; Ezek. 36:5; 38:16; Joel 1:6; 3:2). In a sense, all lands belong to YHWH by means of creation, but for His redemptive, Messianic purposes, Palestine is uniquely His land (cf. Gen. 12:1,7; 13:15; 15:18; and its NT interpretation in Gal. 3:16).

▣ **“they”** The sins of the invaders are listed in the following verses:

1. scattered Israel among the nations
2. divided up and cast lots for Israel’s land
3. turned Israel into slaves
4. robbed YHWH’s temple of its treasures

3:3 “also cast lots for My people” This (BDB 391, KB 388, *Qal* PERFECT) refers to ancient slave trade (cf. historical references: Homer’s *Odyssey* 15:463-84; Herodotus’s *Persian Wars* 1:1; 2:54, 56; biblical references: Obadiah 11; Nahum 3:10). It is alluded to in Gen. 37:36; Ezek. 27:13; Joel 3:6-8; Amos 1:6.

▣ **“traded a boy for a harlot”** The Peshitta has “for a harlot’s hire,” which seems to be the thrust of this verse (cf. Deut. 28:68). This verse highlights the greed and immorality of the invaders. They saw no value in the lives of God’s people (cf. Amos 2:6; 8:6).

3:4-8 This is a prose section surrounded by poetry. It is addressed to Israel’s enemies. Their abuse of Israel was, in a sense, an abuse of God (i.e., Matt. 25:40; Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14; I Cor. 8:12).

3:4 “Me” Notice the FIRST PERSON PRONOUNS in the NASB translation of this section (i.e., vv. 1-8). The prophet is speaking for YHWH (i.e., “the Lord has spoken,” v. 8):

1. “I,” vv. 1,2 (twice),8
2. “My,” vv. 2 (thrice),3,5 (thrice)
3. “Me,” v. 4 (thrice)

There is an interchange of persons (i.e., THIRD PERSON, FIRST PERSON) in this chapter:

1. YHWH speaks, 3:1-8
2. the prophet speaks on YHWH's behalf, 3:9-11
3. YHWH speaks, 3:12-13
4. the prophet speaks on YHWH's behalf, 3:14-16
5. YHWH speaks, 3:17-21

It is uncertain how the inspired biblical author received his revelation from the Spirit. It seems the mechanisms were not standard, but fluid (i.e., dreams, visions, direct speech, angelic messengers, current events, precious Scripture).

▣ **“swiftly and speedily”** These two terms (BDB 886, and 555) are also used in Isa. 5:26, which speaks of the speed and strength of the Babylonian army (cf. Isa. 5:26-30), summoned by YHWH for Israel's judgment. But now as they did to others, it will be done to them! This is a typical reversal. Evil plans often return to the planners; righteousness will prevail in the end! This phrase is an idiom of this truth (i.e., we reap what we sow, cf. Gal. 6:7).

▣ **“recompense”** This PARTICIPLE (BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) means to restore (cf. 2:25) or require in judgment (cf. Deut. 7:9-10; Jer. 51:24,56). The best parallel passage is Isa. 65:1-7, where the truth of God's love for all people becomes the very ground for His judgment on the nations. He reached out to them, but they rejected Him! God loves the nations and is trying to reach them through Israel, but instead of salvation, their self-centered idolatry resulted in judgment.

3:5 “Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples”

These phrases speak of the common ancient Near East practice of defeated people's temple treasures (BDB 326) being taken to the victor's national temple as a visible token of the superiority of the victor's deity.

If, as I think, this reflects Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Judah, then the items of YHWH's temple in Jerusalem were taken in 586 B.C. to the temple of Marduk in Babylon and put on display (note, II Kgs. 24:13; 25:15; Dan. 5:2).

It is surprising that “temples” (BDB 228) is plural. Possibly the Babylonians gave some of the temple treasures to the other national armies who were part of the Babylonian army (e.g., Edom spoken of in Obadiah).

The other option is to see the Hebrew word “temples” as referring to “palaces” (cf. Isa. 13:22; Hosea 8:14; Amos 8:3).

3:6 “sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks” Amos 1:6-9 speaks of the slave trade of Gaza and Tyre. The mention of the term “Greeks” has caused concern for many commentators related to the date of Joel: (1) some say that it is a metaphor for far-off peoples and (2) others assert that it refers to the nation of Greece (cf. Gen. 10:2, 4). See Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 296.

3:7 This verse is reminiscent of v. 4. Two *Hiphil* VERBALS describe YHWH's action:

1. one in deliverance, “I am going to arouse them (Israelites sold as slaves),” BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE

2. one in judgment, “I will return your recompense on your head,” BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil*
PERFECT

Again we see the common theological theme of role reversal (cf. v. 8)!

3:8 “Also I will sell your sons and your daughters” God gives to them what they gave to others. We learn from history that the city of Sidon was captured and sold into slavery by Antiochus III in 345 B.C. We also learn that the cities of Tyre and Gaza were captured and sold into slavery by Alexander II, “the Great,” in 332 B.C. The Judeans were sold to a power to the northwest, but the sea people would be sold to a power of the southeastern desert, the Sabeans (BDB 985).

▣ **“the Sabeans”** This refers to Arab traders who controlled the eastern trade routes until they were overthrown by the Mineans who became the dominant power in southern Arabia around the 400’s B.C. The Queen of Sheba was a member of this tribal identity (cf. Ps. 72:10 Jer. 6:20 and Ezek. 27:22).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:9-17

⁹Proclaim this among the nations:

Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men!

Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!

¹⁰Beat your plowshares into swords

And your pruning hooks into spears;

Let the weak say, "I am a mighty man."

¹¹Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations,

And gather yourselves there.

Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones.

¹²Let the nations be aroused

And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat,

For there I will sit to judge

All the surrounding nations.

¹³Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.

Come, tread, for the wine press is full;

The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.

¹⁴Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!

For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

¹⁵The sun and moon grow dark

And the stars lose their brightness.

¹⁶The LORD roars from Zion

And utters His voice from Jerusalem,

And the heavens and the earth tremble.

But the LORD is a refuge for His people

And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.

**¹⁷Then you will know that I am the LORD your God,
 Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain.
 So Jerusalem will be holy,
 And strangers will pass through it no more.**

3:9-13 A final end-time attack of the kingdoms of this world against the kingdom of our God and His Christ is mentioned over and over again in Scripture (cf. Isa. 8:9, 14; 17:12-14; Ezek. 38-39; Zech. 12-14; Rev. 16:14-16; 19:17-19).

This call to arms has several commands:

1. “proclaim this among the nations,” v. 9, BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Isa. 40:6; Amos 3:6
2. “prepare a war” (i.e., “consecrate,” cf. 1:14; 2:15), v. 9, BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. Josh. 7:13; Jer. 6:4; 22:7; 51:27-28
3. “rouse the mighty men.” v. 9, BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Isa. 41:2,25; Jer. 50:9; 51:1
4. “Let all the soldiers draw near,” v. 9, BDB 620, KB 670, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Jer. 46:3
5. “Let them come up,” v. 9, BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Isa. 7:6; 36:10; Jer. 48:18
6. “Beat your plowshares into swords,” v. 10, BDB 510, KB 507, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, usually the opposite, Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3
7. “Let the weak say,” v. 10, BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
8. “Hasten” (i.e., “lend aid”), v. 11, BDB 736, KB 804, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, found only here in the OT
9. “Come,” v. 11, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (used in sense of “come and join with”)
10. “gather yourselves there,” the MT has a *Niphal* PERFECT (BDB 867, KB 1062), but it could also be a *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, which would match the series of IMPERATIVES in 9:9-13
11. “Bring down,” v. 11, BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, the *Hiphil* is found only here and refers to YHWH’s mighty army, cf. Isa. 13:3
12. “Let the nations be aroused,” v. 12, BDB 734, KB 802, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, similar to v. 9
13. “Come up,” v. 12, BDB 748, KB 828, same as v. 9
14. “Put in the sickle,” v. 13, BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (i.e., the harvest of judgment is ripe, cf. Jer. 51:33)
15. “Come,” v. 13, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 11, used of YHWH coming down in judgment (“day of the LORD,” vv. 12-14)
16. “tread” (i.e., “come down”), v. 13, BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (or possibly from BDB 921, KB 1190 I) used of YHWH coming down in judgment (“day of the LORD,” vv. 12-14)

3:10 “Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears” This is exactly the opposite of the eschatological peace which was promised in Isa. 2:4 and Micah 4:3. Violence precedes peace (cf. Matthew 24; Luke 21; Mark 13).

▣ **“Let the weak say, ‘I am a mighty man,’”** In context this refers to agricultural workers who are now called on to be soldiers (opposite of Deut. 20:8). This shows the all-out military effort of the kingdoms of this world. In Zech. 12:8 this same metaphor is used, but of the people of God.

3:11 “Bring down, O LORD, Thy mighty ones” This may refer to the invisible angelic army of God in II Kgs. 6:16, 17; Zech. 14:5, (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 811-812). Other allusions to God’s army of angels are found in Deut. 33:2, 3; Matt. 16:27; 25:31; Mark 8:38; II Thess. 1:7; and Rev. 19:14. However, because of Isa. 13:3 it may refer to human armies (i.e., Cyrus, cf. Isa. 44:28-45:7) used by YHWH.

3:13-14 There are three agricultural metaphors used to describe God’s judgment: (1) the sickle (BDB 618); (2) treading grapes (BDB 432); and (3) “to drag over a threshing floor” which is the etymological background for the term “decision” (BDB 358) used in verse 14 (twice). The sickle is mentioned in Isa. 63:1-6, while the treading of the grapes is mentioned of judgment in Micah 4:12-13. Both metaphors are mentioned in Rev. 14:15,18,20.

3:13 “the vats overflow” The parallelism clearly shows this is a metaphor of evil:

1. the wine press is full
2. the vats overflow
3. their wickedness is great

This same VERB (BDB 1003 II, KB 1448, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used in 2:24 to describe YHWH’s restoration of covenant blessing (cf. Deuteronomy 28), but here to describe the extent of the evil of the nations! The nations reap judgment, but the covenant people reap blessing (cf. 3:18-21).

3:14 “Multitudes, multitudes” This large army is described in Isa. 34:2-8.

▣ **“For the day of the LORD is near”** The time element is the crucial question. It can be explained in light of prophetic literature taking a current event (i.e., locust plague, cf. 1:15) and projecting it into the future (end-time battle between the nations and the nation of God, cf. 2:1; 3:14). For a good discussion, see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 327-328.

▣ **“the valley of decision”** This is possibly the valley mentioned in Zech. 14:4.

3:15 “The sun and moon grow dark” This is apocalyptic language to describe God’s coming to His creation (cf. 2:10, 31; Isa. 13:10; Jer. 4:23; Ezek. 32:8; Zech. 14:6). The permanent creation is permanent no longer. Time is no more!

▣ **“the stars lose their brightness”** This VERB (BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* PERFECT) is used both here and in 2:10 in a context that demands diminishing, yet the word is not ordinarily used in this sense. It usually refers to gathering at harvest time or YHWH gathering His people back to Palestine.

Here apparently it has the connotation of “taking away” (i.e., harvesting) the light of the stars to match the darkening of the sun and moon.

3:16 “The LORD roars from Zion” Since I hold to a late post-exilic date, I believe that Joel quotes Amos (cf. Amos 1:2; also note Jer. 25:31).



NASB “the heavens and the earth tremble”
NKJV “the heavens and the earth will shake”
NRSV “the heavens and the earth shake”
TEV, NJB “earth and sky tremble”

Heavens and earth are the two inclusive objects of *Elohim*'s creation in Gen. 1:1. Therefore, they are the two oldest and most permanent aspects of creation.

Their trembling is noted in 2:10. It occurs

1. at YHWH coming to Mt. Sinai, Exod. 19:18; Ps. 68:8
2. at YHWH coming from Seir, Jdgs. 5:4
3. at YHWH's anger, II Sam. 22:8-9; Isa. 13:13; Jer. 51:29
4. at YHWH's eschatological coming, Joel 2:10; 3:16; Haggai 2:6 (also note Hab. 3:6)

The “trembling” (BDB 950, KB 1271, *Qal* PERFECT) in the NT denotes the New Age, New Kingdom, New People that are not to be shaken (cf. Heb. 12:26-28; Isa. 54:10).

▣ **“But the LORD is a refuge for His people”** This term “refuge” (BDB 340, KB 337) is used often of the safety to be found in YHWH.

1. the VERB, II Sam. 22:3; Ps. 2:12; 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 18:2; 25:20; 31:1,19; 34:8,22; 37:40; 57:1; 64:10; 71:1; 118:8,9; 141:8; 144:2; Isa. 57:13
2. the NOUN, Ps. 14:6; 46:1; 61:4; 62:7,8; 71:7; 73:28; 91:2,9; 142:5; Pro. 14:26; Isa. 4:6; 25:4; 32:2; Jer. 17:17

For me, Ps. 18:1-3 and 91:1-4 are the best series of metaphors describing YHWH's protection and care to those who know Him and trust Him and obey Him!

▣ **“And a stronghold to the sons of Israel”** This is another wonderful metaphor of God's protection (BDB 731). “Refuge” and “stronghold” are both found in Ps. 31:2,5; 37:39,40; Isa. 25:4; Nahum 1:7. It is also found in Ps. 27:1; 28:8; 43:2; 52:7; Isa. 17:10; 27:5; Jer. 16:19. Our strength and protection are in YHWH and in Him alone!

3:17 “Then you will know that I am the LORD your God” This emphasizes the personal relationship involved in the Covenant between YHWH and His people (see note at 2:27). This emphasis on personal relationship in the word “know” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) can be seen in Gen. 4:1 and Jer. 1:5.

The term “LORD” is YHWH (BDB 217); the term translated “God” is *Elohim* (BDB 43). These names hold theological significance. See Special Topic: The Names for Deity at Obadiah 1.

▣ **“Zion My holy mountain**

So Jerusalem will be holy” Notice the parallelism: (1) Zion = Jerusalem and (2) holy mountain = temple (Mt. Moriah). Jerusalem is holy because of the personal presence of YHWH. His temple (esp. the Ark of the Covenant) is the special place where heaven and earth meet. YHWH symbolically dwelt between the wings of the *Cherubim* on the lid (mercy seat) of the Ark. Heaven was His dwelling place, but the Ark was His footstool.

▣ **“And strangers will pass through it no more”** This is an emphasis on no more military invasions (cf. Isa. 52:1; Nahum 1:15; Zech. 9:8; 1 Peter 1:4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:18-21

¹⁸And in that day

**The mountains will drip with sweet wine,
And the hills will flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water;
And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD
To water the valley of Shittim.**

¹⁹Egypt will become a waste,

**And Edom will become a desolate wilderness,
Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah,
In whose land they have shed innocent blood.**

²⁰But Judah will be inhabited forever

And Jerusalem for all generations.

²¹And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged,

For the LORD dwells in Zion.

3:18 “it will come about in that day” This metaphor of a special “day” dominates Joel. In 1:1-2:17 it is a day of invasion and destruction because of Israel’s sin, but in 2:28-3:21 it becomes a day of renewal and restoration. This fluctuation illustrates that the coming of YHWH can be for judgment or blessing. Believers’ lifestyle faith determines which one! YHWH wants a holy people to reflect His character to the world. In the end-time this redemptive purpose will be fulfilled and God’s people will be changed and prepared for an eternal fellowship with the one and only creator, redeemer, covenant-making God!

▣ **“the mountains will drip with sweet wine”** This end-time restoration is also seen in Isaiah 35; Amos 9:13-15; and Ezekiel 47. On “sweet wine,” see Special Topic at 2:5.

▣ **“And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water”** There will be seasonal and abundant rain (cf. 2:23), which is the opposite of chapter 1.

▣ **“And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD”** This is a common eschatological motif (cf. Ps. 46:4; 65:9-13; Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8; Rev. 22:1, 2). Water is a sign of the blessings and presence of God (e.g., Ps. 36:5-9; Isa. 12:3).

▣ **“To water the valley of Shittim”** This means “wadi of Acacias” (BDB 1008). Shittim is a place name, but it is on the eastern side of the Jordan River opposite Jericho and, therefore, cannot be the focus of this passage. Therefore, this is another metaphor of agricultural abundance; even the deserts will be well watered and bloom!

3:19 “Egypt. . .Edom will become a desolate wilderness” There has been much discussion as to whether this was to have been fulfilled historically or if these countries are simply traditional enemies used in an

eschatological end-time sense (God's people blessed, unbelievers cursed). It is my opinion that they are traditional enemies used in a symbolic way.

The specific mention of Edom, a much smaller nation than Egypt, probably relates directly to Obadiah (esp. v. 10).

3:20 “Judah will be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem for all generations” This has not been fulfilled historically, which seems to make it eschatological (i.e., Amos 9:15). There is some wonderment today whether the current state of Israel is God's fulfillment of ancient prophecy. I must admit that I have some doubts. However, God uses who and what He wants to accomplish His redemptive purposes!

My doubts about the modern state of Israel being the fulfillment of OT national prophecies are:

1. The modern state of Israel is made up mostly of proselyte Jews, not ethnic Jews (i.e., Russian and European Jews are from the European Kahzar conversion in the Middle Ages (740 A.D.). Therefore, the promises to Abraham and his seed of Genesis 12, 15, 17 cannot be racial, but must be a faith issue (cf. Rom. 2:28-29).
2. The OT covenantal promises are made to a believing, faithful remnant. They are conditional promises! If the NT is God's revelation and Jesus is God's Messiah, then modern Israel is not believing Israel (e.g., Zech. 12:10; Romans 9-11; Galatians 3). See Special Topic: OT Covenant Promises Seem So Different From NT Covenant Promises at 2:28-32.

3:21

NASB “And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged”

NKJV “For I will acquit them of bloodguilt, whom I had not acquitted”

NRSV “I will avenge their blood, and I will not clear the guilty”

TEV “I will avenge those who were killed, I will not spare the guilty”

NJB “I shall avenge their blood and let none go unpunished”

LXX “I will make inquisition for their blood, and will by no means leave it unavenged”

Peshitta “For I will avenge their blood, and I will not absolve the offenders”

REB “I shall avenge their blood, the blood I have not yet avenged”

JPSOA “Thus I will treat as innocent blood which I have not treated as innocent”

This is a very difficult verse to translate (cf. *The Bible in Twenty-six Translations* for a multiplicity of English translations of this ambiguous Hebrew phrase).

The MT Hebrew text has the VERB (BDB 667, KB 720, *Piel* PERFECT) meaning

1. “hold innocent” or “acquit,” cf. Job 9:28; 10:14; Ps. 19:13
2. “leave unpunished,” cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; Jer. 30:11; 46:28

Some translations prefer (BDB 667, KB 721) the meaning “avenge,” cf. II Kgs. 9:7; Jer. 51:36. In context, the “shed innocent blood” of v. 19 must relate to v. 21. Either the Israelites will be forgiven or the invading armies will be held accountable. Whichever it is, Israel is restored and established!

▣ **“For the LORD dwells in Zion”** (cf. 2:27). The term “dwells” (BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is from the same root as *Shekinah*. God dwelling with His people is the emphasis of Genesis 1 and also Rev. 21:3 (also note Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23; John 14:23).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Has this restoration already occurred or is it future?
2. Is this restoration referring to racial Jews only, or is the Church somehow included?
3. When, where and how will the end-time battle occur?
4. Why has there been so much disagreement and controversy over this subject?

INTRODUCTION TO HAGGAI

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. Named after its preacher.
- B. His name means “Festival” (BDB 291). The *yod* or “I” at the end may be an abbreviation for YHWH; if so it could mean “festival of YHWH” (BDB 291, cf. I Chr. 6:30) or the PRONOUN “my,” which would also refer to YHWH.

II. CANONIZATION

- A. This book is part of the “latter prophets” (*Ecclesiasticus* 49:10).
- B. It is part of “the Twelve,” a grouping of minor prophets (*Baba Bathra* 14b):
 - 1. like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, they fit on one scroll
 - 2. they represent the twelve tribes or the symbolic number of organization
 - 3. they reflect traditional view of the books chronology
- C. The order of “the Twelve,” or Minor Prophets, has been linked by many scholars to a chronological sequence. It is obvious that Haggai and Zechariah are paired historically.

III. GENRE

- A. This is a series of four sermons (1:13).
- B. It is not poetic. It is summarized sermons.

IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. Haggai is mentioned in Ezra 5:1; 6:14 and Zech. 8:9, where he is linked with Zechariah. He was probably a returnee from exile.
- B. He is also mentioned in two non-canonical books, I Esdras 6:1; 7:3; II Esdras 1:40; and quoted in another, *Ecclesiasticus* 49:11 (cf. Haggai 2:23).
- C. Jerome (4th century A.D.) says that he was a priest, but this is a misunderstanding derived from 2:10-19.
- D. The Modern commentators Ewald and Pusey suggest that 2:3 implies that he saw Solomon’s Temple, which would make him 70 or 80 years old at the time of writing (i.e. 520 B.C.).

- E. Cyril of Alexandria (5th century A.D.) mentions a general opinion in his day that he was an angel. This is from a misunderstanding of the Hebrew term “messenger” in 1:13.
- F. The Septuagint attributes several Psalms (cf. 112, 126, 127, 137, 146-149) to Haggai and Zechariah.
- G. All of Haggai’s four sermons are recorded in the third person which implies
 1. a common literary technique
 2. a scribe or editor

V. DATE

- A. Haggai was a post-exilic prophet along with Zechariah, his contemporary.
- B. The book is dated from the first day of the sixth month (1:1) until the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (2:10,20) of the second year of Darius I Hystaspes (521-486 B.C.). Therefore, the date is 520 B.C. This was four years before the second Temple was finished in 516 B.C., and fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 25:11-13; 29:10) regarding the seventy years of exile which began in 586 B.C.

VI. CHRONOLOGY OF THE PERIOD (taken from *The Minor Prophets* by Dr. Theo Laetsch, published by Concordia, p. 385.)

Darius' Regnal Year	Year B.C.	Month	Day	Text	Content
2	520	6 Aug/Sept/Oct	1	Hag. 1:1-11	Haggai rouses the people into activity
			24	Hag. 1:12-15	The people begin to build
		7 Oct/Nov	1	Hag. 2:1-9	The latter glory of God's temple
		8 Nov/Dec	?	Zech. 1:1-6	Zechariah begins to prophesy
		9 Dec/Jan	24	Hag. 2:10-19	God will begin to bless
				Hag. 2:20-23	Messiah's kingdom established after overthrow of world powers
	519	11 Feb/Mar	24	Zech. 1:7-6:8	Zechariah's night vision
				Zech. 6:9-15	The crowning of Joshua pre-figuring the Messiah's priesthood
4	518	9 Dec/Jan	4	Zech. 7, 8	Repentance urged; blessing promised

6	516	12 Mar/Apr	3	Ezra 6:15	Dedication of Temple
		?		Zech. 9-14	After dedication of Temple

VII. LITERARY UNITS — They can be outlined by the prophet's sermons.

- A. First Sermon, 1:1-11: Rebuild the Temple!
- B. The leaders and people respond: 1:12-15
- C. Second Sermon, 2:1-9: The Temple size is not the issue!
- D. Third Sermon, 2:10-19: God's blessings will flow if the people obey and rebuild the Temple
- E. Fourth Sermon, 2:20-23: The Universal Reign of the Messiah foreshadowed in Zerubbabel.

VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. The book focuses on the rebuilding of the Second Temple which had been neglected for several years
 - 1. cf. Ezra 5:16 (1st year - under Sheshbazzar)
 - 2. Ezra 3:8-13 (2nd year - under Zerubbabel)
- B. God's promises of immediate physical blessings and future Messianic blessings are linked to the rebuilding of the Temple (i.e., restoration of Mosaic Covenant, which Haggai alludes to several times, cf. 1:6; 2:17).
- C. The size and majesty of the Temple was not the issue. God's presence (a theme started in Genesis, Exodus and emphasized in Joshua and Judges) which it symbolized was the true glory!

HAGGAI 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Haggai Begins Temple Building	The Command to Build God's House	Because the People Have Neglected the Temple, God Has Punished Them	The LORD's Command to Rebuild The Temple	The Summons to Rebuild the Temple
1:1-6	1:1-11	1:1-6	1:1-8	1:1-11
1:7-11		1:7-11	1:9-11	
	The People's Obedience		The People Obey the LORD's Command	
1:12-15	1:12-15	1:12-15a	1:12-15	1:12-15a

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-6

¹In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, ²"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'This people says, 'The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.'"" ³Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ⁴"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house *lies* desolate?" ⁵Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! ⁶You have sown much, but harvest little; *you* eat, but *there is not enough* to be satisfied; *you* drink, but *there is not enough* to become drunk; *you* put on clothing, but no one is warm *enough*; and he who earns, earns wages *to put* into a purse with holes."

1:1 "In the second year of Darius the king" Darius I Hystaspes claimed the throne of Persia after the suicide of Cambyses II, the son of Cyrus II (522 B.C.). Cambyses killed himself because of the revolt of an imposter from Egypt (Gaumata). Darius, the son of Cambyses' general, was with the army when this occurred. He reigned from 522-486 B.C. From all documents we learn that he was friendly to the Jews and an effective ruler. The second year is assumed by most modern scholars to be 520 B.C. See Appendix Four: A Brief Historical Survey of the Powers of Mesopotamia.

▣ **"on the first day of the sixth month"** Haggai is very specific in his dating of his four separate prophecies. It is interesting to note that this first prophecy occurred on the festival of a new moon (cf. Num. 10:10; 28:11-15; I Sam. 20:5; II Kgs. 4:23; Ezra 3:5; Isa. 1:13-14; Ezek. 46:1,3,6; Hos. 1:13; Amos 8:5; Col. 2:16). See Special Topics below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FEASTS OF ISRAEL

- I. Mosaic Annual Feasts (cf. Exod. 23:14-17; Lev. 23; Num 28; Deut. 16)
 - A. All male Jews were required to attend three annual feasts (cf. Exod. 23:14,17; 34:23) if possible.
 - B. These feasts had agricultural as well as national significance.
 - C. Each was a day of rest, worship, and community fellowship.
 - D. The three required annual feasts
 1. Passover (cf. Exod. 12:1-14,21-28; Lev. 23:4-14; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8)
 - a. thanksgiving and dedication of the barley harvest
 - b. commemorates the Exodus
 - c. it was followed by an eight-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Exod. 12:15-20; 34:18-20)
 2. Pentecost (Feast of Weeks, cf. Exod. 23:16; 34:22)
 - a. thanksgiving and dedication of the wheat harvest
 - b. commemorates the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai (by rabbinical reckoning)
 - c. See Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31

3. Tabernacles/Booths/Huts (Succoth)
 - a. thanksgiving for the general harvest
 - b. commemorates the beginning of the wilderness wandering period
 - c. see Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:34-44; Deut. 16:13-17
 - d. it was followed by an eight day feast (cf. Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35-38)

E. Other annual feasts

1. New Year Celebration (Rosh Hashanah)
 - a. see Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6
 - b. this day of rest and sacrifice was held on the first day of Tishri
 - c. the feast aspect of this day, so common in the NT era, is unspecified in the Torah
2. Day of Atonement - "day of covering" or Yom Kippur (the only fast day)
 - a. a day of rest, fasting, and repentance
 - b. a ritual for the removal of corporate uncleanness (tabernacle, priests, and people)
 - c. see Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16; 23:26-32; 25:9; Num. 29:7-11
 - d. it is difficult to pin down when this feast was re-instituted after the Exile

II. Other Mosaic Feast Days

A. the Sabbath

1. weekly day of rest and worship
2. see Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 16:22-30; 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-16; Lev. 23:1-3; Num. 28:9-10

B. Sabbath Year

1. every seventh year the land rested (no sowing)
2. see Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7; Deut. 15:1
3. it signified that YHWH owned the land and gave it to Israel
4. all slaves were set free (cf. Exod. 21:2-6) and all debts were forgiven (cf. Deut. 15:1-6)

C. Jubilee Year

1. every seventh Sabbath year (i.e., 49th year)
2. see Lev. 25:8-18; 27:17-24
3. release of debt and returning of land, freeing of slaves (cf. Lev. 25:10,13, very similar to Sabbath Year)
4. its inauguration is never recorded

D. New Moon

1. special offerings and a day of rest
2. see Num. 10:10; 28:11-15
3. possibly commemorated the setting up of the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 40:2,17)
4. Jewish calendar is based on lunar cycles

III. These rituals and regulations show a development over time. These feasts and fasts may have had a beginning in pagan calendars, but developed into uniquely Jewish praise and devotion to YHWH. Nature (seasonal), agricultural (planting, rain, and harvest), and national events (Exodus, giving of the Law, etc.) combined to highlight certain times of the year for worship.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CALENDARS

Canaanite (I Kgs. 6:1,37-38; 8:2)	Sumerian - Babylonian (Nippur Calendar)	Hebrew (Gezer Calendar)	Modern Equivalents
Abib (“greenheads” of barley)	Nisanu	Nisan	March - April
Zin (spring brilliance)	Ayaru	Iyyar	April - May
	Simanu	Sivan	May - June
	Du-uzu	Tammuz	June - July
	Abu	Ab	July - August
	Ululu	Elul	Aug. - Sept.
Ethanim (permanent water sources)	Teshritu	Tishri	Sept. - Oct.
Bul (rains on produce)	Arah-samna	Marcheshvan	Oct. - Nov.
	Kislimu	Chislev	Nov. - Dec.
	Tebitu	Tebeth	Dec. - Jan.
	Shabatu	Shebat	Jan. - Feb.

▣ **“prophet”** See Appendix One: Introduction to OT Prophecy.

▣ **“Haggai”** See Introduction, Authorship.

▣ **“Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel”** Zerubbabel is a Babylonian name which means “born in Babylon” (BDB 279). He is called the son of Shealtiel in Ezra and Nehemiah and in Matt. 1:12 and Luke 3:27. However, in I Chr. 3:19 his father is listed as Shealtiel’s brother. This can possibly be explained by adoption or Levirite marriage. Zerubbabel was in the line of David. Historical evidence seems to imply that he was the nephew of Sheshbazzar (see fuller notes at Ezra 1:8; 5:14-16). Both were of the royal line of David (cf. II Kings 24, grandson of Jehoiachin).

▣ **“governor of Judah”** This term (BDB 808, cf. Mal. 1:8; Nah. 2:7,9) seems to mean a ruler of one of the many provinces of the satrap or district called “the province beyond the river.”

▣ **“Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest”** Joshua was the grandson of Seraiah, the high priest who was killed when Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. (cf. II Kgs. 25:10-21; I Chr. 6:14). He was of the family of Zadok, the family of priests which David put in authority in the Temple. The name “Joshua” is the same Hebrew word as “Jesus,” which means “YHWH saves” or “Salvation is from YHWH” (BDB 221).

▣ **“saying”** Since Haggai consists in a series of sermons this VERB (BDB 55, KB 65) appears often in the book:

1. *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, 1:1,2,3,13; 2:1,2,10,21
2. *Qal* PERFECT, 1:1,2,7; 2:6,7,9,11
3. *Qal* IMPERFECT, 1:13; 2:12,13(twice),14
4. *Qal* IMPERATIVE, 2:2,21

Speaking was the mechanism of creation (cf. Genesis 1). Speaking is part of the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). It forms the basis for interpersonal relationships. YHWH is not like the lifeless idols that do not speak. He is the God of revelation. He seeks fellowship. He desires communication, which is always a two-way street. He initiates and expects an appropriate response!

1:2

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “the LORD of hosts”

TEV, NIV “the LORD Almighty”

NJB “Yahweh Sabaoth”

NET “The sovereign LORD”

This is a very common post-exilic title. It is used 285 times in all the prophets. It is used in this book in 1:1,5,7,9,14; 2:4,5,7,8,9,11,23. The term “hosts” reflects the military term that means “captain of the armies of heaven” (see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Obad. v. 1). It is a title which depicts YHWH in control of all history.

▣ **“This people says”** This phrase is used in a derogatory sense in Isa. 6:9,10; 8:6; 28:11,14. Here it reflects an excuse that the people were giving, either verbally or by their inactivity, for not rebuilding the Temple. There had been an 18-year lapse since the setting of the foundation by Sheshbazzar (cf. Ezra 5:16). The work continued under Zerubbabel (cf. Ezra 3: 8-13), but for some reason, either political pressure from the surrounding nations or the apathy of the Jewish people, work on the Temple had come to a standstill.

1:4 “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate” The VERB “panel” (BDB 706, KB 764, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) originally meant to “overlay a wall with some type of material.” Often it is used in the OT for the overlay of expensive material (cf. I Kgs. 7:3,7; Jer. 22:14). The implication is that they had built extravagant houses for themselves (i.e., personal prosperity) while the Lord’s house lay in ruins.

1:5 “Consider your ways” Literally this is “put your heart on your roads” (BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, also in v. 7; 2:15,18). They were urged to check their personal and collective motives for the inactivity in rebuilding the national Temple.

1:6 Haggai asserts that the poor harvest was directly related to their lack of honoring YHWH in their failure to finish the Temple, which was the cultic center of the national life of the chosen people. YHWH's covenant with Israel had both benefits and responsibilities (i.e., cursings and blessings, cf. Deuteronomy 27-29). This verse is a series of sharp contrasts (cf. NKJV) made up of eight INFINITIVES (two *Hiphil* INFINITIVES, three *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES and three *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:7-11

⁷Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! ⁸Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified," says the LORD. ⁹"You look for much, but behold, *it comes* to little; when you bring *it* home, I blow it *away*. Why?" declares the LORD of hosts, "Because of My house which *lies* desolate, while each of you runs to his own house. ¹⁰Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands."

1:7 See note at v. 5.

1:8 "Go up to the mountains" There is a series of three IMPERATIVES which implores the people to begin the work immediately. Commands to the people:

1. "go up," BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. "bring wood," BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* PERFECT, but in context it is used as a command
3. "rebuild," BDB 124, KB 139, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

God's emphatic affirmations:

1. "that I may be pleased," BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. there is a possible manuscript variation:
 - a. the MT has BDB 457, KB 455, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, FIRST PERSON SINGULAR (Kethib)
 - b. the MT editors suggest, BDB 457, KB 455, *Niphal* COHORTATIVE, FIRST PERSON SINGULAR (Qere) to match #1

The mountains referred to may be related to the king's forest mentioned in Neh. 2:8; they are probably not the mountains of Lebanon, which would have been prohibitive because of the extreme cost of transporting the timber.



NASB, NKJV	"be glorified"
NRSV	"be honored"
TEV	"be worshiped"
NJB	"manifest My glory there"

This VERB (see above) implies that the restored worship at the central shrine would honor (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 577-587) YHWH. It would visibly demonstrate the restoration of the Covenant God with His covenant community.

See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (*DOXA*)

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers’ glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. 1:29-31; Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*) was originally a commercial term relating to a pair of scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous: (1) it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”; (2) it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God; or (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

1:9-11 Verses 9-11 refer to the prophecy of v. 6. Human effort cannot bring prosperity (cf. Deut. 8:11-20). Human inaction did result in divine inaction (i.e., the regular cycles of nature ceased)!

This theology is directly related to the covenant curses and blessings of Deuteronomy 27-28! Israel is uniquely bound to covenant obedience to YHWH.

1:9 “I blew it away” This VERB (BDB 655, KB 708, *Qal* PERFECT) has both positive (i.e., Gen. 2:7) and negative connotations (i.e., Isa. 40:7; Ezek. 22:21). God’s activity in the OT is accomplished by means of His Spirit (i.e., wind, breath). Post-exilic Israel’s agricultural problems were not a natural cycle, but a divine displeasure!

1:10 Note the personification of physical creation! It is controlled by YHWH (“withheld,” BDB 476, KB 475, *Qal* PERFECT, twice).

1:11 “the grain, on the new wine, on the oil” These were the staple goods of the Palestinian economy (cf. Deut. 11:14; Hos. 2:8, 22). YHWH’s lack of blessing is directly related to the cursing-and-blessing formula found in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 (esp. 28:51; Joel 1:10). God would continue to withhold His blessing until they honored Him, at which point He would bless them. In the OT YHWH often uses nature to confront or bless His people (cf. 2:10-19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:12-15

¹²Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for the LORD. ¹³Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke by the commission of the LORD to the people saying, 'I am with you,' declares the LORD.' ¹⁴So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, ¹⁵on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king.

1:12 “Zerubbabel” See note at 1:1.

▣ **“Joshua”** See note at 1:1.

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “obeyed”

TEV “did”

NJB “paid attention”

This is literally “heard” (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT) with the added connotation of “to hear so as to do.” They acted on YHWH’s message through Haggai.

▣ **“And the people showed reverence for the LORD”** Notice that the people had to first respond (i.e., “obey,” lit. “hear,” BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT and “fear,” BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT) to YHWH in faith and then YHWH blessed them with His presence (cf. II Chr. 15:2; 20:17). There is a balance in the Bible between human effort and God’s undeserved blessing (cf. Phil. 2:12-13).

1:13 Notice the introductory phrase by which the author asserts that YHWH spoke a message to him, which he is passing on in first person. The exact mechanism of the inspiration is not revealed, but that it was a message from God is emphatically stated. The Bible is either a revelation from God or it is a fraud!

▣ **“I am with you, declares the LORD”** The phrase “I am” is a form of YHWH, the covenant name for God, from Exod. 3:14 (see Special Topic: Names for Deity at Obad. v. 1). The great affirmation of God’s presence with them was an answer to the years that the glory had not been there (cf. Ezek. 10:19-20). These people desperately needed to hear that God had renewed the covenant (i.e., Gen. 26:3,24; 28:15; 31:3; Isa. 41:10; 43:2,5; Jer. 1:8,19; 15:20; 30:11; 42:11; 46:28) and that His glory had returned to His people.

1:14 “So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel” As YHWH instigated the revelation to Haggai, so too, He worked (i.e., “stirred up” or “awakened,” BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) in the life of the returning Judean prince, as He did so with many others:

1. Deborah, Jdgs. 5:12
2. Barak, Jdgs. 5:12
3. Pul, King of Assyria, I Chr. 5:26
4. Cyrus, King of Persia, II Chr. 36:22; Ezra 1:1,5; Isa. 13:17; 41:2; 45:13
5. Persian king, Dan. 11:1
6. eschatological army, Joel 3:7,9,12
7. sons of Zion against sons of Greece, Zech. 9:13
8. kings against YHWH’s Messiah, Zech. 13:7

YHWH is in control of history for His redemptive purposes!

▣ **“spirit”** The Hebrew term (BDB 924) here means “the person of.” The NT Special Topic below reflects the Hebrew term’s usage. See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (*PNEUMA*) IN THE NT

The Greek term for “spirit” is used in several ways in the NT. Here are some representative classifications and examples.

- A. of the Triune God
 - 1. of the Father (cf. John 4:24)
 - 2. of the Son (cf. Rom. 8:9-10; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11)
 - 3. of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mark 1:11; Matt. 3:16; 10:20; John 3:5,6,8; 7:39; 14:17; Acts 2:4; 5:9; 8:29,35; Rom. 1:4; 8:11,16; I Cor. 2:4,10,11,13,14; 12:7)
- B. of the human life force
 - 1. of Jesus (cf. Mark 8:12; John 11:33,38; 13:21)
 - 2. of mankind (cf. Matt. 22:43; Acts 7:59; 17:16; 20:22; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; I Cor. 2:11; 5:3-5; 7:34; 15:45; 16:18; II Cor. 2:13; 7:13; Phil. 4:23; Col. 2:5)
- C. of the spiritual realm
 - 1. spiritual beings
 - a. good (i.e., angels, cf. Acts 23:8-9; Heb. 1:14)
 - b. evil (i.e., demonic, cf. Matt. 8:16; 10:1; 12:43,45; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16; 19:12-21; Eph. 6:12)
 - c. ghosts (cf. Luke 24:37)
 - 2. spiritual discernment (cf. Matt. 5:3; 26:41; John 3:6; 4:23; Acts 18:25; 19:21; Rom. 2:29; 7:6; 8:4,10; 12:11; I Cor. 14:37)
 - 3. spiritual things (cf. John 6:63; Rom. 2:29; 8:2,5,9,15; 15:27; I Cor. 9:11; 14:12)
 - 4. spiritual gifts (cf. I Cor. 12:1; 14:1)
 - 5. inspiration of the Spirit (cf. Matt. 22:43; Luke 2:27; Eph. 1:17)
 - 6. spiritual body (cf. I Cor. 15:44-45)
- D. Characterizes
 - 1. the attitude of the world (cf. Rom. 8:15; 11:8; I Cor. 2:12)
 - 2. thinking process of humans (cf. Acts 6:10; Rom. 8:6; I Cor. 4:2)
- E. of the physical realm
 - 1. wind (cf. Matt. 7:25,27; John 3:8; Acts 2:2)
 - 2. breath (cf. Acts 17:25; II Thess. 2:8)

It is obvious that this term must be interpreted in light of its immediate context. There are various shades of meaning which can refer to (1) the physical world; (2) the unseen world; (3) as well as persons of this physical world or of the spiritual realm.

The Holy Spirit is that part of the Triune God who is supremely active in this stage of history. The new age of the Spirit has come. All that is good, holy, right, and true relates to Him. His presence, gifts, and ministry are crucial to the furtherance of the gospel and the success of the Kingdom of God (cf. John 14 and 16). He does not draw attention to Himself, but to Christ (cf. John 16:13-14). He convicts, convinces, woos, baptizes, and matures all believers (cf. John 16:8-11).

▣ **“all the remnant”** This term (BDB 984, cf. v. 12) has important theological significance in some texts, but here it refers to all of those who returned to Palestine from Babylonian exile.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES

The OT concept of “a faithful remnant” is a recurrent theme of the Prophets (mostly in the eighth century prophets and Jeremiah). It is used in three senses:

1. those who survived the Exile (e.g., Isa. 10:20-23; 17:4-6; 37:31-32; Jer. 42:15,19; 44:12,14,28; Amos 1:8)
2. those who remained faithful to YHWH (e.g., Isa. 4:1-5; 11:11,16; 28:5; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-9; 7:18-20)
3. those who are a part of the eschatological renewal and recreation (e.g., Amos 9:11-15)

In this context God chooses only some (those with a faithful zeal) of the remnant (survivors of the Exile) to return to Judah. As we have seen before in this chapter, themes from Israel’s past recur (v. 6). God is reducing the numbers so that He can show His power, provision, and care (e.g., Gideon, Jdgs. 6-7).

▣ **“the LORD of hosts”** See Special Topic at Obadiah verse 1.

1:15 Many have assumed a wrong date in v. 15, but this is possibly related to the length of time (approximately 3½ months) it took to gather the materials for the beginning of construction. The NRSV, JPSOA, and NJB see v. 15b as starting a new literary unit.

HAGGAI 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Builders Encouraged	The Coming Glory of God's House	The New Temple To Be More Splendid than the Old	The Splendor of the New Temple	The Future Glory of the Temple
2:1-9	2:1-5 2:6-9	1:15b-2:9	2:1-5 2:6-9	2:1-9
2:10-19	The People Are Defiled 2:10-14	The Offering Made By a Defiled People Is Unclean 2:10-14	The Prophet Consults the Priests 2:10-12a 2:12b 2:13a 2:13b 2:14	Haggai Consults the Priests 2:10-14
	Promised Blessing 2:15-19	When the Foundation of the Temple Is Laid, God Will Bless This Needy, Obedient People 2:15-19	The LORD Promises His Blessings 2:15-19	A Promise of Agricultural Prosperity 2:15-19a 2:19b
2:20-23	Zerubbabel Chosen As A Signet 2:20-23	When the LORD Establishes the Kingdom, Zerubbabel Will Be the Messiah 2:20-23	The LORD's Promise to Zerubbabel 2:20-23	The Promise to Zerubbabel 2:20-23

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-9

¹On the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet saying, ²"Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people saying, ³'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison? ⁴But now take courage, Zerubbabel,' declares the LORD, 'take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,' declares the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' declares the LORD of hosts. ⁵As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!' ⁶For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. ⁷I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁸'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,' declares the LORD of hosts. ⁹'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and in this place I will give peace,' declares the LORD of hosts.'"

2:1 “On the twenty-first of the seventh month” This was on the seventh day of the eight-day Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23:39-42, when Haggai spoke to the people concerning the blessings of God).

▣ **“by Haggai”** The Hebrew text has “by the hand of Haggai” (BDB 388 CONSTRUCT BDB 291). This can be seen in two ways:

1. a common idiomatic usage of “through someone” (i.e., 1:1,3)
2. a written, as well as spoken, message

In light of the wide semantic usage of “hand,” #1 seems best.

2:2 “Speak now” This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. See note at 1:1.

▣ **“Zerubbabel”** See note at 1:1.

▣ **“Joshua”** See note at 1:1.

▣ **“remnant”** See note at 1:14.

2:3 Notice verse 3 has three rhetorical questions (so common in post-exilic prophets).

▣ **“Who is left among you who saw this Temple in its former glory”** Many have assumed that Haggai saw the Temple before its destruction (i.e., 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar’s army). If so, he was a very elderly man at this time (i.e., exile lasted 70 years, cf. Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10. This is one of the more literal usages

of the number 70, 586 B.C.-516 B.C.). However, this may simply refer to the elders of the community who had seen the former Temple and were growing more discouraged (cf. Ezra 3:12).

The “former glory” may refer to Ezek. 10:19-20, where there is an explanation of the glory of YHWH leaving the Temple and moving east with the exiles. If so, the old men were discouraged because the *Shekinah* glory had not returned to rest on the new structure (cf. I Kgs. 8:10-12).

2:4 “take courage. . .take courage. . .take courage. . .work” This series of four *Qal* IMPERATIVES tries to deal with the discouragement which was developing among the post-exilic community in rebuilding the smaller Temple. God answered this attitude problem by reaffirming His presence with them (cf. the end of v. 4).

All parts of the post-exilic community are addressed (BDB 304, KB 302).

1. Zerubbabel (the civil leadership)
2. Joshua (the priestly leadership)
3. the remnant/the people of the land (this term has different connotations in different periods of Israel’s history. Here it refers to all returnees).

All are called on to “work” (BDB 738, KB 889). This was a national temple! These same words were said to Solomon by David as he began the work of YHWH’s temple (cf. I Chr. 28:20).

▣ **“I am with you”** See note at 1:13. This was YHWH’s word to Moses, to Joshua, and to His people!

▣ **“the LORD of hosts”** See note at 1:2. This phrase occurs five times, but the wording is not exactly the same. The one found here is a concluding phrase, like vv. 8 and 9.

2:5 “As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt” This sentence is not found in the Septuagint, but it seems to reflect the Sinaitic covenant (cf. Exodus 19-20). This was prophesied in Gen. 15:12-21.

The term “made” equals “cut” (BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* PERFECT), which often refers to cutting a covenant (i.e., Gen. 15:10,17). These people desperately needed to know that God had renewed His covenant with them.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith*, covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial to understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God’s sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God’s character and actions

1. creation itself (cf. Gen. 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Gen. 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deut. 27-28)

This same tension involving God's relationship to humanity is addressed in the "new covenant." The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezek. 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37 (YHWH's action). Is the covenant based on God's gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Gen. 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God's character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God's law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not God's covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Rom. 7; Gal. 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

▣ **"My Spirit is abiding in your midst"** During the Exodus period God's Spirit is spoken of quite often (cf. Num. 11:17,25,29; Isa. 63:11,14). See note at 1:9 ("I blow it away") and 1:14 ("spirit of"). Here Spirit is theologically parallel to YHWH Himself (i.e., Zech. 7:12).

▣ **"do not fear"** The term "fear" (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is used often in Scripture to encourage

1. Abraham, Gen. 15:1
2. Hagar, Gen. 21:17
3. Isaac, Gen. 26:24
4. Jacob, Gen. 46:3
5. Joshua, Josh. 8:1; 10:8; 11:6
6. Gideon, Jdgs. 6:23
7. often through the Prophets to Israel (i.e., Zech. 8:13).

Often fear can result in faith (cf. Exod. 14:13,31). This phrase is a recurrent message from YHWH to Israel through Moses in Deuteronomy. An awesome respect for God opens many spiritual doors!

2:6

NASB	“Once more in a little while”
NKJV	“Once more (it is a little while)”
NRSV	“Once again, in a little while”
TEV	“Before long”
NJB	“A little while now”

This is the only passage in Haggai which is quoted in the NT (cf. Heb. 12:26). The first question one would naturally ask is “when was the first time God shook the heavens and earth?”

1. creation (Genesis 1-2)
2. fall (Genesis 3)
3. exodus (Exodus 19-20)
4. a special visitation of YHWH

Number 3 is the best guess!

The second question is “what does a little while mean”? This is used several times in the OT to denote the soon-coming judgment of YHWH (cf. Ps. 37:10; Jer. 51:33; Hosea 1:4) or the cessation of His judgment (cf. Isa. 10:25; 29:17). In Prophetic and Apocalyptic literature, immediacy is always an aspect of the message. In Prophetic literature the future is determined by the present (repent or be judged). In Apocalyptic literature God’s breaking into history is always just ahead, very soon. This expectancy is carried over into the NT theme of the Second Coming of Christ (cf. Rev. 1:13; 22:6). This kind of literature sees history as redemptive peaks or events that are seen in close proximity. Three books have really helped me in this area:

1. *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart
2. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks* by Sandy
3. *Cracking Old Testament Codes* by Sandy and Giese

Western people see literalism as a mark of biblical conservatism. The intent of the original author is the key to conservatism! The genre they chose to communicate their message is a literary contract with the reader on how to understand it (i.e. God’s message).

▣ The VERB “shake” (BDB 950, KB 1271) is used as a PARTICIPLE in v. 6 and the *Hiphil* PERFECT in v. 7. It has several possible connotations:

1. shaking in fear, cf. v. 5; Ezek. 12:18
2. shaking in an earthquake
 - a. apocalyptic metaphor of YHWH’s approach, cf. Jdgs. 5:4; II Sam. 22:8; Ps. 68:8; Isa. 13:13; 29:6
 - b. metaphor of trembling at YHWH’s approach, Ezek. 38:20
3. shaking as a metaphor of military invasion, cf. 2:21-22; Isa. 14:16 (chariots, Jer. 47:3)
4. sound of YHWH’s portable throne chariot, cf. Ezek. 3:12-13

In this context (vv. 1-9), #2 fits best. By supernatural means YHWH will cause the nations to rebuild His temple. Chapter 2 has a Messianic theme (i.e., v. 23). The end-time activity involves the nations, both in salvation (cf. Joel) and in judgment (cf. 2:22).

2:7 “And I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all the nations” Many rabbis (i.e., Akiba), the Vulgate, and the King James Version all translate this as a specific Messianic passage (i.e., NKJV, “they shall come to the Desire of All Nations,” cf. Malachi 3:1; see *Hard Sayings of*

the Bible, pp. 341-342). The context seems to demand that the nations (cf. Isa. 60:5,11; 61:6) will bring material wealth to the Temple to help rebuild it (i.e., the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius, and in later time, Herod the Idumean). This follows the interpretation of the Septuagint, Rabbi Kimchi, and Calvin (see *Questions and Answers* by F. F. Bruce, p. 37). “The nations bring wealth” is a metaphor of tribute being brought to a universal king (cf. Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19; Isa. 6:3; 9:6-7; Micah 5:4-5a).

☐ **“I will fill this house with glory”** The VERB (BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* PERFECT) reflects YHWH’s promise. The question is, “what does ‘glory’ stand for?” Assuming the NT is YHWH’s fulfillment of OT themes in Christ, then Luke 2:32 defines it as

1. the Messiah
2. His universal reign (including Gentiles)

2:8 “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine” YHWH asserts His ownership and control over all material resources (i.e., as Creator); therefore, the builders of the second Temple are not to be discouraged. YHWH will provide all that is needed from outside resources (i.e., for the tabernacle, Exod. 12:35-36; for Solomon’s Temple, I Chr. 29:14,16; and now for the Second temple, Ezra 6:5).

2:9 “the latter glory of this house will be greater than the former” This must be interpreted in light of two contexts:

1. return from exile and later to Herod’s temple
2. eschatological, to YHWH’s presence (cf. Zech. 2:5) in the person of His chosen One (cf. v. 23, i.e., a king of the tribe of Judah [Gen. 49:10] and family of Jesse [II Samuel 7]).

Many commentators relate this to a temple which will the Antichrist will enter and take his seat (cf. II Thessalonians 2); however, no Jewish temple ever had a seat (except the throne of Zeus put there by Antiochus IV during the interbiblical period, i.e., the abomination of desolation). See Special Topic at Joel 2:28-32.

☐ **“and in this place I shall give peace”** This seems to have an eschatological element (cf. vv. 20-23). Many see the word “peace” (BDB 1022), which equals the word *shalom*, as a reference to the Messiah (cf. Isa. 9:6); this is certainly possible because of Hag. 2:20-23.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:10-19

¹⁰On the twenty-fourth of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Haggai the prophet, saying, ¹¹“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Ask now the priests *for* a ruling: ¹²‘If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any *other* food, will it become holy?’” And the priests answered, “No.” ¹³Then Haggai said, “If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will *the latter* become unclean?” And the priests answered, “It will become unclean.” ¹⁴Then Haggai said, “So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean. ¹⁵But now, do consider from this day onward: before one stone was placed on another in the temple of the LORD, ¹⁶from that time *when* one came to a *grain* heap of twenty *measures*, there would be only ten; and *when* one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there would be *only* twenty. ¹⁷I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew and hail; yet you did not come *back* to Me,’ declares the LORD. ¹⁸Do consider from this day onward,

from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month; from the day when the temple of the LORD was founded, consider: ¹⁹Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit. Yet from this day on I will bless you.'"

2:11-19 This is a very difficult passage to interpret. It seems to be a condemnation of the people's selfish actions in stopping the work on the Temple. They were possibly relying on (1) the fact that they lived in the Holy Land; (2) that they were a part of the blessed ones, the remnant that returned; (3) that they were already offering sacrifices at the restored altar. However, this priestly parable shows that sin is passed on more readily than righteousness, and that just because they were in the Holy Land and offering sacrifices did not mean that God was pleased (cf. 1:8). Their apathy in not rebuilding the Temple had affected every aspect of their lives. However, this was all over now because the reconstruction on the Temple had begun again.

2:11 The term "ruling" (BDB 435) is the Hebrew word *torah*, which the rabbis used to denote the writings of Moses (Genesis - Deuteronomy). The etymology of the word is uncertain.

1. from "throw" or "shoot" (BDB 435 I)
2. from "teach" (BDB 435 II, KB 436 III, also note 1710)
3. from Akkadian "direction" or "order" or "instruction"

The basic idea is instructions or directions. This word takes on theological significance when these guidelines come from YHWH.

In this context it refers to an opinion given by the priests about a particular question of "clean vs. unclean." In context the whole passage is functioning as a parable (punch line, v. 14, very similar to Isa. 1:1-11 and Mal. 1:6-14).

2:12 "holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches" (cf. Exod. 29:37; Ezek. 44:19; and Matt. 23:19)

2:13 "If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these" (cf. Lev. 22:4; Num. 3:9; 19:2)

2:15

NASB "from this day onward:"

NKJV "from this day forward:"

NRSV "from this day on"

NJB "today and henceforth"

This is literally "from this day and upwards" (BDB 751, cf. v. 18). This idiom usually refers to the future (e.g., I Sam. 16:13; 30:25). Notice that NASB and NKJV put a colon after this phrase, while NIV puts a dash. This is an attempt to show that 15b-17 form a unit somewhat unrelated to 15a.

The Septuagint, followed by the JPSOA, NEB, REB, and NET Bible, see the phrase as retroactive. However, there is no usage of this idiom in the Hebrew Bible which is used in this sense. This sense does not fit the idioms used in v. 18.

2:15,18 There is a word play on "consider" (lit. "set your heart") and "one stone set on another." This wordplay (BDB 962, KB 1321) occurs in v. 15 and v. 18.

2:16-17,19 These verses speak of a divine judgment on Israel's agriculture (cf. 1:6,9-11).

2:16	
NASB	“from that time”
NKJV	“since those <i>days</i> ”
NRSV	“how did you fare”
TEV	“you would go to”
NJB	“what state were you in”
LXX	“what manner of men were you”
REB	“how were you then”

The MT has “since they were” (BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, NASB footnote). It is the LXX that has a question, which may reflect a different Hebrew manuscript. There are several Hebrew precursors to the Masoretic Text. This variety can be seen in the manuscripts from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some follow the MT, some the LXX, and some neither. The MT was an attempt to standardize multiple manuscript traditions.

It is possible that the Hebrew word reflects an idiom, the exact meaning of which has been lost. Our only sure backup is context, context, context!

2:17 “Yet you did not come back to me,’ declares the LORD” The purpose of the agricultural failures (cf. Amos 4:6-13, esp. v. 9, which may be quoted here; an allusion to Deuteronomy 27-29) was to bring the covenant people back into a covenant relationship! Outward form was not enough (i.e., restored sacrificial system).

2:18 “from this day forward” This is the same difficult construction as v. 16 (see notes), but here the context demands a forward look, as v. 16 demanded a backward look.

2:19 “from this day on I will bless you” As they returned to YHWH with a whole heart, symbolized by their desire and actions, YHWH reversed the covenant curses. This blessing is first of all YHWH Himself and then the promised abundance of covenant fidelity (cf. Joel 2:14; Mal. 3:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:20-23

²⁰Then the word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth *day* of the month, saying, ²¹“Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, ‘I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. ²²I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.’ ²³On that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will make you like a signet *ring*, for I have chosen you,’” declares the LORD of hosts.

2:20 “a second time” On the 24th day of the ninth month, Haggai received two related messages from YHWH (cf. v. 10). Both involve a new day of obedience and blessing:

1. 2:10-19, the post-exilic period
2. 2:20-23, the Messianic age

Both are aspects of the cursing and blessing motifs. Obedient Israel will be blessed, but the disobedient nations will be destroyed. Both of these actions are metaphors of YHWH’s intended universal redemption to be brought through His Messiah.

2:21 “shake” See note at 2:6-7.

2:22 This is an allusion to the eschatological kingdom of God, brought into history by a military defeat of the nations, expressed in apocalyptic language. This section implies that, through Zerubbabel (cf. v. 23), God’s Messianic promise (i.e., II Samuel 7) has been re-established (cf. Matt. 1:12-13).

▣ **“I will overthrow”** Notice the divine wrath:

1. “overthrow” - BDB 245, KB 253, *Qal* PERFECT (twice), cf. Gen. 19:25,29; Job 34:25; Pro. 12:7; YHWH will overthrow the wicked
2. “destroy” - BDB 1029, KB 1552, lit. “exterminate,” *Hiphil* PERFECT; this is the VERB used so often in the conquest of the Promised Land

This is an allusion to the victory of YHWH over the Egyptians at the Red (Reed) Sea. He will reestablish His covenant people.

The question remains, does this refer to Israel alone? I think not. Please read the Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at Joel 2:32! I am not anti-Semitic, but pro-mankind! If monotheism is true, if all humans are created in the image of God, if Gen. 3:15 refers to humanity, then there must be a universal, eternal redemption plan!

2:23 “My servant” This is an exalted title (BDB 713) used of those ancient servants such as Abraham (Gen. 26:24); Moses (i.e., Num. 12:7; Deut. 34:5; Josh. 18:7; Num. 12:7); Joshua (Josh. 24:29); David (II Sam. 3:18; 7:5,8,26); Hezekiah (II Chr. 32:16); and Zerubbabel (i.e., “Branch,” Zech. 3:8; 6:12). It is a title for the Messiah (i.e., Servant Songs of Isaiah, cf. Isa. 41:8; 42:1; 49:5, 6; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11).

▣ **“the signet ring”** This (BDB 368) is a sign of authority and power. Obviously, Zerubbabel is being addressed because of his relation to the exiled Davidic king at the time of the Babylonian exile (i.e., II Samuel 7).

▣ **“I have chosen you”** This is another emphasis on God’s choosing (BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* PERFECT) both Israel and the Messiah to fulfill His purposes (cf. I Kgs. 1:13; I Chr. 28:4; Neh. 9:7; Ps. 135:4; Zech. 1:17). As YHWH chose David (cf. I Sam. 16:12; Ps. 78:70), He now chooses his descendant (cf. II Samuel 7).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR HAGGAI 1-2

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the major thrust of the book of Haggai?
2. Why did the remnant have such a hard time in their return to the Promised Land?
3. What sections of chapter 2 are Messianic and why?
4. Explain in your own words the parable or Rabbinical interpretation in 2:10-19.
5. Why are such great things said about Zerubbabel when we know from history that so little happened with him?

INTRODUCTION TO MALACHI

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. It is named after the prophet.
- B. His name means “My messenger” (BDB 521 #1).
 - 1. It could be a title, “my messenger,” cf. 3:1.
 - 2. It could mean “My angel” (BDB 521 #2).
 - 3. It could be a proper name (BDB 522).

II. CANONIZATION

- A. This book is part of the “latter prophets” (cf. *Ecclesiasticus* 49:10).
- B. It is part of “the Twelve,” a grouping of minor prophets (*Baba Bathra* 14b)
 - 1. Like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, they fit on one scroll.
 - 2. Represent the twelve tribes or the symbolic number of organization.
 - 3. Reflect traditional view of the books chronology.
- C. The order of “the Twelve” or Minor Prophets has been linked by many scholars to a chronological sequence. Malachi is obviously the last minor prophet.

III. GENRE

- A. It uses diatribe to communicate truth. This is a question-and-answer format. A truth was presented and then a supposed objector asked a question or made a comment to which the speaker responded.
- B. Malachi has been called “the Hebrew Socrates.”
- C. Both Paul and James used this same method (i.e., diatribe) to present truth.
- D. This genre structure can be seen in, “But you say. . .,” 1:2, 6, 7(twice), 12, 13; 2:14, 17 (twice); 3:7, 8, 13, 14.
- E. It is not Hebrew poetry, but similar. The NIV Study Bible calls it “lofty prose,” p. 1424.

IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. The Hebrew term “*malachi*” used in 1:1 means “angel” or “messenger” (BDB 521).
 - 1. Most take it as a proper name (BDB 522).

2. The LXX takes it as a title (cf. 3:1).
 3. Origen thought it referred to an angel.
- B. The Talmud (*Mecillah* 15a) said Mordecai wrote the book.
 - C. The Aramaic Targum of Jonathan said that it was a title for Ezra. This interpretation was followed by Jerome, Rashi and Calvin.
 - D. In *Antiquities of the Jews* 11:4-5 Josephus mentions all the post-exilic persons by name except Malachi.
 - E. His name does not appear in conjunction with any NT quotes from this book.
 - F. II Esdras lists the post-exilic prophets as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.
 - G. Since no other prophetic book is anonymous, Malachi must have been a proper name. Remember, authorship does not affect inspiration.

V. DATE

- A. There is great similarity between the historical setting of the post-exilic books of Nehemiah and Malachi:
 1. tension over tithing, Mal. 3:8; Neh. 10:32-39
 2. oppression of the poor, Mal. 3:5; Neh. 5:1-5
 3. inter-religious marriages, Mal. 2:10,11; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-24 (Ezra 9:1-2)
- B. The best guess for a date is between 450-430 B.C., after Nehemiah's return to the court of Artaxerxes I, Neh. 13:6.

VI. HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HEBREWS AND EDOM, 1:2-5

- A. The Israelites were told to respect them as relatives
 1. Numbers 20:14
 2. Deuteronomy 2:4-6
- B. The Israelites had many confrontations with them
 1. Numbers 20:14-21
 2. Judges 11:16ff
 3. I Samuel 14:47-48
- C. Prophecies against Edom
 1. Numbers 24:18
 2. Isaiah 34:5ff; 63:1ff
 3. Jeremiah 49:7ff

4. Lamentations 4:21-22
5. Ezekiel 26:12ff; 35:13ff; 36:2-6
6. Amos 1:11-12

VII. LITERARY UNITS

- A. The outline of Malachi follows his six disputations or diatribes. Malachi spoke for God, the people responded, and Malachi spoke for God again.
- B. Basic Outline
 1. God's love for the returning Jews, 1:2-5
 2. God's condemnation of the priests, 1:6-2:9
 3. God's condemnation of divorce and mixed-religious marriage, 2:10-16
 4. God's condemnation of their bad attitude (Where is the God of justice?), 2:17-3:6
 5. God's condemnation of their support of the Temple, 3:7-12
 6. God's condemnation of their bad attitude (It is vain to serve God!), 3:13-4:3
 7. A final admonition and promise, 4:4-6

VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. Malachi documents the sins of apathy and disillusionment of the returning Jews.
- B. This book has several universal statements. God will use Israel to reach the world, 1:5, 11, 14; 3:12.
- C. God's people are impugning His character
 1. 2:17 - God does not act in justice.
 2. 3:6 - God's unchanging character is the only reason Israel still exists.
 3. 3:14 - It is vain to serve God.
- D. This book has a Messianic hope, 3:1; 4:5.

THEOLOGICAL THEMES OF MALACHI

- I. The Covenant God (reveals Himself by names and acts)
 - A. Terms for God
 1. YHWH (YHWH Sabbaoth = LORD of Hosts, 1:8, 10, 11, 14, etc.) 1:1,2, 7, 12, 13, 14, etc.
 - a. Special covenant name for God (cf. Exod. 3:14), from the Hebrew “to be”
 - b. The rabbis say it speaks of God’s covenant mercy and loyalty
 - c. Parallel to “God of Heaven” in Ezra-Nehemiah. YHWH Sabbaoth is used 24 times in this brief book. This title is used often in Zechariah and Haggai.
 2. Father, 1:6 (twice)
 - a. Analogy applied to God, 1:6; 2:10; 3:17
 - b. God’s major way of communicating His love towards man in the use of intimate family terms.
 3. Adonai (Lord), 1:6 (twice)
 - a. Term originally meant “master,” “owner,” “husband,” or “Lord”
 - b. Significant use in 3:1 where it is parallel to “messenger of the covenant”
 4. King, 1:14 - This concept goes back to I Sam. YHWH had always been Israel’s true king
 5. El, 1:9; 2:10, 11, and *Elohim*, 2:16, 17; 3:8, 14, 15, 18
 - a. This is the plural form of the general name for God in the ancient near east. “*El*” equals “Mighty One.”
 - b. The rabbis say it speaks of God as Creator, Ruler and Judge.
 6. “LORD of Hosts,” 1:4, 8, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, etc. This is the characteristic title for God in the post-exilic books. It means the commander of the army of heaven. It is used twenty-four times in only fifty-five verses.
 - B. His name reflects God’s character and purpose
 1. (Priests) who despise My name, 1:6 (twice)
 2. My name will be great among the nations, 1:11 (twice)
 - a. Future Gentiles, Acts 10:35; Rom. 2:14-15
 - b. Scattered Jews - Diaspora
 - c. Eschatological
 3. You (Priests) are profaning it, 1:12
 4. My name is feared among the nations, 1:14
 5. To give honor to My name, 2:2 (1:6)
 - a. Notice this refers to the religious leaders
 - b. Attitude is crucial
 6. Stood in awe of My name, 2:5
 - a. God’s acts of life and peace demanded appropriate response
 - b. Particularly from the sons of Levi

7. Those who esteem His name, 3:16
 - a. Spoke of God to each other
 - b. Written in Book of Life
8. You who fear My name, 4:2, 5

II. Covenant Apathy

- A. Diatribe Structure, 1:2, 6, 7 (twice), 12, 13; 2:14, 17 (twice) 3:7, 8, 13, 14:
 1. later rabbinical teaching form
 2. Malachi is often called “Hebrew Socrates”
 3. Paul uses this method in Romans
 4. James uses this method in James
- B. Apathy seen in neglect and abuses
 1. blemished sacrifices, 1:7, 8
 - a. blind, 1:8
 - b. lame, 1:8, 13
 - c. sick, 1:8, 13
 - d. stolen, 1:13
 - e. blemished, 1:14
 2. foreign marriages and domestic divorces, 2:11-16
 3. priestly activities
 - a. sacrificial irregularities, 1:6-14
 - b. teaching and judging irregularities, 2:1-9
 - c. purification of the sons of Levi, 3:3
 - d. godly activities, 2:6-8
 - (1) revere and honor God, 2:5
 - (2) true teaching, 2:6, 7
 - (3) walk with God in peace and justice, 2:6
 - (4) spokesman for God, 2:7
 4. tithing of people, 3:8-10
 - a. tithes
 - b. contributions
 - c. connected promise of Deut., blessings (27-28), 3:10-11
 5. God’s justice and character impugned, 2:17; 3:13-18
 - a. everyone who does evil is called good, 2:17
 - b. it is vain to serve God, 3:14
 - c. it will be set right, 4:3

III. Covenant Renewal

- A. Judgment on Improper Response
 1. judgment on unbelieving Edom, 1:2-4
 2. curse on covenant cheating, 1- 3:9; 1:14; 2:2 (twice)

3. judgment theme connected with coming Messenger, who is Judge, 3:2, 5
 - a. refiner's fire
 - b. fuller's soap
 - c. King James has "Sun" in 4:2, but term is feminine
 4. that day, 3:3
 - a. day of judgment, 3:18; 4:1, 5
 - b. day of salvation, 3:17
- B. Special Messenger Coming
1. special preparer, 3:1; 4:5
 - a. comes before "messenger of covenant"
 - b. called Elijah
 - c. Jesus identifies this one as John the Baptist, Matt. 11:14; 12: 9-13
 - d. John asserts that he is not literally Elijah, John 1:21
- C. His Gracious Covenant Acts
1. special love and calling of Jacob, 1:2-5
 2. their expectation of God's gracious response, 1:9
 3. God's love for all men was to be clearly visible in Israel, 1:5, 11, 14, 3:12
 4. special day for covenant people, 3:17
 5. special day of freedom, 4:2
 6. God will change hearts, 4:6
- D. Themes of judgment and hope interspersed
1. judgment, 2:2-3, 5
 2. hope, 3:1, 4, 6
 3. judgment, 4:5, 6
 4. hope, 4:6

MALACHI 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Love for Jacob		Superscription		
1:1	1:1 Israel Beloved of God	1:1 God Loves Israel	1:1 The LORD's Love for Israel	1:1 The Love of Yahweh for Israel
1:2-5	1:2-5 (2-3) (4a) (4b-5)	1:2-5	1:2a 1:2b 1:2c-3 1:4 1:5	1:2-5
Sin of the Priests	Polluted Offerings	The Priests Have Despised Their God and Their Solemn Vocation (1:6-2:9)	The LORD Reprimands the Priests (1:6-2:9)	An Indictment of the Priests (1:6-2:9)
1:6-14	1:6-14 (6) (7-8) (9-11) (12-14)	1:6-2:3	1:6-8 1:9-14	1:6-11 1:12-14

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1

¹**The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.**

1:1 “The oracle” The word means “utterance” or “oracle” (BDB III, cf. II Kgs. 9:25; II Chr. 24:27; Isa. 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1,11; 22:1; 23:1; 30:6; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Mal. 1:1). It can also mean “burden” or “donkey’s load” (BDB 672 II). The basic concept is “that which is lifted” (BDB 672 I). Therefore, it could represent

1. the voice lifted to speak
2. the emotional release of giving God’s message
3. the difficult message to give to God’s people

▣ **“the LORD”** There are several titles for God listed in this chapter: (1) the “LORD” equals YHWH, which is the covenant name for God, v. 1; (2) “Father,” v. 6; (3) *Adonai*, which means “master” or “lord,” v. 6; (4) “the LORD of Hosts,” which means “commander of the army of heaven,” vv. 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, etc. This term is used 24 times in 55 verses. It is the characteristic title for God in the post-Exilic period. It is possibly related to the Persian title for Ahura Mazda. (5) “the King,” v. 14 (cf. I Sam. 8:7). See Special Topic: The Names for Deity at Obadiah v. 1.

▣ **“to Israel”** This refers to the children of Jacob who was renamed Israel (cf. Gen. 32:28; 35:10). The meaning of the name is uncertain. See Special Topic at Joel 3:1. This title was previously used for the northern ten tribes, but after the Babylonian Exile it again became the title for the united nation.

▣ **“Malachi”** See Introduction.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:2-5

²**“I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob's brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob; ³but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”**
⁴**Though Edom says, “We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins”; thus says the Lord of hosts, “They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever.”** ⁵**Your eyes will see this and you will say, “The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!”**

1:2 “I have loved you” What a powerful way to start a prophetic book. This VERB (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT) is used three times in this one verse:

1. two *Qal* PERFECTS
2. one *Qal* IMPERFECT

This word speaks to the intimate personal relationship involved in covenant faith! This is what allows God to be seen as

1. a Father (Mal. 1:6)
2. a lover (Hosea 1-3)
3. a near kin (Ruth, cf. 4:1,3,6,8,14)

It is His longsuffering love for the covenant people that causes Him to enter into the diatribe of Malachi. He starts the conversation with His own character (cf. 3:6). See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel’s God at Joel 2:13.

▣ **“But you say”** This formula (most are *Qal* PERFECTS) is repeated several times throughout the book (vv. 2,6 [twice],12,13; 2:14 [twice],17; 3:7,8,13,14) and forms the structure of the literary technique used by this author to communicate truth (i.e. diatribe). The rabbis used this very same question and answer form in the Talmud. Malachi is often called “the Hebrew Socrates” because of this particular form of teaching. This is very similar to Paul, James, and John’s use of diatribe in the books of Romans, James, and I John.

▣ **“How has Thou loved us”** This question highlights the underlying resentment that most of the returnees felt toward God for the difficult times they faced after they, in faith, left Babylon and returned to Judah. They were only a remnant of the exiled Jewish community. They were the ones who left everything to return.

1:3 “Yet I have hated Esau” Paul quotes this in Rom. 9:13. Esau (i.e. Edom) stands for all non-covenant people, especially the enemies of God’s people! The VERB (BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT) is apparently a Hebrew idiom of comparison (cf. Gen. 29:30-32; Deut. 21:15-18; Prov, 13:24; Matt. 6:24; 10:37; Luke 14:26, see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 347-348). This is not a rejection of individuals (same as Romans 9), but a way of showing the removal of a traditional, national enemy of the covenant people.

▣

NASB “and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness”

NKJV “his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness”

NRSV “his heritage a desert for jackals”

TEV “abandoned the land to jackals”

NJB “his heritage into dwellings in the wastelands”

The NKJV follows the MT. The NJB follows the Septuagint. The JPSOA says the Hebrew is uncertain and translates it as “his territory a home for beasts of the desert.” The theological concept behind this statement is twofold:

1. total destruction, no human population
2. the presence of the demonic (i.e., cursed)

See Introduction to Obadiah for a complete list of prophecies against Edom.

1:4 “Though Edom says” Edom was a descendant of Esau (cf. Gen. 36:1).

▣ **“They may build, but I will tear down”** Edom was a proud nation (cf. Jer. 49:14-22; Obad. vv. 1-4). Most biblical historians see this as a prediction of the Nabatean invasion of Edom (500-450 B.C., cf. I Maccabees, chap. 4 and 5).



NASB “indignant”

NKJV “indignation”

NRSV, TEV,

NJB “angry”

The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1129, says of this VERB (BDB 276, KB 277, *Qal* PERFECT) that God is usually the subject and the object is usually personal. Faith is personal, rebellion is personal because God is personal.

▣ **“forever”** YHWH was angry at Israel for a period (cf. Romans 9-11), but He was angry with Edom “forever.” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (*'OLAM*)

This is the very common (used over 400 times) term *'olam* (BDB 761, KB 798). It is used of duration of time in several senses, each of which must be linked to the nature of the thing to which it refers.

A. Time past (examples only)

1. “heroes of old,” Gen 6:4
2. “mountains and hills,” Gen. 49:21
3. “generations of old,” Deut. 32:7
4. “forefather,” Josh 24:2
5. “days of old,” Isa. 51:9

B. Continual for a lifetime (examples only)

1. “believe in you forever” (i.e., Moses), Exod. 19:9
2. “slave forever,” Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 27:12
3. “all your days,” Deut. 23:6
4. Samuel “stay there forever,” I Sam. 1:22
5. King “live forever,” I Kgs. 1:21; Neh. 2:3; Ps. 21:4
6. “bless the Lord forever,” Ps. 115:18; 145:1-2
7. “sing forever,” Ps. 89:1; 115:18; 145:1-2
8. “pregnant forever (metaphor), Jer. 20:17
9. possibly Prov. 10:25

C. Continual existence (but with obvious limitations)

1. humans live forever, Gen. 3:22
2. the earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; 148:6; Eccl. 1:4 (cf. II Pet. 3:10)
3. Aaronic priesthood, Exod. 29:9; 40:15 (cf. I Sam. 2:30)
4. the Sabbath, Exod. 31:16-17

5. the feast days, Exod. 12:14,17,24; Lev. 16:29,31,24; 23:14,21,41
6. circumcision, Gen. 17:13 (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
7. the land of promise, Gen. 13:15; 17:18; 48:4; Exod. 32:13 (cf. Exiles)
8. ruined cities, Isa. 25:2; 32:14; 34:10

D. Conditional Covenants

1. Abraham, Gen. 17:7,8,13,19
2. Israel, Deut. 5:29; 12:28
3. David, II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; Ps. 89:2,4
4. Israel, Jdgs. 2:1 (cf. Galatians 3)

E. Unconditional Covenants

1. Noah, Gen. 9:12,16
2. New Covenant, Isa. 55:3; Jer. 32:40; 50:5 (i.e., Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-30)

F. God Himself

1. His existence, Gen. 21:33; Deut. 32:40; Ps. 90:2; 93:2; Isa. 40:28; Dan. 12:7
2. His name, Exod. 3:15; Ps. 135:13
3. His reign, Exod. 15:18; Ps. 45:6; 66:7; Jer. 10:10; Micah 4:7
4. His word, Ps. 119:89,160; Isa. 40:8; 59:21
5. His lovingkindness, Ps. 25:6; 89:2; 103:17; 118:1-4,29; Jer. 33:1

G. His Messiah

1. His name, Ps. 72:17,19
2. Blessed forever, Ps. 45:2,17; 89:52
3. His reign, Ps. 89:36,37; Isa. 9:7
4. His priest, Ps. 110:4
5. pre-existence, Micah 5:2

H. New Age life

1. everlasting life, Dan. 12:2
2. everlasting contempt, Dan. 12:2
3. no more tears, Isa. 65:19 (Rev. 21:4)
4. no sun, Isa. 60:19-20 (Rev. 21:23)

Note how many different English words are used to translate this Hebrew word in the NIV

1. forever
2. old, of old
3. everlasting
4. eternal
5. lasting
6. always
7. for life

8. continue
9. regular
10. permanent
11. any time
12. ancient, ancient times
13. endless
14. forevermore
15. to the very end
16. a long time
17. long ago

1:5 This expresses the historical evidence of God’s sovereignty over all nations. In the ancient Near East gods were worshiped within national contexts and national boundaries (i.e., II Kgs. 5:17). If one nation defeated another, then the victor’s god was considered to be more powerful. Israel’s defeat by her neighbors was seen as their gods being more significant. The plagues on Egypt were intended to demonstrate the opposite!

This text’s theological significance lies in

1. YHWH’s power over other nations (cf. Job 12:23)
2. YHWH’s power over all nations (i.e., Deut. 32:8; Amos 9:7; Acts 17:26)

This is true because He is the only God, the only Creator, the only Savior.



NASB “be magnified”

NKJV “is magnified”

NRSV “great is”

TEV, NJB “is mighty”

This VERB (BDB 152, KB 178) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. It is often used to describe YHWH (cf. II Sam. 7:22; Ps. 35:27; 40:16; 70:4; 104:1; Micah 5:4); it is used as an ADJECTIVE in Deut. 3:24; Ps. 48:1; 86:10. YHWH wants “the nations” to know Him, but He protects Israel in a special way until she brings forth the Messiah.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:6-14

6“A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?’ says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, ‘How have we despised Your name?’ **7**You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, ‘How have we defiled You?’ In that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is to be despised.’ **8**But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?’ says the Lord of hosts. **9**“But now will you not entreat God’s favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?” says

the LORD of hosts. ¹⁰"Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle *fire on My altar!* I am not pleased with you," says the Lord of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you. ¹¹For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is pure*; for My name *will be* great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts. ¹²But you are profaning it, in that you say, 'The table of the LORD is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.' ¹³You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it," says the LORD of hosts, "and you bring what was taken by robbery and *what is* lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?" says the LORD. ¹⁴"But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."

1:6 Malachi 1:6 through 2:9 is Malachi's address to the priests (i.e., 6d) who were the spiritual representatives of the people. They may have been going through the motions, but there was no heartfelt faith. Sacrifice and ritual without faith are an abomination (cf. Isa. 1:12-13; Jer. 7-10; Amos 4:4-5).

▣ **"a son"** The term "son" (BDB 119) in the Old Testament can refer to.

1. the nation of Israel - Exod. 4:22-23; Deut. 14:1; Hosea 11:1; Mal. 2:10
2. the king of Israel - II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27
3. the Messiah - Ps. 2:7, quoted in Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5
4. angels - always PLURAL; cf. Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1
5. judges of Israel - very rare, cf. Ps. 82:6

In this context it refers to the nation of Israel (cf. Exod. 4:22; Hos. 11:1; Isa, 1:2).

▣ **"if I am a father"** See Special Topics below on this powerful anthropomorphic title for deity.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD

I. Old Testament

A. There is a sense that God is father by means of creation:

1. Gen. 1:26-27
2. Mal. 2:10
3. Acts 17:28

B. Father is an analogy used in several senses:

1. father of Israel (by election)
 - a. "Son" - Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:19; 31:20; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; Mal. 1:6
 - b. "firstborn" - Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9
2. father of the king of Israel (Messianic)
 - a. II Sam. 7:11-16
 - b. Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5
 - c. Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15

3. analogy of a loving parent
 - a. father (metaphor)
 - (1) carries his son - Deut. 1:31
 - (2) disciplines - Deut. 8:5; Pro. 3:12
 - (3) provides (i.e., Exodus) - Deut. 32:1
 - (4) will never forsake - Ps. 27:10
 - (5) loves - Ps. 103:13
 - (6) friend/guide - Jer. 3:4
 - (7) healer/forgiver - Jer. 3:22
 - (8) mercy giver - Jer. 31:20
 - (9) trainer - Hosea 11:1-4
 - (10) special son - Mal. 3:17
 - b. mother (metaphor)
 - (1) will never forsake - Ps. 27:10
 - (2) love of a nursing mother - Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 and Hosea 11:4 (with the proposed textual emendation of “yoke” to “infant”)

II. New Testament

A. The Trinity (texts where all three are mentioned)

1. Gospels
 - a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19
 - b. John 14:26
2. Paul
 - a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 - b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 - c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
 - d. Gal. 4:4-6
 - e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
 - f. I Thess. 1:2-5
 - g. II Thess. 2:13
 - h. Titus 3:4-6
3. Peter - I Pet. 1:2
4. Jude - vv. 20-21

B. Jesus

1. Jesus as “only begotten” - John 1:18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9
2. Jesus as “Son of God” - Matt. 4:3; 14:33; 16:16; Luke 1:32,35; John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
3. Jesus as Beloved Son - Matt. 3:17; 17:5
4. Jesus’ use of *abba* for God - Mark 14:36
5. Jesus’ use of PRONOUNS to show both His and our relationship to God

- a. "My Father," e.g., John 5:18; 10:30,33; 19:7; 20:17
 - b. "your Father," e.g., Matt. 17:24-27
 - c. "our Father," e.g., Matt. 6:9,14,26
- C. Family metaphors to describe the intimate relationship between God and humankind:
- 1. God as Father
 - 2. Believers as
 - a. sons of God
 - b. children
 - c. born of God
 - d. born again
 - e. adopted
 - f. brought forth
 - g. family of God

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)

- I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)
- A. Physical body parts
- 1. eyes - Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
 - 2. hands - Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
 - 3. arm - Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Num. 11:23; Deut. 4:34; 5:15
 - 4. ears - Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
 - 5. face - Exod. 32:30; 33:11; Num. 6:25; Deut. 34:10; Ps. 114:7
 - 6. finger - Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
 - 7. voice - Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
 - 8. feet - Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
 - 9. human form - Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
 - 10. the angel of the Lord - Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
- B. Physical actions
- 1. speaking as the mechanism of creation - Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
 - 2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden - Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Hab. 3:15
 - 3. closing the door of Noah's ark - Gen. 7:16
 - 4. smelling sacrifices - Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21
 - 5. coming down - Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
 - 6. burying Moses - Deut. 34:6
- C. Human emotions (some examples)
- 1. regret/repent - Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
 - 2. anger - Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:5; 7:4; 29:20
 - 3. jealousy - Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
 - 4. loath/abhor - Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19

D. Family terms (some examples)

1. Father

- a. of Israel - Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5
- b. of the king - II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
- c. metaphors of fatherly action - Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:1; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17

2. Parent - Hosea 11:1-4

3. Mother - Ps. 27:10 (analogy to nursing mother); Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13

4. Young faithful lover - Hosea 1-3

II. Reasons for the use of this type of language

- A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
- B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover)
- C. Though necessary, God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

▣ **“honor. . .despise”** These two terms are antonyms. The word “honor” (cf. Ps. 15:4) is the term “glory” (BDB 458, see Special Topic at Haggai 1:8). Despise (BDB 102, KB 117) is a *Qal* PARTICIPLE and *Qal* PERFECT VERB, cf. 1:7,12; 2:9; Gen. 25:34. It is not surprising that those who do not know YHWH despise Him, but usually it is those who do know Him that do so.

1. Israel in the wilderness, Num. 15:31
2. Eli’s son, I Sam. 2:30
3. David, II Sam. 12:9-10
4. Zedekiah, II Chr. 36:16
5. wicked Israelites, Ps. 73:20; Ezek. 16:59; 22:8
6. the priests, Mal. 1:6 (twice),7,12; 2:9

▣

NASB, NRSV, TEV “respect”

NKJV “reverence”

NJB “stands in awe”

This is in a parallel relationship to “honor.” This term (BDB 432) means “fear” (cf. Deut. 11:25; Ps. 76:12; Isa. 8:12) but in context the English translations show its connotation (cf. 2:5).

1:7 “You are presenting defiled food upon My altar” The rest of this chapter continues to define what this defilement involved. Apparently it is not only the physical condition of the sacrifices (cf. v. 8), but the offerers themselves.

▣ **“the table of the LORD”** This seems to refer to the sacrificial altar where the blood was poured (cf. Ps. 23:5).

1:8 “the blind for sacrifice” The priests were offering (“bring near,” BDB 897, KB 1132, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) unacceptable sacrifices (cf. vv. 13-14). This was completely against the Mosaic covenant (cf. Exod. 12:5; Lev. 1:3, 10; 22:18-25; Deut. 15:21).

▣ **“your governor”** This is a Persian term (BDB 808), which shows that we are in a post-Exilic period (cf. Hag. 1:1; Neh. 5:14).

1:9 The first two VERBS are commands showing YHWH’s intense desire.

1. “entreat,” BDB 318, KB 316, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
 - a. NASB - “will you not entreat”
 - b. NRSV - “implore”
 - c. TEV - “try asking”
 - d. NJB - “try pleading”
2. “show favor,” BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

In the MT the object of “entreat” is “the face of God” (BDB 815 CONSTRUCT, BDB 42 II). This is an idiom of personal encounter. Theologically in the OT to see God’s face meant death (i.e., Exod. 33:22-23). This is a metaphor of intimacy! Humans were created for fellowship with God (cf. v. 11)!

It is YHWH’s will to be a blessing to Israel, but this blessing is conditional (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29). YHWH’s covenant has benefits and requirements! He wants to reveal Himself to the nations through His blessing of an obedient, righteous people (cf. v. 11)! But these priests assume they were obedient, yet they were not (cf. vv. 8-10).

1:10 “shut the gates” This seems to refer to the gates of the rebuilt Temple. The Qumran community, from whom the authors and compilers of the Dead Sea Scrolls came, used this verse to condemn the sacrifices at the Temple of Jerusalem in Jesus’ day.

In context YHWH is pleading for one priest to restrict (i.e., “shut,” BDB 688, KB 742, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) access to His altar. The priests were knowingly violating Mosaic requirements for sacrifice (cf. Isa. 1:13). YHWH says:

1. I am not pleased with you (v. 9)
2. I will not accept an offering from you (v. 14)

These are not insignificant statements coming from the covenant God who is demanding their covenant requirements. Both their attitudes and sacrifices were unacceptable.

▣ **“I am not pleased with you”** This has a covenant connotation (cf. Num. 14:8; II Sam. 15:26; 22:20; I Kgs. 10:9; II Chr. 9:8; Ps. 18:19; Isa. 1:11). It is used of the marriage relationship in Deuteronomy (cf. 21:14; 25:7,8). The term is used most often in Psalms and Isaiah.

For me the most significant usage is where it describes YHWH as not pleased that any should perish (cf. Ezek. 18:23 [twice], 32; 33:11). YHWH was willing to endure the Messiah’s suffering that all may know His pleasure (cf. Isa. 53:10).

1:11 “from the rising of the sun, even unto its setting” The one and only God desires universal worship (cf. Isa. 61:8-9). He will be known beyond Israel in spite of Israel (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38, which reflects “the New Covenant,” cf. Jer. 31:31-34).

▣ **“My name”** It (BDB 1027) is used three times in this verse. It stands for YHWH Himself (cf. Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13).

▣ **“is going to be offered”** This is a *Hoph'al* stem (BDB 620, KB 670), which is used in a FUTURE sense. This entire context seems to demand an eschatological setting. There have been three major theories concerning this verse:

1. it refers to the offerings of pagans (cf. Acts 10:35)
2. it refers to the offerings of scattered Judaism
3. it refers to eschatological offerings of the end-time people of God (see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 348-349)

▣ **“the LORD of Hosts”** This term is used extensively in the post-Exilic books. It apparently means (1) the captain of the army of heaven or (2) the leader of the heavenly council. It is used twenty-four times in this book. See Special Topic at Obadiah v. 1.

1:12 The PARTICIPLES in this verse are surprisingly strong and condemnatory to the post-exilic community.

1. “profaning” (i.e., “defiling,” “polluting”), BDB 320, 319, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, cf. 2:11; Ezek. 7:21,22; 23:39; 24:21; 44:7
2. “defiled,” BDB 146 II, KB 169, *Pual* PARTICIPLE, cf. 1:7
3. “despised,” BDB 102, KB 117, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, 1:7; 2:9

They were offering to YHWH not their best, but their worst (cf. vv. 13-14). Even the governor would not accept it (cf. v. 8); even the priests would not eat it (cf. v. 13).

▣ **“its fruit”** This refers to the offerings placed on the altar. Part of it was

1. burned and symbolically rose to YHWH in smoke
2. given to the priests for food

1:13 “and you disdainfully sniff at it” The “it” (MASCULINE SINGULAR) should possibly be the term “me” (following vv. 6-7). This is one of the eighteen rabbinical emendations which, because of the text, seem to border on blasphemy. However, it seems to me that this phrase relates to the Lord’s table of v. 12.

▣ **“you bring what is taken in robbery”** The term “robbery” (cf. NKJV, TEV, NJB, JPSOA) can mean “violence” (Peshitta, NIV, REB, BDB 159 I, II Sam. 23:21; Job 24:9; Micah 2:2; 3:2). This seems to be used in the sense of a wild animal attack (cf. Exod. 22:31). If that is the sense, instead of robbery, it is a sacrilege as well as a sin to offer previously killed animals on the altar.

▣ **“what is lame or sick”** Also refer to 1:8.

1:14 “but cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock” The swindler referred to (1) the Israelites who did not offer their best to God or (2) those who made vows but did not fulfill them. They were offering

their worthless animals. The priests were accepting the blemished animals (cf. Lev. 22:18-20; Deut. 15:19-23).

The “curse” (BDB 76, KB 91, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. 2:2[twice]; 3:9; the two contexts that use this term the most are Deuteronomy 27-29 and Jeremiah) represents the opposite of the Aaronic blessing of Num. 6:22-26. The priests of the post-exilic community were using the liturgical formula, but in reality, they were cursing the people with it!

▣ **“I am a great King and My name is feared among the nations”** This again shows the universal scope and heart of God (cf. v. 11). Israel was to be a witness to God’s greatness, but her actions were counterproductive. This could mean that the pagans respected God more than His own priests! See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at Joel 2:32.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Who is the author? Why?
2. Explain in your own words the Hebrew idiom of “I have loved” in v. 2 and “I have hated” in v. 3.
3. Describe the five titles for God used in this chapter and relate them to the person of God.
4. Is v. 11 referring to pagan worship or an end-time setting? Why?
5. List Malachi’s four charges against the priests found in vv. 13-14.

MALACHI 2:1-16

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Priests To Be Disciplined 2:1-9	Corrupt Priests 2:1-9 (1-2) (3-6) (7-9)	The Priests Have Despised Their God and Their Solemn Vocation (1:6-2:9) 2:1-3 2:4-9	The Lord Reprimands the Priests (1:6-2:9) 2:1-4 2:5-7 2:8-9	An Indictment of the Priests (1:6-2:9) 2:1-9
Sin in the Family 2:10-16	Treachery of Infidelity 2:10-12 2:13-16 (13-15) (16)	God Hates Divorce and Demands Marital Fidelity 2:10-12 2:13-16	The People's Unfaithfulness to God 2:10-12 2:13-16	Mixed Marriages and Divorce 2:10-12 2:13-16

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-9

¹"And now this commandment is for you, O priests. ²If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them *already*, because you are not taking it to heart. ³Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it. ⁴Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi," says the LORD of hosts. ⁵"My covenant with him was *one of life and peace*, and I gave them to him *as an object of reverence*; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name. ⁶True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. ⁷For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. ⁸But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says the LORD of hosts. ⁹"So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction."

2:1 "And now this commandment is for you, O priests" Malachi had been addressing priests from 1:6 and will continue to do so through 2:9. The priests in the Old Testament had several functions:

1. they were mediators between man and God (cf. Exod. 28)
2. they were teachers (cf. Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10)
3. they acted as a court of appeal (cf. Deut. 19:17-23).

2:2 "If you do not listen" This seems to reflect Deut. 28:15. Deuteronomy 27 and 28 are a very important covenant summary, dealing with the cursings and blessings connected to obeying or disobeying God's law.

▣ **"take it to heart"** This speaks of having a proper attitude. A similar phrase is used in Haggai (lit. "set your heart on," cf. 1:5,7; 2:15,18). The heart was used as a metaphor for the entire person. See Special Topic at Joel 2:11.

▣ **"to give honor to My name"** The term "honor" is the Hebrew concept of "glory" (BDB 458, cf. Josh. 7:19; I Sam. 6:5; Ps. 66:2; 115:1; Isa. 42:12; Jer. 13:16). See Special Topic at Haggai 1:8.

YHWH's name (BDB 1027) is a way of referring to His person (cf. 1:6 [twice], 11[thrice], 14; 2:2,5; 3:16; 4:2). Obedience honors Him; disobedience dishonors Him. Faith and life are inseparably bound together (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28).

▣ **"the curse upon you"** Curses (BDB 76) are the consequences of covenant disobedience. See Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

▣ **"and I will curse your blessings"** This refers to either (1) the blessings that the priests gave to the people (cf. Num. 6:22-27) or (2) God's blessing to them (cf. Deut. 18:21).

▣ **“because you are not taking it to heart”** The problem with the priests was their attitude toward the ministry and the lack of honor to God in their lives (cf. 1:6-10).

2:3 There are four separate rebukes: (1) curse your offspring; (2) spread refuse in your face; (3) spread refuse on your sacrifices; and (4) take you away (i.e., dung pile). Dung made all things unclean!

▣ **“offspring”** This is literally “seed” (BDB 282, cf. Deut. 28:18). This can refer to

1. children (cf. NKJV)
2. descendants (TEV, NIV)
3. the harvest (Peshitta, KJV)
4. the Vulgate, NJB, NEB and REB change one vowel in the phrase which makes it read “cut off your arm” (a metaphor for “powerlessness”). They were personally cut off from ministry because they were not physically whole.
5. it could also mean “arm” in the sense of “shoulder,” referring to the priests’ food being cut off (cf. Deut. 18:3).

▣ **“refuse”** The refuse or offal (BDB 831) can refer to

1. the contents of the stomach
2. parts left from cutting up the animal for sacrifice
3. dung (cf. Jer. 8:2; 9:22; Zech. 3:3-4)

This term is used often (cf. Exod. 29:14; Lev. 4:11; 8:17; 16:27; Num. 19:5). Refuse was considered unclean and had to be burned outside the camp of Israel during the wilderness wandering period.

This trilateral root has several different meanings (BDB 831-832):

1. to spread, spread out
2. make distinct, declare
3. to issue an exact statement
4. pierce, sting
5. contents of stomach
6. horse, steed
7. horseman

Remember context, context, context determines meaning, not later Masoretic pointing systems!

The refuse of the sacrificial animals was to be removed from the camp and burned (cf. Exod. 29:14; Lev. 4:11-12). The priests and their offerings were considered to be in the same category and were themselves to be smeared with refuse and removed from the camp and destroyed (cf. Nah. 3:6).

▣

NASB “and be taken away with it”
NKJV “and *one* will take you away with it”
NRSV “and I will put you out of my presence”
TEV “and you will be taken out to the dung heap”
NJB “and sweep you away with it”
LXX “and I will carry you away at the same time”
REB “and I shall banish you from my presence”
JPSOA “and you shall be carried out to it [heap]”

The MT has “and one will take you to it.” Obviously several English translations have made emendations. Contact with animal refuse made one unclean and thereby they could not come to a holy, sacred place (i.e., tabernacle). These covenant violating priests could not officiate or even attend worship events!

2:4 The JB, REB, and NEB make this verse negative by changing a Hebrew vowel. However, LXX, Peshitta, NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, JPSOA all translate it in a positive way. God intended His covenant with Levi, Aaron and their seed to continue (cf. Num. 25:11-13).

▣ **“covenant”** See Special Topic at Haggai 2:5.

2:5-7 Verses 5-7 describe how a true priest should act. He should follow the example of Levi (cf. Deut. 33:8-11):

1. revere God
2. speak the truth
3. walk with God
4. teach knowledge
5. be a true messenger of the Lord

2:5 “life and peace” These were what the Mosaic covenant was meant to give (cf. Deuteronomy 28). YHWH wanted to bless Israel so that the nations would be attracted and come to know and worship Him. But this is not what occurred because of Israel’s disobedience (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“reverence. . .revered”** There are three related terms in this verse:

1. “an *object of reverence*,” BDB 432
2. “he revered Me,” BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT, often translated “feared” (cf. NKJV)
3. “stood in awe of My name,” BDB 369, KB 365, *Niphal* PERFECT

A proper attitude toward God is crucial. Our religious actions are judged by our motives! God looks at the heart first, then the covenant obedience becomes significant. It is always heart, then life, then perseverance!

2:8 “You have turned aside” The VERB implies a settled condition (BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* PERFECT). All of the Hebrew terms for sin reflect a deviation from the standard, which is God Himself. The term “righteousness” means a “measuring reed.” See Special Topic at Joel 2:23.

▣ **“from the way”** This is a pivotal concept in our understanding of God’s will for our lives. God desires for us to follow Him in lifestyle ways. That is why in the OT “the way” (BDB 202) was a metaphor for godly living (cf. v. 6; Exod. 32:8; Deut. 9:12, 16).

The same term, “the way,” is used in the book of Acts as the earliest title for the Church (cf. Acts 9:1; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:15, 22).

▣ **“you have caused many to stumble”** Their basic problem was not only faulty living, but faulty teaching (cf. Matt. 15:14; 18:5-6; Luke 6:39) and showing partiality (cf. v. 9). Godly priests turned people to God (cf. v. 6); godless priests turned them away! They also brought down the spiritual influence of all other priests.

2:9 Because of their actions God will act against these post-exilic priests:

1. they will be despised, BDB 102, KB 117, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE
2. they will be abased, BDB 1050

Notice that it is YHWH Himself who will embarrass the priests before all of the covenant community.

▣ **“but are showing partiality”** This is literally “and lifting faces in the law.” This idiom refers to a judge lifting the face of someone coming before him to see if he knows the person before rendering a fair verdict (cf. Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 10:17; 16:19; 24:17).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:10-16

¹⁰“Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers? ¹¹Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves and has married the daughter of a foreign god. ¹²As for the man who does this, may the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob *everyone* who awakes and answers, or who presents an offering to the LORD of hosts.” ¹³“This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts *it with favor* from your hand. ¹⁴Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that one do* while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.'"

2:10 “Do we not all have one Father” In context this refers to (1) the fatherhood of God; (2) the Jewish nation (cf. 1:6; Exod. 4:22; Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:6; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:19; Hos. 11:103), or (3) possibly Abraham (the beginning of the Israelite family/nation, cf. Genesis 12; also note Isa. 51:2) and not to God.

▣ **“Has not one God created us”** The “we” of the previous phrase and the “us” of this phrase refer to the descendants of the Patriarchs.

Joyce G. Baldwin, in the Tyndale OT Commentary Series by IVP, notes that this same VERB, “create” (BDB 135, KB 153) is also mentioned in Deut. 32:6, as is the concept of “fatherhood” (p. 237). I really enjoy the comments of this commentator!

Malachi (like all the prophets) is a covenant mediator (cf. Fee and Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 181-204). They all go back to the Mosaic covenant and demand obedience and heart-felt fidelity. See Introductory Article on Prophecy.

▣ **“Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother”** This is a strong VERB (BDB 93, KB 108, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. I Sam. 14:33; Ps. 78:57; Isaiah 24 [esp. v. 16]). Our love for God is seen in the treatment of our brothers (cf. Exod. 20:17ff.; Deut. 5). In this context, they are polluting the national faith by marrying pagan women.

2:11 “Judah. . Israel” This reflects the splitting of the tribes in 922 B.C. (cf. I Kings 12).

▣ **“a foreign god”** Surprisingly in the post-exilic community, there was still this old temptation (cf. 3:5).

▣ **“abomination”** This is a term (BDB 1072) which is used in connection with idolatry (cf. Deut. 27:15; 32:16; II Kgs. 23:13).

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATIONS

“Abominations” (BDB 1072) can refer to several things:

1. things related to Egyptians:
 - a. they loathe eating with Hebrews, Gen. 43:32
 - b. they loathe shepherds, Gen. 46:34
 - c. they loathe Hebrew sacrifices, Exod. 8:26
2. things related to YHWH’s feelings toward Israel’s actions:
 - a. unclean food, Deut. 14:2
 - b. idols, Deut. 7:25; 18:9,12; 27:15
 - c. pagan spiritists, Deut. 18:9,12
 - d. burning children to *Molech*, Lev. 18:21-22; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9,12; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17-18; 21:6; Jer. 32:35
 - e. Canaanite idolatry, Deut. 13:14; 17:4; 20:17-18; 32:16; Isa. 44:19; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 5:11; 6:9; 11:18,21; 14:6; 16:50; 18:12
 - f. sacrificing blemished animals, Deut. 17:1 (cf. 15:19-23; Mal. 1:12-13)
 - g. sacrificing to idols, Jer. 44:4-5
 - h. remarrying a woman who you have previously divorced, Deut. 24:2
 - i. women wearing men’s clothes (possibly Canaan worship), Deut. 22:5
 - j. money from cultic prostitution (Canaanite worship), Deut. 23:18
 - k. Israel’s idolatry, Jer. 2:7
 - l. homosexuality (possibly Canaanite worship), Lev. 18:22; 20:13
 - m. use of false weights, Det. 25:16; Pro. 11:1; 20:23
 - n. violation of food laws (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 14:3
3. Examples in Wisdom Literature:
 - a. Proverbs 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:1,20; 12:22; 15:8,9,26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 21:27; 28:9
 - b. Psalms 88:8
 - c. Job 30:10
4. There is a recurrent eschatological phrase “abomination of desolation,” which is used in Daniel (cf. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It seems to refer to three different occasions (multiple fulfillment prophecy):
 - a. Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the interbiblical Maccabean period (cf. I Macc. 1:54,59; II Macc. 6:1-2)

- b. the Roman general (later Emperor), Titus, who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20)
- c. an end-time world leader called “the man of lawlessness” (cf. II Thess. 2:3-4) or “the Antichrist” (cf. I John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 13)



NASB, NRSV “the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves”
NKJV “the LORD’s holy *institution*”
TEV “the Temple which the LORD loves”
NJB “Yahweh’s loved sanctuary”
REB “the sacred place loved by the LORD”

The MT has “has profaned the holy of YHWH.” This could refer to:

1. the temple (Peshitta, cf. Ps. 108:7)
2. the people (cf. Deut. 7:6; Ezra 9:2; Isa. 6:13)
3. the holy things (LXX, JPSOA)
4. the covenant
5. marriage (NKJV)

Whatever “the holy” (BDB 871) refers to, it is loved by YHWH. The post-exilic community has “profaned” (BDB 320 III, KB 319, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, 1:12; Neh. 13:17; cf. Ezek. 24:21) it. This strong VERB can be translated

1. pollute
2. defile
3. profane

This term is often used in Leviticus in warning about not “profaning” the name of the Lord (cf. 18:21; 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; 22:2,32), but it is Ezekiel that used the term most often (32 times). This is serious rebellion (cf. Neh. 13:23-29).

▣ **“has married the daughter of a foreign god”** This is not so much an inter-racial marriage as an inter-faith marriage (cf. Exod. 34:15,16; Deut. 7:3-4). Joseph and Solomon married Egyptian women and Moses seems married a black Cushite woman (cf. Num. 12:1). Neither were condemned, nor was Boaz’s marriage to the Moabitess, Ruth.

The issue of inter-religious marriage is addressed in this same period by Ezra (cf. 9:1-15) and Nehemiah (cf. 13:23-29).

2:12 “to cut off” This VERB (BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE) usually refers to death (i.e., Ps. 37:9; Isa. 29:20; Obad. v. 9; Zeph. 1:11), but here it possibly means banishment from the Promised Land (i.e., Edom).

▣ **“the tents of Jacob”** This is an ancient idiom for the people of God (cf. Jer. 30:18).

2:12

NASB “*everyone* who awakes and answers”
NKJV “being awake and aware”

NRSV	“any to witness of answer”
TEV	-----
JB	“whoever he be”
JPSOA	“no descendants”
LXX	“until he be humbled”
TARGUM	“son and grandson”
Peshitta	-----
NIV (footnote)	“anyone who gives testimony in behalf of the man who does this”

This is obviously a difficult text. The MT has “the one awaking” (BDB 734 I, KB 802, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, possibly BDB 729, “witness”) and “one responding” (BDB 772 I, KB 851, *Qal* PARTICIPLE). Here are some of the guesses:

1. teacher and student (Talmud and Vulgate, KJV)
2. nomads or settlers (NEB, REB, based on Arabic roots)
3. priests and laymen (LB)
4. witness and advocate (NRSV, NJB)
5. all without exception (JB, *Translators’ Handbook*, p. 415)
6. humbled (LXX)
7. no descendants left

In context, this phrase is connected to “who presents an offering,” so it must refer to some group in Israeli society, but which group must remain conjecture. As with so many of this kind of unsure texts, the context gives us the gist of the meaning. Number 7 seems to fit the context best.

2:13 “you cover the altar of the LORD with tears” There are several possibilities here: (1) the divorced Jewish wives cry out to YHWH; (2) the rejected offender who married a foreign wife; (3) insincere worship rites; or (4) pagan worship rites for the dying fertility god.

The term “altar” (BDB 258) could refer to

1. the temple (v. 11)
2. the place of sacrifice (v. 12)

▣ **“He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand”** This phrase has two balanced *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS:

1. “turn,” BDB 815, KB 937
2. “take,” BDB 542, KB 534

YHWH, the faithful covenant God, refuses to acknowledge and receive the Mosaic sacrifices of the unfaithful covenant people (cf. Ps. 66:18; Isa. 1:15; Jer. 11:11,14; 14:12). The NT clearly shows the qualifications for effective prayer and worship. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EFFECTIVE PRAYER

- A. Related to one’s personal relationship with the Triune God
 1. Related to the Father’s will
 - a. Matt. 6:10
 - b. I John 3:22
 - c. I John 5:14-15

- 2. Abiding in Jesus - John 15:7
- 3. Praying in Jesus' name
 - a. John 14:13,14
 - b. John 15:16
 - c. John 16:23-24
- 2. Praying in the Spirit
 - a. Eph. 6:18
 - b. Jude 20
- B. Related to one's personal motives
 - 1. Not wavering
 - a. Matt. 21:22
 - b. James 1:6-7
 - 2. Asking amiss - James 4:3
 - 3. Asking selfishly - James 4:2-3
- C. Related to one's personal choices
 - 1. Perseverance
 - a. Luke 18:1-8
 - b. Colossians 4:2
 - c. James 5:16
 - 2. Discord at home - I Peter 3:7
 - 3. Sin
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Isaiah 59:1-2
 - c. Isaiah 64:7

All prayer is answered, but not all prayer is effective. Prayer is a two-way relationship. The worst thing God could do is grant believers' inappropriate requests.

2:14 “the LORD has been a witness between you and your wife, the wife of your youth” Biblical marriage is a religious covenant (YHWH Himself was a witness), not just a civil document (cf. Pro. 2:17). We must remember that promises we make in God's name are binding. Marriage among believers is possibly the best human analogy of covenant faithfulness.

▣ **“youth”** In Hebrew culture a boy became marriageable at age 13 (*bar mitzvah*), which was also the time of his personal commitment to YHWH and His covenant. One could be called “a youth” up to age 40 (cf. BDB 655).

Marriages were arranged by the parents and the wife came to live in the husband's family home. The husband's covenant requirements were part of his *bar mitzvah* education and commitment to YHWH.

As a university colleague from India once told me, Americans fall in love before they marry, Indians (and many Near Eastern cultures) learn to love the wife chosen for them. It is not how one finds a wife, but how one allows the spiritual and physical aspects of life, and time, to bind them together!

▣ **“you have dealt treacherously”** This VERB (BDB 93, KB 108, *Qal* PERFECT) describes their **faithlessness** to their covenant marriage vows, not just by divorcing, but by remarrying a pagan unbeliever (cf. Deut. 7:3)! This inter-marriage ban was for religious reasons (cf. Exod. 34:15-16; Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 13), not racial!

▣ **“companion”** This term (BDB 289) means “wife” (KB 289 I) and is found only here in the OT.

2:15 This text is extremely difficult in Hebrew. The three major theories are:

1. it reflects the concept of “one flesh” (cf. Gen. 2:23) or monogamy as in the example of Adam and Eve who were meant to have children and fulfill God’s command to be fruitful and multiply (Peshitta, NRSV, REB)
2. it relates to Abraham marrying Hagar instead of waiting for Sarah to become pregnant (LXX, Net Bible, NIV Study Bible [footnote])
3. it refers to the oneness of the covenant people

Some rabbis say it is the most difficult verse in the entire Old Testament.

The text is difficult because the key terms are ambiguous:

1. the “one”
 - a. YHWH
 - b. Abraham
2. she “has made”
 - a. Adam
 - b. then from him, Eve
3. “spirit”
 - a. agency of the Spirit
 - b. breath of God in mankind (cf. Gen. 2:7)
4. “seed”
 - a. humans are to be fruitful and multiply (cf. Gen. 1:28)
 - b. a Messiah will come (cf. Gen. 3:15)
 - c. a covenant people and from them a Messiah (cf. Gen. 49:8-12; II Samuel 7)
 - d. this term is also found in 2:3 and refers to children

A good summary article on the difficulties and possibilities of this text can be found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 349-351.

2:16 “I hate divorce” In context this refers to Israelites of the post-exilic community divorcing their covenant wives to marry pagan women. Divorce (cf. Deut. 24:1-4) is not the issue, but inter-religious marriage!

This statement was understood in the Dead Sea Scrolls (cf. 4 Q 12^a), the Targums, and the rabbis (cf. *b. Git.* 80b) to mean “if one hates his wife, divorce her.” This is followed by the Vulgate. The text in the MT has, “he,” which could be understood as “an Israelite husband” or YHWH.

Jesus clarifies this point in Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:4-9 (see notes in my other commentaries online at www.freebiblecommentary.org).

▣ **“the God of Israel”** This title is found only here. For *Elohim*, see Special Topic at Obadiah v. 1. It has strong creator (*Elohim*) and covenant (Israel) implications.

▣ **“who covers his garment with wrong”** This seems to refer to a metaphor of marriage used in the OT (cf. Deut. 22:30; Ruth 3:9; Ezek. 16:8). In this case instead of a faithful marriage (i.e., covering garment) there is cruel and hurtful action (cf. TEV). The NJB takes the phrase as “concealing their cruelty under a cloak.” This implies that divorce was legal (cf. Deut. 24:1-4), but not for the purpose of marrying a pagan woman!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is Malachi’s major complaint against the priests in verses 1-9?
2. In your translation is verse 4 positive or negative? Why?
3. Does the Bible teach that inter-racial marriage is wrong?
4. Why is verse 14 so helpful in a day when divorce is the norm?

MALACHI 2:17-3:12

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		The LORD Will Send A Messenger to Prepare For the Coming of the Day of Judgment (2:17-3:5)	The Day of Judgment Is Near (2:17-3:5)	The Day of Yahweh (2:17-3:5)
2:17	2:17	2:17	2:17	2:17
The Purifier	The Coming Messenger			
3:1-4	3:1-7 (1) (2-3)	3:1-2a	3:1 3:2-4	3:1-5
3:5-6		3:2b-4 3:5	3:5	
		If the People Will Return to God With a Full Measure of Devotion, God Will Bless Them	The Payment of Tithes	Temple Tithes
3:7-12	(6-7) Do Not Rob God 3:8-12 (8-10) (11-12)	3:6-7 3:8-12	3:6-12	3:6-12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:17-3:4

^{2:17}You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied *Him*?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?" ^{3:1}"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years."

2:17 "You have wearied the LORD with your words" The VERB (BDB 388, KB 386, *Hiphil* PERFECT) means "to toil and thereby grow tired." This same VERB, same tense, is used in Isa. 43:23 for Israel's sins wearying YHWH. Here it is their words of rejection and condemnation that weary Him. His own people are attributing to both His person and His motives an apathetic or indifferent attitude toward His covenant promises and judgments.

▣ **"How have we wearied *Him*"** This is a continuation of the literary form used in Malachi to present truth, which was picked up by the rabbis, Paul, and James. It is called diatribe.

▣ **"Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, He delights in them"** This is an attack on YHWH's character and covenant. Two strong VERBS describe their accusation:

1. "is good," BDB 373, this may be an ADJECTIVE or a *Qal* PERFECT, MASCULINE SINGULAR VERB
2. "delights," BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT

They assert that not only is YHWH apathetic toward covenant disobedience, but He approves and is delighted by it! This would mean that His word (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29) cannot be trusted! This accusation probably arises from a misunderstanding of the longsuffering patience of YHWH in regard to Israel's sin. He worked with them over time to change their devotion and behavior, but many took advantage of His patience (cf. Zeph. 1:12). His seeming inactivity in judgment caused these post-exilic returnees to impugn His character (cf. Isa. 5:19; Jer. 17:15).

▣ **"Where is the God of justice"** This is the question which chapter 3 answers (cf. Job; Psalm 37; 73; Jer. 12:1-4; and Hab. 1:2-4). This period of Jewish history was very difficult for those who chose to return from Babylon to Palestine. The surrounding nations were openly hostile, the Persian court was ambivalent towards them, and YHWH had not manifested Himself in the new rebuilt Temple as He had in the old one (i.e., *Shekinah* Cloud of Glory).

3:1 “My messenger” This is exactly the same Hebrew phrase from Mal. 1:1, where it is a proper name. It (BDB 521) can also mean “angel” (cf. JPSOA, who identifies the messenger as the angel of the Lord or Michael). Many see this messenger as the Messiah or possibly Elijah of 4:5 (i.e., John the Baptist).

▣ **“and he will clear the way before Me”** This VERB (BDB 815, KB 937, *Piel* PERFECT) in the *Piel* stem has the connotation of “making clear” of obstacles (cf. Isa. 40:3; 57:14; 62:10). It was used of preparing for a royal visit by preparing the roads.

The question remains, how many people are involved in this paragraph?

1. “the LORD (YHWH),” 2:17
2. “I,” “My,” “Me,” = YHWH, 3:1
3. “My messenger,” 3:1
 - a. Malachi
 - b. angel of the covenant, cf. Exod. 23:20-23
 - c. Elijah
 - d. John the Baptist
4. the LORD (*Adon*), 3:1
 - a. YHWH (His temple)
 - b. Messiah (He is coming)
 - c. covenant angel

Because v. 1 ends with “says the LORD of hosts,” He is ruled out as a possibility. Notice the cleansing work of the Lord (*Adon*) in vv. 2-3. Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 43-44, lists several OT texts that refer to YHWH, but are quoted in the NT as referring to the Messiah:

1. Joel 2:32 - Romans 10:13
2. Isaiah 6:9,10 - John 12:41
3. Isa. 8:13-14 - Rom. 9:33; I Pet. 2:6-8
4. Isa. 40:3/Mal. 3:1 - Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:4; Luke 1:76; 3:4; John 1:23
5. Isa. 45:23-25 - Phil. 2:9

This was the task of John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:4; Luke 1:76: 3:4; John 1:23). John denies that he is Elijah, but Jesus said (cf. Matt. 11:2-19; Luke 7:24-28) that John fulfilled the prophesied ministry of Elijah (cf. He combines Mal. 4:5-6 with Isa. 40:3).

▣ **“the Lord”** This is the term *Adon*. Originally it was substituted orally for YHWH, but here it is used as the title of the Messiah, as it is in Joel 2:32, which is quoted in Rom. 10:13. The NT authors often used OT titles for God to describe the deity and majesty of Jesus of Nazareth.

▣ **“will suddenly come to His Temple”** This VERB (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT) occurs several times in these closing verses of Malachi. It is a common VERB, but has eschatological implications here.

1. Mal. 3:1 (twice)
2. Mal. 3:2
3. Mal. 4:1 (twice)
4. Mal 4:5
5. Mal. 4:6

The Lord of creation is coming in His

1. prophet (John the Baptist)

2. Spirit (i.e., the new age of the Spirit)
3. angel (cf. 3:1)
4. Son (Messianic implications of chapters 3 and 4)

This seems to be related to the *Shekinah* glory returning to the rebuilt Temple (cf. Ezek. 43:1-5). When the Jews of Judah went into exile, the *Shekinah* glory left the Temple (cf. Ezekiel 10) and moved east but now it is returning.

This was used by the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day to describe the sudden appearing of the Messiah in the Temple. Many see it fulfilled in Jesus suddenly appearing in Jerusalem and cleansing the Temple (twice).

▣ **“and the messenger of the covenant”** The term “and” can be translated “even.” There is much discussion about the title “the messenger of the covenant.” It is only used here in all of the OT. The rabbis see this as the angel of the Lord because of passages like Exod. 3:2, 4. To me there seems to be one, not two, personages mentioned here. The twice repeated phrase “in whom you...” are in a parallel relationship. This seems to bolster the interpretation that the terms “the Lord” and “the messenger of the covenant” refer to the same person. This is also confirmed by v. 2.

▣ **“in whom you delight”** This is the same VERB used in 2:17 to attack YHWH's character. Here it asserts that YHWH will act in history. His “day” is coming. He will judge the hearts of all humans, He will set straight the fallen world systems, He will act. In Malachi, like Isaiah and Micah, we begin to see that this “day” is primarily a person (i.e., the Messiah, “He is coming”). He will both reward and punish. We know from future revelation that His work is split into two separate comings: (1) the first for salvation and the inauguration of the new age, the age of the Spirit, the age of righteousness and (2) the second for judgment.

3:2 “But who can endure the day of His coming” This verb (BDB 465, KB 463) is in the rare *Pilpel* stem. Its basic meaning is:

1. to comprehend (*Qal*), Isa. 40:12
2. to contain, cf. I Kgs. 8:27; II Chr. 2:6; 6:18
3. to sustain, to support (*Pilp*), cf. Neh. 9:21; Zech. 11:16
4. to endure (*Pilp*), cf. Pro. 8:14

In this context #1 and #4 make sense, but #4 fits better! There may be a purposeful ambiguity.

YHWH's breaking into history is described as (1) a refiner's fire; (2) a fuller's soap; and (3) judgment. It is used in two different senses: (a) although He is coming to test, it is a test for purification, not destruction; (b) for those who know YHWH by faith, it will be a day of salvation, but for those who do not know Him it will be a day of swift judgment. It is also significant to note that the judgment mentioned in v. 5 has both religious and social connotations with no distinction made between them.

▣ **“And who can stand when He appears”** This is a military term for “holding one's ground” (BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. II Kgs. 10:4; Amos 2:15; Eph. 6:11, 13, 14). The standard by which God will judge humanity is the standard of His own character (cf. Matt. 5:48). That is why the Bible confidently asserts that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (cf. lists of OT quotes in Rom. 3:9-18 and the summary in Romans 3:21-31). Our only hope for righteousness is the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us (cf. Gal. 3; Rom. 4; II Cor. 5:21).

▣ **“refiner’s fire”** This CONSTRUCT (BDB 77, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, BDB 864) speaks of the testing and purification of metals (cf. v. 3). It is used metaphorically of God purifying His people (cf. Job 23:10; Ps. 66:10; Isa. 1:25; 48:10; Jer. 6:29; Zech. 13:9).

▣ **“fuller’s soap”** This CONSTRUCT (BDB 141 and *Piel* PARTICIPLE BDB 460) speaks of “vegetable lye” (cf. Jer. 2:22).

3:3 Notice that the Messiah as YHWH’s representative refines His people. They are cleansed, but not rejected! This is a judgment of redemption. The outcome is holiness, not hell. It is difficult to transfer NT gospel categories into OT texts. However, I still think it is hermeneutically better to view OT texts through NT fulfillment than to try to read the NT through OT categories (i.e, Mosaic covenant, national Israel, geographical promises).

God wants a holy people to reflect Himself to a lost world. However, He is patiently working with an unholy people whom He has redeemed! Sin is not the stumbling block in the NT because the work of Christ has effectively dealt with this spiritual barrier. The problem is now unbelief! This is foreshadowed in the New Covenant of Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38.

This verse is used by Roman Catholic theologians to support the doctrine of purgatory, which they develop from a passage in *The Shepherd of Hermes*.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

I. Old Testament

- A. All humans go to *She’ol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
- B. *She’ol* characterized
 - 1. associated with God’s judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
 - 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
 - 3. associated with *Abaddon* (destruction), but also open to God, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
 - 4. associated with “the Pit” (grave), Ps.16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
 - 5. wicked descend alive into *She’ol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
 - 6. often personified as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
 - 7. people there called *Repha’im*, Isa. 14:9-11)

II. New Testament

- A. The Hebrew *She’ol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. *Hades* characterized
 - 1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
 - 2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
 - 3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
 - 4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
- C. Possibly divided (rabbis)

1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4, a holding place for evil angels (cf. Gen. 6; I Enoch)

D. *Gehenna*

1. Reflects the OT phrase “the valley of the sons of Hinnom” (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god *Molech* (BDB 574) was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5
2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH’s judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
3. The Jews of Jesus’ day were so appalled by their ancestors’ participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus’ metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
4. Jesus’ usage of *Gehenna*
 - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
 - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
 - d. paralleled to *She’ol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
 - e. characterizes the wicked as “son of hell,” Matt. 23:15
 - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
 - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *She’ol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-10; 20:1,3).
 - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41

E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *She’ol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that

1. all humans originally went to *She’ol/Hades*
2. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell).

The only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *She’ol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

A. The NT does not teach the “immortality of the soul,” which is one of several ancient views of the after life.

1. human souls exist before their physical life
2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
3. the physical body is often seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state

- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
 1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
 2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
 3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matt. 17
 4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, II Thess. 4:13-18
 5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
 6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible:
 1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
 2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
 3. the place of God's throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife, probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand it (cf. I Cor. 2:9).
- C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-2; Rev. 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:6 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*

▣ **“the sons of Levi”** This refers to the priests. We must remember that Malachi spoke directly to the priests in 1:6 through 2:9 and possibly throughout chapter 2.

▣ **“so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness”** The key to worship is a personal relationship. Only clean people can approach God (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). In the OT the sacrificial system was God's way of providing a way for imperfect people to approach a perfect deity. The key was always an appropriate attitude and mind set (cf. Deut. 6:4-6). The OT temple has become Christ, the true temple (cf. Matt. 12:6; John 2:19-21). I guess for me some of the best examples of how interpersonal relationship affects worship are Matt. 5:23-24 and James 4:8! Ritual and liturgy can become a barrier (cf. Isa. 29:13 [Matt. 15:8-9]; Ezek. 33:31).

▣ **“righteousness”** See Special Topic at Joel 2:13.

3:4 The author looks back to the past history of the people of God as an idealistic period, especially the Wilderness Wandering Period (cf. Isa. 63:11; Jer. 2:2-3). It was considered a honeymoon period by later generations. In this post-exilic period the reference may be to the dedication of Solomon’s temple in II Chronicles 7 in the days of David (cf. Amos 9:11).

▣ **“the days of old”** See Special Topic: *’Olam* at Mal. 1:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:5-6

5“Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts. **6**“For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”

3:5 “I will draw near to you” This VERB (BDB 897, KB 1132, *Qal* PERFECT) means “approach.” It can be used of God coming

1. in a positive sense (i.e., for blessing or aid, cf. Ps. 69:18; Lam. 3:57)
2. in a negative sense (i.e., for judgment, here)

In the OT, one’s faith relationship to YHWH and their covenant obedience determines which one!

▣ **“swift witness”** The literal word here is “expert” (BDB 554 I) and has the idea of very rapid judgment. God’s longsuffering patience, once complete, results in rapid accountability! One is surprised by the lists of sins which follows. Apparently they were still present within the post-exilic community

▣ **“sorcerers”** For the Mosaic context, see Exod. 22:18; Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:9-10. My commentary on Deuteronomy is now available online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

▣ **“adulterers”** This is possibly related to the post-exilic call for religious purity in marriage (i.e., no marriages to pagan women, cf. 2:10-16; Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-24).

▣ **“oppress the wage earner of his wages”** For the Mosaic context see Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15; James 5:4.

▣ **“widow”** For the Mosaic context, see Exod. 22:22-24.

▣ **“those who turn aside the alien”** For the Mosaic context see Deut. 24:14; 19:22; 17:19. For a good brief article, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 74-76.

▣ **“and do not fear Me”** The VERB “fear” (BDB 431, KB 432) is used several times in Malachi (cf. 1:14; 2:5; 3:5; 4:5). It needs to be remembered that our treatment of our covenant partners reflects what we

believe and feel about God. To abuse the downtrodden is to abuse God Himself. This is the continual emphasis of the book of Deuteronomy. We are our brother's keeper!

3:6 “I, the LORD, do not change” The VERB (BDB 1039 I, KB 1597, *Qal* PERFECT) speaks of a settled character. This refers to three possible theological areas

1. God's covenant faithfulness (cf. Lam. 3:22-23)
2. God's purpose (cf. Ps. 33:11)
3. God's character (cf. Ps. 127; James 1:17)

The key issue of faith is the character of God! His word is established by His character and His actions!
See Special Topic: Characteristics of Israel's God at Joel 2:13.

▣ **“O sons of Jacob”** This seems to be a play on the term “Jacob,” which means “cheater” or “supplanter” (BDB 784). This verse is a comparison between the changelessness of God and the fickle rebellion of the nation of Israel. Israel's only steadfast hope is the unchanging character of God.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:7

⁷ **“From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord of hosts. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’”**

3:7 “From the days of your fathers” For a historical overview of Israel's history, see Nehemiah 9. Israel has a settled history of covenant disobedience.

▣ **“you have turned aside”** This VERB (BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* PERFECT) speaks of their settled character of rebellion. There is a play on the concept of “turning” in this verse.

1. Israel has repeatedly “turned away,” BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Exod. 32:8; Jdgs. 2:17
2. YHWH commands them to “turn” (i.e., repent), BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. If they will, YHWH will “turn” to them, BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* COHORTATIVE (i.e., in covenant restoration and blessing)
4. The people ask “how shall we turn,” BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT (i.e., of what should we repent)

▣ **“My statutes”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR GOD'S REVELATION (using DEUTERONOMY and PSALMS)

- I. “Statutes,” BDB 349, “an enactment, decree, or ordinance”
 - A. Masculine, קִנּוּ - Deut. 4:1,5,6,8,14,40,45; 5:1; 6:1,24,25; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19; 26:17; 27:10; Ps. 2:7; 50:16; 81:4; 99:7; 105:10,45; 148:6
 - B. Feminine, הִקִּינוּ - Deut. 6:2; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15,45; 30:10,16; Ps. 89:31; 119:5,8, 12, 16, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 124, 135, 145, 155, 171
- II. “Law” BDB 435, “instruction”

- Deut. 1:5; 4:44; 17:11,18,19; 27:3,8,26; 28:58,61; 29:21,29; 30:10; 31:9; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 78:10; 94:12; 105:45; 119:1,18,29,34,44,51,53,55,61,70, 72,77,85,92,97,109,113,126,136,142,150,153,163,165,174
- III. “Testimonies” BDB 730, “divine laws”
 - A. PLURAL, הָעֵדוּת - Deut. 4:45; 6:17,20; Ps. 25:10; 78:56; 93:5; 99:7; 119:22,24,46,59,79, 95,119,125,138,146,152,167,168
 - B. עֵדוּת or עֵדוּת - Ps. 19:8; 78:5; 81:6; 119:2,14,31,36,88,99,111,129,144,157
- IV. “Precepts” BDB 824, “a charge”
 - Ps. 19:8; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4,15,27,40,45,56,63,69,78,87,93,94,100, 104, 110,128,134,141,159,168,173
- V. “Commandments” BDB 846
 - Deut. 4:2,40; 5:29; 6:1,2,17,25; 8:1,2,11; 10:13; 11:13; 15:5; 26:13,17; 30:11,16; Ps. 19:8; 119:6,10,19,21,32,35,47,48,60,66,73,86,96, 98,115, 127,131,143,151,166,176
- VI. “Judgments/ordinances” BDB 1048, “rulings” or “justice”
 - Deut. 1:17; 4:1,5,8,14,45; 7:12; 16:18; 30:16; 33:10,21; Ps. 10:5; 18:23; 19:10; 48:12; 89:30; 97:8; 105:5,7; 119:7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 84, 102,106,120,132,137,149,156,160,164; 147:19; 149:9
- VII. “His ways” BDB 202, YHWH’s guidelines for His people’s lifestyle
 - Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22,28; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; 32:4; Ps. 119:3, 5,37,59
- VIII. “His words”
 - A. BDB 202 - Deut. 4:10,13,36; 9:10; 10:4; Ps. 119:9,16,17,25,28,42,43, 49,57,65,74, 81,89,101,105,107,114,130,139,147,160,161,169
 - B. BAB 57
 - 1. “word” - Deut. 17:19; 18:19; 33:9; Ps. 119:11,67,103,162,170,172
 - 2. “promise” - Ps. 119:38,41,50,58,76,82,116,133,140,148,154
 - 3. “command” - Ps. 119:158

▣ **“Return to Me and I will return to you”** This is a call not to initial repentance, but to subsequent repentance (cf. Zech. 1:3; James 4:8). Our lifestyle reflects and verifies our faith commitment to God (cf. I John and James).

▣ **“But you say, ‘How shall we return’”** This seems to focus on two possible motives: (1) their truly wanting to know how to show repentance or (2) arrogant, self-righteousness, which sees no problems that need to be corrected. It may just be the literary continuation of the diatribe technique.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:8-12

⁸"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! ¹⁰Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. ¹¹Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*," says the LORD of hosts. ¹²"All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts.

3:8-12 This is the answer to the people's question in v. 7.

3:8 "How have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings" This is one example of many that the prophet could have used (cf. chapters 1-2). The tithe was given to God before the Mosaic Law was instituted (cf. Gen. 14:20; 18:22). There were three separate tithes taken in different years. It is related to both the needs of the Temple and the priests and also the special needs mentioned in v. 5. In my opinion, the tithe is not an exegetical truth from the New Testament, but an implied truth by analogy from the Old Testament. The NT speaks more of sacrificial, joyful, regular, proportionate giving than percentage giving (cf. II Cor. 8 and 9). Grace should induce greater results than the law (cf. *New Testament Theology* by Frank Stagg, p. 292-293 and *The Authority of the Old Testament* by John Bright, p. 54).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHES IN THE MOSAIC LEGISLATION

A. Scripture References:

For Priests and Central

Sanctuary

1. Lev. 27:30-32
2. Deut. 12:6-7,11,17
3. Deut. 14:22-26
- 4.
5. Num. 18:21-24

For Local Levites

- Deut. 12:12
- Deut. 14:27
- Num. 18:25-29 (Levites must tithe of their tithe to the central shrine)
- Neh. 10:37,38

For Local Poor

- Deut. 14:28-29
- Deut. 26:12-15
- Num. 18:21-29
- Neh. 12:44

B. Examples of tithing predate Mosaic legislation

1. Genesis 14:20, Abraham to Melchizedek (Heb. 7:2-9)
2. Genesis 28:22, Jacob to YHWH

C. The tithes of Israel were used to support the central sanctuary, but every third year the national tithes were directed exclusively to the local poor.

▣ **“offerings”** This refers to the priest’s part (cf. Exod, 29:17-18; Lev. 7:32; Num. 5:9). This withholding of required support for the priests and the poor was simply a result of a practical atheism of the leaders and people.

3:9 “You are cursed with a curse” Literally, “the curse,” (BDB 76) this is related to the cursing and blessing section of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29).

▣ **“the whole nation of you”** This shows the widespread abuses, not only of the priesthood, but of the entire nation. The term “nation” (BDB 156) was used by Israel in a derogatory sense of the pagan nations. Now God calls them by this name!

3:10 “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse” This verse has three commands:

1. “bring,” BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. “so that there may be food in My house,” BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE
3. “test Me,” BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The whole issue of tithing is contentious in the church because OT texts are being used as threats or greed to promote financial giving to the local churches.

The concept of “tithing” is not ever addressed to the church. It is mentioned only in isolated ways by Jesus to Jews (cf. Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHING

I do not believe the NT teaches tithing because this entire setting is against “nit-picking” Jewish legalism and self-righteousness. I believe the NT guidelines for regular giving (if there are any) are found in II Cor. 8 and 9, which go far beyond tithing! If a Jew, who only had knowledge of the OT, was commanded to give ten to thirty percent (there are two, possibly three, required tithes in the OT), then Christians should give far beyond and not even take the time to discuss the tithe!

NT believers must be careful about turning Christianity into a new legal performance-oriented code (Christian Talmud). Their desire to be pleasing to God causes them to try to find guidelines for every area of life. However, it is theologically dangerous to pull old covenant rules which are not reaffirmed in the NT (cf. Acts 15) and make them dogmatic criteria, especially when they are claimed (by modern preachers) to be causes of calamity or promises of prosperity (cf. Mal. 3).

Here is a good quote from Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 292-293:

“The New Testament does not once introduce tithing into the grace of giving. Tithes are mentioned only three times in the New Testament: (1) in censoring the Pharisees for neglect of justice, mercy, and faith while giving meticulous care to the tithing even of garden produce (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42); (2) in the exposure of the proud Pharisee who ‘prayed to himself,’ boasting that he fasted twice each week and tithed all his possessions (Luke 18:12); and (3) in arguing for the superiority of Melchizedek, and hence of Christ, to Levi (Heb. 7:6-9).

It is clear that Jesus approved tithing as a part of the Temple system, just as in principle and practice he supported the general practices of the Temple and the synagogues. But there is no indication that he imposed any part of the Temple cultus on his followers. Tithes were chiefly

produce, formerly eaten at the sanctuary by the one tithing and later eaten by the priests. Tithing as set forth in the Old Testament could be carried out only in a religious system built around a system of animal sacrifice.

Many Christians find the tithe to be a fair and workable plan for giving. So long as it is not made to be a coercive or legalistic system, it may prove to be a happy plan. However, one may not validly claim that tithing is taught in the New Testament. It is recognized as proper for Jewish observance (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42), but it is not imposed upon Christians. In fact, it is now impossible for Jews or Christians to tithe in the Old Testament sense. Tithing today only faintly resembles the ancient ritual practice belonging to the sacrificial system of the Jews.”

Frank Stagg summed it up:

“While much may be said for adopting the tithe voluntarily as a standard for one’s giving without rigidly imposing it upon others as a Christian requirement, it is clear in adopting such a practice that one is not carrying on the Old Testament practice. At most one is doing something only remotely analogous to the tithing practice of the Old Testament, which was a tax to support the Temple and the priestly system, a social and religious system which no longer exists. Tithes were obligatory in Judaism as a tax until the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, but they are not thus binding upon Christians.’

This is not to discredit tithing, but it is to clarify its relationship to the New Testament. It is to deny that the New Testament supports the coerciveness, legalism, profit motive, and the bargaining which so often characterize the tithing appeals today. As a voluntary system, tithing offers much; but it must be redeemed by grace if it is to be Christian. To plead that ‘it works’ is only to adopt the pragmatic tests of the world. Much ‘works’ that is not Christian. Tithing, if it is to be congenial to New Testament theology, must be rooted in the grace and love of God.”

▣ **“storehouse”** This refers specifically to the storage chambers of the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 13:5). The temple is known as God’s house (cf. II Samuel 7; Hag. 1:9; Zech. 3:7).

▣ **“test Me now in this”** This refers to the testing of metal (BDB 103, cf. Zech. 13:9). This same term is used in v. 15, where it is obvious that attitude is the key in our relationship to God. The NT guidelines for “giving” are surprisingly scarce (only II Corinthians 8-9, which refers to a one-time gift for the mother church in Jerusalem).

▣ **“the windows of heaven”** Heaven was described as a domed vault (cf. Gen. 1:17, “firmament,” BDB 954). The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 718, mentions that these windows can be opened for

1. blessing, II Kgs. 7:2,19; here
2. judgment, Gen. 7:11; 8:2; Isa. 24:18

See Special Topic following:

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEAVEN

The Hebrew term (BDB 1029, translated “heaven,” “sky,” “firmament,” “air”) can refer to several things (i.e. a series of domes or spheres of creation):

1. In Gen.1:8-20 it refers to the atmosphere above the earth where clouds move and birds fly.
2. This dome (cf. Gen. 1:6,20; Isa. 40:22; 42:5) above the earth is where God sends the rain (i.e., “windows of heaven,” cf. Ps. 78:23-29; Mal. 3:10 or “the water jars of heaven,” cf. Job 38:37).
3. This dome is where the stars dwell and planets move (two dimensional). It could refer to all the created cosmos (tens of billions of galaxies).
4. Above this dome is the abode of God (i.e. the third or seventh heaven). The highest heaven (e.g., Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27,30,32; Ps. 2:4; 148:4; Isa. 66:1).
5. The theological emphasis
 - a. God is the creator of everything.
 - b. He controls creation (i.e., light and dark, rain and drought).
 - c. He creates and places the night lights (stars, planets, comets).
 - d. There are spheres or realms of reality:
 - 1) earth
 - 2) above the earth
 - 3) invisible/angelic (cf. Col. 1:16)
 - 4) His presence and abode

They are all connected by His will.

▣ **“pour out for you a blessing until it overflows”** The blessings of vv. 10-11 are agricultural in nature and reflect the Deuteronomy promises (cf. Deut. 11:8-13; 28:1-14). YHWH’s initial desire was for Israel to be a kingdom of priests to bring “the nations” to Himself. He planned to bless Israel in order to attract the nations’ interest. Note v. 12 (cf. Isa. 61:9; Jer. 4:2)!

3:11 “the devourer” The word “devourer” (BDB 37) is from the VERB “to eat.” It may literally refer to locusts or metaphorically to anything that destroys the crops (i.e., famine, desert wind, hail, etc.). The theological point (or Mosaic point, cf. Deuteronomy 27-29) is that YHWH controls nature for His purposes.

▣ **“cast its grapes”** This literally means “to suffer a miscarriage” (BDB 1013, KB 1491, *Piel* IMPERFECT). Both of the terms in this verse refer to agricultural losses (cf. II Kgs. 2:19,21). This is directly related to Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

3:12 This verse reflects

1. YHWH’s promise to Abraham, Gen. 12:3; Isa. 61:9; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8
2. YHWH’s purpose that Israel be a kingdom of priests to bring knowledge of His person to the nations, Exod. 19:5-6; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10
3. YHWH’s goal of a holy people, Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:18-19

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Who is the messenger that will prepare the way for the Messiah and appear suddenly in the Temple?
2. Why does the Bible speak to the day of the Lord as primarily a day of judgment?
3. Is God's judgment related primarily to social injustices or spiritual commitments? cf Matt. 25:31-46; Rev, 24:11-15).
4. Explain the comparison in verse 8
5. Is tithing a New Testament principle?

MALACHI 3:13-4:6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Purifier (3:1-15)	The People Complain Harshly	When the Day of Judgment Comes, the True Worshippers Will be Spared (3:13-4:3)	God's Promise of Mercy	The Triumph of the Upright on the Day of Yahweh
3:13-15	3:13-15	3:13-15	3:13-15	3:13-15
The Book of Remembrance	A Book of Remembrance			
3:16-18	3:16-18 (16) (17-18)	3:16-4:3	3:16-18	3:16-18
The Final Admonition	The Great Day of God		The Day of the LORD's Coming	3:19-21 [follows MT]
4:1-3	4:1-6 (1-3)	Two Appendices	4:1-3	
4:4	(4-6)	4:4	4:4	Appendices [follows MT] 3:22
4:5-6		4:5-6	4:5-6	3:23-24

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:13-15

^{3:13}"Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' ¹⁴You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts?' ¹⁵So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.'"

3:13

NASB "Your words have been arrogant against Me"

NKJV "Your words have been harsh against Me"

NRSV, NJB "you have spoken harsh words against me"

TEV "you have said terrible things about Me"

JPSOA "you have spoken hard words against Me"

This is a common term with a large semantic range. Its basic meaning is "to be strong" (BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* PERFECT). It can have negative connotations of God hardening the hearts of

1. Pharaoh, Exod. 7:13,22; 8:15; 9:35
2. Canaanite kings, Josh. 11:20

but also a positive connotation:

- a. encouraging Joshua (cf. Deut. 1:38; 3:28; 31:6,7,23; Josh. 1:6,7,9,18; 10:25)
- b. encouraging Israel to keep the covenant, Josh. 23:6
- c. encouraging Israel to fight, II Sam. 10:12 (twice)

In context the usage here fits #1. These post-exilic Jews had hardened their hearts and words against YHWH (cf. Ps. 119:21,51,69,78,85,122).

▣ "What have we spoken against Thee" Although they spoke to each other, God took it as to Himself (cf. v. 16). This is another use of diatribe.

3:14 "It is vain to serve God" The word "vain" (BDB 996) means "emptiness" and "vanity" (see Ps. 127:1). They were claiming that there were no visible benefits of worshiping and obeying YHWH.

1. "to serve," BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. "we have kept," BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT
3. "we have walked," BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* PERFECT

All three verbals denote lifestyle faith. They viewed faith as "what is in it for me?" This is the spiritual plague of the modern western church. See Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*. Luke 12:15 screams at us!

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH

- I. Perspective of the Old Testament as a whole
 - A. God is the owner of all things
 1. Genesis 1-2
 2. I Chronicles 29:11

3. Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 89:11
 4. Isaiah 66:2
 - B. Humans are stewards of wealth for God's purposes
 1. Deuteronomy 8:11-20
 2. Leviticus 19:9-18
 3. Job 31:16-33
 4. Isaiah 58:6-10
 - C. Wealth is a part of worship
 1. the two tithes
 - a. Numbers 18:21-29; Deut. 12:6-7; 14:22-27
 - b. Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-15
 2. Proverbs 3:9
 - D. Wealth is seen as a gift from God for covenant fidelity
 1. Deuteronomy 27-28
 2. Proverbs 3:10; 8:20-21; 10:22; 15:6
 - E. Warning against wealth at the expense of others
 1. Proverbs 21:6
 2. Jeremiah 5:26-29
 3. Hosea 12:6-8
 4. Micah 6:9-12
 - F. Wealth is not sinful in itself unless it takes priority
 1. Psalm 52:7; 62:10; 73:3-9
 2. Proverbs 11:28; 23:4-5; 27:24; 28:20-22
 3. Job 31:24-28
- II. Unique perspective of Proverbs
- A. Wealth placed in arena of personal effort
 1. slothfulness and laziness condemned—Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:4-5,26; 12:24,27; 13:4; 15:19; 18:9; 19:15,24; 20:4, 13; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30-34; 26:13-16
 2. hard work advocated—Proverbs 12:11,14; 13:11
 - B. Poverty versus riches used to illustrate righteousness versus wickedness—Proverbs 10:1ff; 11:27-28; 13:7; 15:16-17; 28:6,19-20
 - C. Wisdom (knowing God and His Word and living this knowledge) is better than riches—Proverbs 3:13-15; 8:9-11,18-21; 13:18
 - D. Warnings and admonitions
 1. warnings
 - a. beware of guarantying a neighbor's loan (surety)—Proverbs 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26-27; 27:13

- b. beware of getting rich through evil means—Proverbs 1:19; 10:2,15; 11:1; 13:11; 16:11; 20:10,23; 21:6; 22:16,22; 28:8
 - c. beware of borrowing—Proverbs 22:7
 - d. beware of the fleetingness of wealth—Proverbs 23:4-5
 - e. wealth will not help on judgment day—Proverbs 11:4
 - f. wealth has many “friends”—Proverbs 14:20; 19:4
2. admonitions
- a. generosity advocated—Proverbs 11:24-26; 14:31; 17:5; 19:17; 22:9,22-23; 23:10-11; 28:27
 - b. righteousness better than wealth—Proverbs 16:8; 28:6,8,20-22
 - c. pray for need, not abundance—Proverbs 30:7-9
 - d. giving to the poor is giving to God—Proverbs 14:31

III. Perspective of the New Testament

A. Jesus

- 1. wealth forms a unique temptation to trust in ourselves and our resources instead of God and His resources
 - a. Matthew 6:24; 13:22; 19:23
 - b. Mark 10:23-31
 - c. Luke 12:15-21,33-34
 - d. Revelation 3:17-19
- 2. God will provide our physical needs
 - a. Matthew 6:19-34
 - b. Luke 12:29-32
- 3. sowing is related to reaping (spiritual as well as physical)
 - a. Mark 4:24
 - b. Luke 6:36-38
 - c. Matthew 6:14; 18:35
- 4. repentance affects wealth
 - a. Luke 19:2-10
 - b. Leviticus 5:16
- 5. economic exploitation condemned
 - a. Matthew 23:25
 - b. Mark 12:38-40
- 6. end-time judgment is related to our use of wealth—Matthew 25:31-46

B. Paul

- 1. practical view like Proverbs (work)
 - a. Ephesians 4:28
 - b. I Thessalonians 4:11-12

- c. II Thessalonians 3:8,11-12
- d. I Timothy 5:8
- 2. spiritual view like Jesus (things are fleeting, be content)
 - a. I Timothy 6:6-10 (contentment)
 - b. Philippians 4:11-12 (contentment)
 - c. Hebrews 13:5 (contentment)
 - d. I Timothy 6:17-19 (generosity and trust in God, not riches)
 - e. I Corinthians 7:30-31 (transformation of things)

IV. Conclusions

- A. There is no systematic biblical theology concerning wealth.
- B. There is no definitive passage on this subject; therefore, insights must be gleaned from different passages. Take care not to read your views into these isolated texts.
- C. Proverbs, which was written by the wise men (sages), has a different perspective than other biblical genres. Proverbs is practical and individually focused. It balances and must be balanced by other Scripture (cf. Jer. 18:18).
- D. Our day needs to analyze its views and practices concerning wealth in light of the Bible. Our priorities are misplaced if capitalism or communism are our only guide. Why and how one succeeds are more important questions than how much one has accumulated.
- E. Accumulation of wealth must be balanced with true worship and responsible stewardship (cf. II Cor. 8-9).

▣ **“what profit”** This term (BDB 130) usually has the connotation of “gain made by violence.” Here it denotes physical benefits from being a believer (cf. Job 22:3).

3:15 “So now we call the arrogant blessed” We are now at the heart of the question of 2:17. We live in an unfair world which has been affected by our own rebellion (cf. Genesis 3). Often the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer (cf. Job; Ps. 73; Jer. 12:1-4; Hab. 1:2-4). The key to understanding life is our trusting attitude toward the faithfulness of God and His promises, and being patient for His justice in His time (cf. Gal. 6:7).

▣ **“they also test God and escape”** This same term, “test,” (BDB 103, KB 119) is used in a positive sense in 3:10; therefore, the only difference is the attitude by which we trust the trustworthiness of God.

No one “tests” God and escapes (BDB 572, KB 589, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, cf. Pro. 19:5; Amos 9:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:16-18

¹⁶Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. ¹⁷“They will be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.” ¹⁸So you will again

distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

3:16 “Then those who fear the LORD spoke to one another” We must remember that in this context of doubt and uncertainty, it is the righteous (i.e., “those who feared the Lord,” BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. 2:5; 3:5) who are complaining, not the wicked (however, note vv. 13-14). Israel has become greatly discouraged because of

1. the small size of the rebuilt Temple
2. the lack of supernatural manifestations in their day
3. the ambivalence of the Persian empire
4. the social and religious conditions of Judah
5. the aggression of their neighbors

As in vv. 13-14, YHWH overheard (BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, “give attention”) His people speaking and acted on their words! Be careful what you say (cf. Matt. 12:36-37).

▣ **“a book of remembrances was written before Him”** The Bible speaks in metaphorical language of two books: (1) the book of life and (2) the book of remembrances (cf. Dan. 7:10 and Rev. 20:12). In this context it is the book of remembrances used in a positive way. The book of remembrances is mentioned in Ps. 56:8; 139:16; Isa. 65:6; Mal. 3:16. The book of life is mentioned in Exod. 32:32; Ps. 69:28; Dan, 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil, 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27.

3:17 “they will be Mine. . .on the day I prepared My own possessions” Judgment day will be a tremendous day of blessing for those who know God in (1) “fear” (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) and (2) “esteem” (BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* PARTICIPLE). The term “possession” (BDB 688) is used in Exod. 19:5 for a royal treasure (cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). This promise is primarily national and corporate (i.e., “they” who fear and esteem Him), though with an individual element (cf. Ezek. 18:32; Jer. 31:31-34).

▣ **“as a man spares his own son who serves him”** Again, family terms are used to describe YHWH’s love. See Special Topics: The Fatherhood of God and Anthropomorphic Language for God at Mal. 1:6.

The VERB “serves” (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) was used in a mocking sense in v. 14, but it is used here in a positive sense.

3:18

NASB “again distinguish”

NKJV “again discern”

NRSV, TEV,

NJB “once more. . .see the difference”

There are two VERBS in this phrase:

1. BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT, literally, “turn,” “turn back.” It is used in several senses in Malachi:
 - a. return, 1:4 (cf. Zech. 1:4,16; 4:1; 8:3)
 - b. repent, 2:6; 3:7 [thrice] (cf. Zech. 1:3 [twice], 6)
 - c. again, 3:18 (cf. Zech. 5:1; 6:1; 8:15)
 - d. turn, 4:6 (cf. Zech. 1:4)

2. BDB 906, #7,f (only example), KB 1157, *Qal* PERFECT, literally, “see.” Those who fear and esteem YHWH will have their spiritual eyes opened to recognize those in the religious community who are true and who are false!

This is a reversal of 2:17!

▣ **“between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him”** Service is not the basis of our righteousness or relationship, but it is the natural result (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). This verse asserts that one day God will set it all straight. There is an eschatological day of justice coming (cf. Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 49-50)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-3

¹“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ²But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. ³You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts.

4:1 The Septuagint and the Vulgate begin a new chapter here, but the Masoretic Text continues chapter 3 through the end of chapter 4.

▣ **“the day is coming”** The term “the day” (BDB 398) becomes a technical term for the coming of YHWH. The Israelites thought it would be a day of blessing, but the prophets (esp. Amos and Joel) clearly prophesied a day of judgment beginning with the people of God. One can see from this verse how the Jews of Jesus’ day expected the Messiah to come as one bringing judgment. Even John the Baptist misunderstood the nature of Jesus’ first coming (cf. Matt. 11:2ff).

▣ **“burning like a furnace”** Fire is often a symbol of God and His purifying activities (cf. Mal. 3:2-3; Ps. 21:9; 50:3; Isa. 10:17; 66:15-16; Dan. 7:9-10; Joel 2:30; Nahum 1:5-6; I Cor. 3:13; II Peter 3:7). See Special Topic: Fire at Obadiah 18.

▣ **“will be chaff”** This refers to (1) refuse from harvest time or (2) burning of the field in preparation for planting (cf. Matt. 3:14-12).

▣ **“so that it will leave them neither root or branch”** This is a metaphor of complete destruction (cf. Amos 2:9; Isa. 11:1; Matt. 3:14).

4:2 “the sun of righteousness” The KJV and NKJV capitalize the term “Sun,” but this is exegetically impossible because it is a FEMININE NOUN in this context (it is usually MASCULINE). It is, however, a unique reference to the Messiah (a similar metaphor is in Isa. 60:1-3, 19-20. Also note Matt. 17:2; Rev. 22:5).

Although a Messianic understanding is traditional (even in the rabbis, cf. *b.sanh.* 118a; b. *'Eruv.* 43b), in context it seems to be a metaphor inaugurating the new age of restoration (cf. Isa. 30:23-26; 60:103). This metaphor is striking and unique, which makes it difficult to interpret. What would Malachi have understood

by this phrase? The symbol of the Zoroastrian high-good god was a winged sun disk. Possibly the prophet is borrowing the well known symbol of Persian religion to describe YHWH's new day of righteousness (i.e., Ps. 84:11).

▣ **“with healing in its wings”** This metaphor is possibly used of (1) the relationship between healing and light or (2) a Persian symbol for deity used in Zoroastrianism. Healing was a sign of the New Age (cf. Isa. 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:7,16,18; Matt. 11:5; 12:22-25; 15:30-31; 21:14).

The healing referred to here is more of a spiritual restoration. Israel is sick in covenant rebellion (cf. Isa. 1:5-6; Ps. 103:3). Forgiveness will result in health, peace, and joy. The new day was really what the old day should have been, was meant to be (cf. Deuteronomy 28).

▣ **“skip about like calves from the stall”** This seems to be a metaphor of joy, freedom, and health (cf. Isa. 35:6).

4:3 “And you will tread down the wicked” This is a metaphor from the wine press, which is used for the righteous finally overcoming. Some see it as a reference to Josh. 10:24 and, therefore, to military victory. Notice God's victory is not immediate, but eschatological.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:4

4”Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.*

4:4-6 The order of these verses is slightly altered in the Septuagint (i.e., vv. 5, 6, and 4). The order is also slightly altered in the Masoretic Text. This seems to be related to the rabbinical thought that the Bible should end with a Covenant name for God. They also did this to the books of Isaiah and Ecclesiastes.

4:4 “Remember” This is a command (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, this VERB is so common in Deuteronomy, 5:15; 7:18 [twice]; 8:2,18; 9:7,27; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:9,18,22; 25:17; 32:7). Privilege brings responsibility! We need to hide God's word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (cf. Deut. 4:9; 6:12; 8:11-20; Ps. 103:2).

▣ **“the statutes and ordinances”** See Special Topic at 3:7.

▣ **“Horeb”** This (BDB 325) is another name for Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-23). Some have speculated that Horeb (Hebrew word) is the mountain range and Sinai (non-Hebrew word) is the individual peak.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOCATION OF MT. SINAI

- A. If Moses was speaking literally and not figuratively of the three day journey he requested of Pharaoh (3:18; 5:3; 8:27), that was not a long enough time to get to the traditional site in the southern Sinai peninsula. Therefore, some scholars place the mountain near the oasis of Kadesh-Barnea.
- B. The traditional site called “Jebel Musa,” in the Wilderness of Sin, has several things in its favor:
 - 1. There is a large plain before the mountain.

2. Deut. 1:2 says it was an eleven day journey from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea.
 3. The term “Sinai” is a non-Hebrew term. It may be linked to the Wilderness of Sin, which refers to a small desert bush. The Hebrew name for the mountain is Horeb (wilderness).
 4. Mt. Sinai has been the traditional site since the 4th century A.D. It is in the “land of Midian” which included a large area of the Sinai peninsula and Arabia.
 5. It seems that archaeology has confirmed the location of some of the cities mentioned in the Exodus account (*Elim, Dophkah, Rephidim*) as being on the western side of the Sinai Peninsula.
- C. The traditional site of Mt. Sinai was not established until *Pilgrimage of Silvia*, written about A.D. 385-8 (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, p. 151).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:5-6

⁵“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. ⁶He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

4:5 “I am going to send Elijah the prophet” The rabbis (i.e., *b. Sanh* 118a), the Septuagint, and some early Church fathers were expecting Elijah, the prophet, to return literally (cf. *Ecclesiasticus* 48:10ff). Elijah and Moses met with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:4). However, the words of Jesus seem to relate this passage to John the Baptist (cf. Mal. 3:1; Matt. 11:7-14; 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 1:17). John denies this title in John 1:19-23, but apparently he was denying that he was Elijah reincarnated.

▣ **“the great and terrible day of the LORD”** This day is characterized in two ways:

1. “great,” BDB 152, these two descriptions are often used together (i.e., YHWH’s acts of redemption, cf. Deut. 10:21; Job 5:9; 9:10; 37:5; Ps. 71:19; 106:21)
2. “terrible,” BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE. Its basic meaning is “fear” or “awe.” Therefore, it can stand for
 - a. a day of judgment
 - b. a day of the awesome deeds of YHWH
 - 1) used of YHWH Himself in Deut. 10:21; II Sam. 7:23; Ps. 47:3; 68:36; 76:8; Isa. 64:2. He is “great and awful” (cf. Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 4:8; 9:32; Dan. 9:4)
 - 2) used of YHWH’s name in Deut. 28:58; Ps. 99:3; 111:9; Mal. 1:14
 - 3) YHWH’s coming day in Joel 2:11; 3:4; and here

4:6 “He will restore” This VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used often in Malachi (cf. 1:4; 2:6; 3:7[thrice],18; 4:6, see notes at 3:7). This is the regular Hebrew word for repentance (lit. “turn” or “turn back”). In this context it has a double focus:

1. return the post-exilic community to the faith of their fathers
2. return stability to the family structure of the faith community

▣ **“curse”** The literal word is *herem* (BDB 356, cf. Lev. 27:28, 29; Deut. 25:16-17; Josh. 6:17 and I Sam. 3:15ff). This is the term which is used of something being dedicated to God, and it becoming so holy that it must be completely destroyed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the cultural setting of Malachi 3:14?
2. Explain “the book of remembrances.”
3. How is service related to our righteousness before God? (cf v. 18)
4. Explain the two unique terms found in Malachi 4:2 and how they relate to the Messiah.
5. Is John the Baptist the predicted prophet Elijah?

APPENDIX ONE

INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Opening Statements

1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy
 - a. pre-monarchial (before King Saul)
 - 1) individuals called prophets
 - d) Abraham - Gen. 20:7
 - e) Moses - Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
 - f) Aaron - Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)
 - g) Miriam - Exod. 15:20
 - h) Medad and Eldad - Num. 11:24-30
 - i) Deborah - Judg. 4:4
 - j) unnamed - Judg. 6:7-10
 - k) Samuel - I Sam. 3:20
 - 2) references to prophets as a group - Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
 - 3) prophetic groups or guilds - I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.
 - 4) Messiah called prophet - Deut. 18:15-18
 - b. non-writing monarchial prophets (they address the king)
 - 1) Gad - I Sam. 7:2; 12:25; II Sam. 24:11; I Chron. 29:29
 - 2) Nathan - II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22
 - 3) Ahijah - I Kgs. 11:29
 - 4) Jehu - I Kgs. 16:1,7,12
 - 5) unnamed - I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22
 - 6) Elijah - I Kgs. 18; II Kgs. 2
 - 7) Milcaiah - I Kgs. 22
 - 8) Elisha - II Kgs. 2:8,13
 - c. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king):
Isaiah—Malachi (except Daniel)

B. Biblical Terms

1. *ro'eh* = seer, I Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term *Nabi*, which means “prophet” and comes from the root, “to call.” *Ro'eh* is from the general Hebrew term “to see.” This person understood God’s ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God’s will in a matter.
2. *hozeh* = seer, II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *ro'eh*. It is from a rarer Hebrew term “to see in a vision.” The participle form is used most often to refer to prophets.

3. *nabi'* = prophet, cognate of Akkadian verb *nabu* = "to call" and Arabic *naba'a* = "to announce." This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but "to call" at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH's description of Moses' relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).
4. All three terms are used of the prophet's office in I Chron. 29:29; Samuel - *Ro'eh*; Nathan - *Nabi'*; and Gad - *Hoze'h*.
5. The phrase *'ish ha - 'elohim*, "man of God," is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of "prophet."
6. The word "prophet" is Greek in origin. It comes from (1) *pro* = "before" or "for"; (2) *phemi* = "to speak."

II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term "prophecy" had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The Jews labeled the history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) "the former prophets." Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:5) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. "Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation" (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896).
- C. "The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present" ("Prophets and Prophecy," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, p. 1152).

III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God's people about Himself and His plans. Often it is used to clearly reveal God's choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected it into an eschatological setting. This end-time view of history (teleological) is unique to Israel and her sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and supplant the office of High Priest as a way of knowing God's will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God's spokesman. The office of prophet seems to also have passed away in Israel after Malachi (or the writing of Chronicles). It does not appear until 400 years later with John the

Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of “prophecy” relates to the OT. New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 14:29,32,37; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation, but forth-tellers and fore-tellers of God’s will in recurrent situations.

- D. Prophecy is not exclusively or primarily predictive in nature. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted “. . .less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic. Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come” (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166).
- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.
- F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic, but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time-frame, or clear division between oracles, it is difficult (1) to read the books through in one sitting; (2) to outline them by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of “prophet” and “prophecy.” In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase “the sons of the prophets” was used to designate this group (II Kgs. 2). The prophets at times were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into the time of individual prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israelite society (Amos). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14).
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on a person’s or a people’s immediate response. Often the prophet’s task was to unfold God’s universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of Israel in the ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets were primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation of Israel.
- D. Most prophetic material was presented orally. It was later combined by means of theme or chronology, or other patterns of Near Eastern literature, which are lost to us. Because it was oral, it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.

- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages
 1. Court scene - God takes His people to court; often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
 2. Funeral dirge - the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic “woe” sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
 3. Covenant blessing pronouncement - the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positively and negatively, are spelled out for the future (Deuteronomy 27-29).

V. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR VERIFICATION OF A TRUE PROPHET

- A. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (predictions/signs are linked to monotheistic purity)
- B. Deuteronomy 18:9-22 (false prophets/true prophets)
- C. Both men and women are called and designated as prophets or prophetesses
 1. Miriam - Exodus 15
 2. Deborah - Judges 4:4-6
 3. Huldah - II Kings 22:14-20; II Chronicles 34:22-28
- D. In the surrounding cultures prophets were verified by means of divination. In Israel they were verified by
 1. a theological test - the use of the name of YHWH
 2. a historical test - accurate predictions

VI. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.
- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book (by literary units and to paragraph level).
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then attempt to put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember that this is ancient Near Eastern literature, not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat predictions with care
 1. Are they exclusively for the author’s day?
 2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel’s history?

3. Are they yet future events?
 4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
 5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.
- F. Special concerns:
1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
 2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
 3. Is there a possibility both biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfillments?
 4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or word play. Since we are not inspired, we best leave this approach to them.

VII. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* by Carl E. Armerding and W. Ward Gasque
- B. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. *My Servants the Prophets* by Edward J. Young
- D. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy
- E. *Cracking the Old Testament Code*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr.

APPENDIX TWO

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up 1/3 of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the “Prophets” (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and “Writings” sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. It is basically thought-based in balanced, parallel lines.
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15th century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in:
 - 1. balanced lines (parallelism)
 - 2. word plays
 - 3. sound plays

III. THE STRUCTURE ©. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp.965-975)

- A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
 - 1. synonymous - the lines express the same thought in different words:
 - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
 - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
 - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
 - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
 - 2. antithetical - the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
 - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
 - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
 - 3. synthetic - the next two or three lines develop the thought - Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2
 - 4. chiasmic - a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.
- B. Charles A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899) developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:
 - 1. emblematic - one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3

2. climatic or stair-like - the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22
 3. introverted - a series of clauses, usually at least four are related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3 - Ps. 30:8-10a
- C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915), developed the concept of balanced clauses further by:
1. complete balance - where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two - Psalm 83:14 and Isaiah 1:3
 2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length - Ps. 59:16; 75:6
- D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which usually denotes a number of parallel lines (a,b,b,a; a,b,c,b,a) forming an hour glass shape, often the central line(s) is emphasized.
- E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry
1. play on alphabet (acrostic, cf. Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff; Lamentations 1-4)
 2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
 3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)
 4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
 5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
 6. special opening and close (inclusive)
- F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related:
1. dedication song - Num. 21:17-18
 2. work songs - (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
 3. ballads - Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
 4. drinking songs - negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7 and positive, Isa. 22:13
 5. love poems - Song of Songs, wedding riddle - Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song - Ps. 45
 6. laments/dirge - (alluded to but not recorded in II Sam. 1:17 and II Chr. 35:25) II Sam. 3:33; Ps. 27, 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lam.; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19)
 7. war songs - Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Josh. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; I Sam. 18:6; II Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
 8. special benedictions or blessing of leader - Gen. 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deut. 32; II Sam. 23:1-7
 9. magical texts - Balaam, Num. 24:3-9
 10. sacred poems - Psalms
 11. acrostic poems - Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
 12. curses - Num. 21:22-30
 13. taunt poems - Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
 14. a book of war poems (Jashar) - Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; II Sam. 1:18

IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

- A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.

- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue-oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.
- D. Judges 4 & 5 are very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exod. 14 & 15).
- E. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.

APPENDIX THREE

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE POWERS OF MESOPOTAMIA

(using dates based primarily on John Bright's *A History of Israel*, p. 462ff.)

I. Assyrian Empire (Gen.10:11)

A. Religion and culture were greatly influenced by the Sumerian/Babylonian Empire.

B. Tentative list of rulers and approximate dates:

1. 1354-1318 - Asshur-Uballit I:
 - (a) conquered the Hittite city of Carchemish
 - (b) began to remove Hittite influence and allowed Assyria to develop
2. 1297-1266 - Adad-Nirari I (powerful king)
3. 1265-1235 - Shalmaneser I (powerful king)
4. 1234-1197 - Tukulti-Ninurta I
 - first conquest of Babylonian empire to the south
5. 1118-1078 - Tiglath-Pileser I
 - Assyria becomes a major power in Mesopotamia
6. 1012- 972 Ashur-Rabi II
7. 972- 967 - Ashur-Resh-Isui II
8. 966- 934 - Tiglath-Pileser II
9. 934- 912 - Ashur-Dan II
10. 912- 890 - Adad-Nirari II
11. 890- 884 - Tukulti-Ninurta II
12. 883- 859 - Asshur-Nasir-Apal II
13. 859- 824 - Shalmaneser III
 - Battle of Qarqar in 853
14. 824-811 - Shamashi-Adad V
15. 811-783 - Adad-Nirari III
16. 781-772 - Shalmaneser IV
17. 772-754 - Ashur-Dan III
18. 754-745 - Ashur-Nirari V
19. 745-727 - Tiglath-Pileser III:
 - a. called by his Babylonian throne name, Pul, in II Kings 15:19
 - b. very powerful king
 - c. started the policy of deporting conquered peoples
 - d. In 735 B.C.. there was the formation of the "Syro-Ephramatic League" which was an attempt to unify all the available military resources of the transjordan nations from the head waters of the Euphrates to Egypt for the purpose of neutralizing the rising military power of Assyria. King Ahaz of Judah refused to join and was invaded by Israel and Syria. He wrote to Tiglath-Pileser III for help against the advise of Isaiah (cf. II Kgs. 16; Isa. 7-12).

- e. In 732 Tiglath-Pileser III invades and conquers Syria and Israel and places a vassal king on the throne of Israel, Hoshea (732-722). Thousands of Jews from the Northern Kingdom were exiled to Media (cf. II Kings 15).
20. 727-722 - Shalmaneser V
 - a. Hoshea forms an alliance with Egypt and is invaded by Assyria (cf. II Kgs.17)
 - b. besieged Samaria in 724 B.C.
 21. 722-705 - Sargon II:
 - a. After a three year siege started by Shalmaneser V, his successor Sargon II conquers the capital of Israel, Samaria. Over 27,000 are deported to Media.
 - b. The Hittite empire is also conquered.
 - c. In 714-711 another coalition of transjordan nations and Egypt rebelled against Assyria. This coalition is known as “the Ashdad Rebellion.” Even Hezekiah of Judah originally was involved. Assyria invaded and destroyed several Philistine cities.
 22. 705-681 - Sennacherib:
 - a. In 705 another coalition of transjordan nations and Egypt rebelled after the death of Sargon II. Hezekiah fully supported this rebellion. Sennacherib invaded in 701. The rebellion was crushed but Jerusalem was spared by an act of God (cf. Isa. 36-39 and II Kgs. 18-19).
 - b. Sennacherib also put down the rebellion in Elam and Babylon.
 23. 681-669 - Esarhaddon:
 - a. first Assyrian ruler to attack and conquer Egypt
 - b. had great sympathy with Babylon and rebuilt its capital city
 24. 669-633 - Ashurbanipal:
 - a. also called Osnappar in Ezra 4:10
 - b. His brother Shamash-shum-ukin was made king of Babylon (later demoted to viceroy). This brought several years of peace between Assyria and Babylon, but there was an undercurrent of independence which broke out in 652 led by his brother (who had been demoted to Viceroy).
 - c. fall of Thebes, 663 B.C.
 - d. defeated Elam, 653, 645 B.C.
 25. 633-629 - Asshur-Etil-IIani
 26. 629-612 - Sin-Shar-Ishkun
 27. 612-609 - Asshur-Uballit II:
 - a. enthroned king in exile in Haran
 - b. the fall of Assher in 614 B.C. and Nineveh in 612 B.C.

II. Neo-Babylon Empire:

- A. 703-? Merodach-Baladan
 - Started several revolts against Assyrian rule

- B. 652 Shamash-shum-ukin:
1. Esarhaddon's son and Assurbanipal's brother
 2. he started a revolt against Assyria but was defeated
- C. 626-605 Nabopolassar:
1. was the first monarch of the Neo-Babylonian Empire
 2. he attacked Assyria from the south while Cyaxares of Media attacked from the northeast
 3. the old Assyrian capital of Asshur fell in 614 and the powerful new capital of Ninevah fell in 612 B.C.
 4. the remnant of the Assyrian army retreated to Haran. They even installed a king.
 5. In 608 Pharaoh Necho II (cf. II Kings 23:29) marched north to help the remnant of the Assyrian army for the purpose of forming a buffer zone against the rising power of Babylon. Josiah, the godly king of Judah (cf. II Kings 23), opposed the movement of the Egyptian army through Palestine. There was a minor skirmish at Megiddo. Josiah was wounded and died (II Kgs. 23:29-30). His son, Jehoakaz, was made king. Pharaoh Necho II arrived too late to stop the destruction of the Assyrian forces at Haran. He engaged the Babylonian forces commanded by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II and was soundly defeated in 605 B.C. at Carchemesh on the Euphrates River.
 On his way back to Egypt Pharaoh Necho stopped at Jerusalem and sacked the city. He replaced and deported Jehoahaz after only three months. He put another son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, on the throne (cf. II Kings 23:31-35).
 6. Nebuchadnezzar II chased the Egyptian army south through Palestine but he received word of his father's death and returned to Babylon to be crowned. Later, in the same year, he returned to Palestine. He left Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah but exiled several thousand of the leading citizens and several members of the royal family. Daniel and his friends were part of this deportation.
- D. 605-562 - Nebuchadnezzar II:
1. From 597-538 Babylon was in complete control of Palestine.
 2. In 597 another deportation from Jerusalem occurred because of Jehoakim's alliance with Egypt (II Kings 24). He died before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar II. His son Jehoiachin was only king for three months when he was exiled to Babylon. Ten thousand citizens, including Ezekiel, were resettled close to the City of Babylon by the Canal Kebar.
 3. In 586, after continued flirtation with Egypt, the City of Jerusalem was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (II Kgs. 25) and a mass deportation occurred. Zedekiah, who replaced Jehoiachin, was exiled and Gedaliah was appointed governor.
 4. Gedaliah was killed by Jewish renegade military forces. These forces fled to Egypt and forced Jeremiah to go with them. Nebuchadnezzar invaded a fourth time (605, 596, 586, 582) and deported all remaining Jews that he could find.
- E. 562-560 - Evil-merodach, Nebuchadnezzar's son, was also known as Amel-Marduk (Akkadian, "Man of Marduk")
- He released Jehoiakim from prison but he had to remain in Babylon (cf. II Kings 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31).

- F. 560-556 - Neriglissar
- He assassinated Evil-merodach, who was his brother-in-law
 - He was previously Nebuchadnezzar's general who destroyed Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 39:3,13)
- G. 556 - Labaski-Marduk
- He was Neriglissar's son who assumed kingship as a boy, but was assassinated after only nine months (Berossos).

- H. 556-539 - Nabonidus (Akkadian, "Nebo is exalted"):
1. Nabonidus was not related to the royal house so he married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar
 2. He spent most of the time building a temple to the moon god "Sin" in Tema. He was the son of the high priestess of this goddess. This earned him the enmity of the priests of Marduk, chief god of Babylon.
 3. He spent most of his time trying to put down revolts (in Syria and north Africa) and stabilize the kingdom.
 4. He moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar, in the capital, Babylon (cf. Dan.5).

- I. ? - 539 - Belshazzar (co-reign)
- The city of Babylon fell very quickly to the Persian Army under Gobryas of Gutium by diverting the waters of the Euphrates and entering the city unopposed. The priests and people of the city saw the Persians as liberators and restorers of Marduk. Gobryas was made Governor of Babylon by Cyrus II. Gobryas may have been the Darius the Mede of Dan. 5:31; 6:1. "Darius" means "royal one."

III. Medio-Persian Empire: Survey of the Rise of Cyrus II (Isa. 41:2,25;44:28-45:7; 46:11; 48:15):

- A. 625-585 - Cyaxares was the king of Media that helped Babylon defeat Assyria.
- B. 585-550 - Astyages was king of Media (capital was Ecbatana). Cyrus II was his grandson by Cambyses I (600-559, Persian) and Mandane (daughter of Astyages, Median).
- C. 550-530 - Cyrus II of Ansham (eastern Elam) was a vassal king who revolted:
1. Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, supported Cyrus.
 2. Astyages' general, Harpagus, led his army to join Cyrus' revolt
 3. Cyrus II dethroned Astyages.
 4. Nabonidus, in order to restore a balance of power, made an alliance with:
 - a. Egypt
 - b. Croesus, King of Lydia (Asia Minor)
 5. 547 - Cyrus II marched against Sardis (capital of Lydia) and it fell in 546 B.C.
 6. 539 - In mid-October the general Ugbaru and Gobryas, both of Gutium, with Cyrus' army, took Babylon without resistance. Ugbaru was made governor, but died of war wounds within weeks, then Gobryas was made governor of Babylon.
 7. 539 - In late October Cyrus II "the Great" personally entered as liberator. His policy of kindness to national groups reversed years of deportation as a national policy.

8. 538 - Jews and others (cf. the Cyrus Cylinder) were allowed to return home and rebuild their native temples (cf. II Chr. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4). He also restored the vessels from YHWH's temple which Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Marduk's temple in Babylon (cf. Ezra 1:7-11; 6:5).
 9. 530 - Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, succeeded him briefly as co-regent, but later the same year Cyrus died while in a military campaign.
- D. 530-522 - reign of Cambyses II
1. added Egyptian empire in 525 B.C. to the Medo-Persian Empire;
 2. he had a short reign:
 - a. some say he committed suicide;
 - b. Heroditus said he cut himself with his own sword while mounting his horse and died of the resulting infection.
 3. brief usurpation of the throne by Pseudo-Smerdis (Gaumata) - 522
- E. 522-486 - Darius I (Hystapes) came to rule
1. He was not of the royal line but a military general.
 2. He organized the Persian Empire using Cyrus' plans for Satraps (cf. Ezra 5-6; also during Haggai's and Zechariah's time).
 3. He set up coinage like Lydia.
 4. He attempted to invade Greece, but was repulsed.
- F. 486-465 - Reign of Xerxes I:
1. put down Egyptian revolt
 2. intended to invade Greece and fulfill Persian dream but was defeated in the battle of Thermoply in 480 B.C. and Salamis in 479 B.C.
 3. Esther's husband, who is called Ahasuerus in the Bible, was assassinated in 465 B.C.
- G. 465-424 - Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) reigned (cf Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah; Malachi):
1. Greeks continued to advance until confronted with the Peloponisian Civil Wars
 2. Greece divides (Athenian - Peloponisian)
 3. Greek civil wars lasted about 20 years
 4. during this period the Jewish community is strengthened
 5. brief reign of Xerxes II and Sekydianos - 423
- H. 423-404 - Darius II (Nothos) reigned
- I. 404-358 - Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) reigned
- J. 358-338 - Artaxerxes III (Ochos)reigned
- K. 338-336 - Arses reigned
- L. 336-331 - Darius III (Codomannus)reigned until the Battle of Issus 331 and was defeated by Greece

IV. Survey of Egypt:

A. Hyksos (Shepherd Kings - Semitic rulers)-1720/10-1550

B. 18th Dynasty (1570-1310):

1. 1570-1546 - Amonhotep I
 - a. made Thebes the capital
 - b. invaded southern Canaan
2. 1546-1525 - Amenophis I (Amenhotep I)
3. 1525-1494 - Thutmose I
4. 1494-1479 - Thutmose II - married Thutmose I's daughter, Hatshepsut
5. 1479-1435 - Thutmose III (nephew of Hatshepsut)
6. 1435-1414 - Amenophis II (Amenhotep II)
7. 1414-1406 - Thutmose IV
8. 1406-1370 - Amenophis III (Amenhotep III)
9. 1370-1353 - Amenophis IV (Akhenaten)
 - a. worshiped the Sun, Aten
 - b. instituted a form of high-god worship (monotheism)
 - c. Tel-El-Amarna letters are in this period
10. ? Smenkhare
11. ? Tutankhamun (Tutankhaten)
12. ? Ay (Aye-Eye)
13. 1340-1310 Haremhab

C. 19th Dynasty (1290-1200):

1. ? Rameses I (Ramses)
2. 1290-1279 - Seti I (Sethos)
3. 1279-1213 - Rameses II (Ramses II)
 - a. from archaeological evidence most likely Pharaoh of the exodus
 - b. built the cities of Avaris, Pithom and Ramses by Habaru (possibly Semites or Hebrew) slaves
4. 1213-1204 - Merneptah (Merenptah)
5. ? Amenmesse
6. ? Seti II
7. ? Siptah
8. ? Tewosret

D. 20th Dynasty (1180-1065)

1. 1180-1155 - Rameses III
2. 1155-1065 - Rameses IV - XI

E. 21st Dynasty (1065-935):

1. ? Smendes
2. ? Herihor

- F. 22nd Dynasty (935-725 - Libyan):
1. 935-914 - Shishak (Shosenk I or Sheshong I)
 - a. protected Jeroboam I until Solomon's death
 - b. conquered Palestine about 925 (cf. I Kgs. 14-25; II Chr. 12)
 2. 914-874 - Osorkon I
 3. ? Osorkon II
 4. ? Shoshnek II
- G. 23rd Dynasty (759-715 - Libyan)
- H. 24th Dynasty (725-709)
- I. 25th Dynasty (716/15-663 - Ethiopian/Nubian):
1. 710/09-696/95 - Shabako (Shabaku)
 2. 696/95-685/84 - Shebteko (Shebitku)
 3. 690/689, 685/84-664 - Tirhakah (Taharqa)
 4. ? Tantamun
- J. 26th Dynasty (663-525 - Saitic):
1. 663-609 - Psammetichus I (Psamtik)
 2. 609-593 - Neco II (Necho)
 3. 593-588 - Psammetichus II (Psamtik)
 4. 588-569 - Apries (Hophra)
 5. 569-525 - Amasis
 6. ? - Psammetichus III (Psamtik)
- K. 27th Dynasty (525-401 - Persian):
1. 530-522 - Cambyses II (Cyrus II's son)
 2. 522-486 - Darius I
 3. 486-465 - Xerxes I
 4. 465-424 - Artaxerxes I
 5. 423-404 - Darius II
- L. Several brief dynasties (404-332)
1. 404-359 - Artaxerxes II
 2. 359/8 - 338/7 - Artaxerxes III
 3. 338/7 - 336/7 - Arses
 4. 336/5 - 331 - Darius III

*for a differing chronology see Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 2 p. 231.

V. Survey of Greece:

- A. 359-336 - Philip II of Macedon:
 - 1. built up Greece
 - 2. assassinated in 336 B.C.

- B. 336-323 - Alexander II “the Great” (Philip’s son):
 - 1. routed Darius III, the Persian king, at the battle of Issus
 - 2. died in 323 B.C. in Babylon of a fever at 32/33 yrs. of age
 - 3. Alexander’s generals divided his empire at his death:
 - a. Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
 - b. Lysimachus - Thrace
 - c. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
 - d. Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
 - e. Antigonus - Asia Minor (He did not last long)

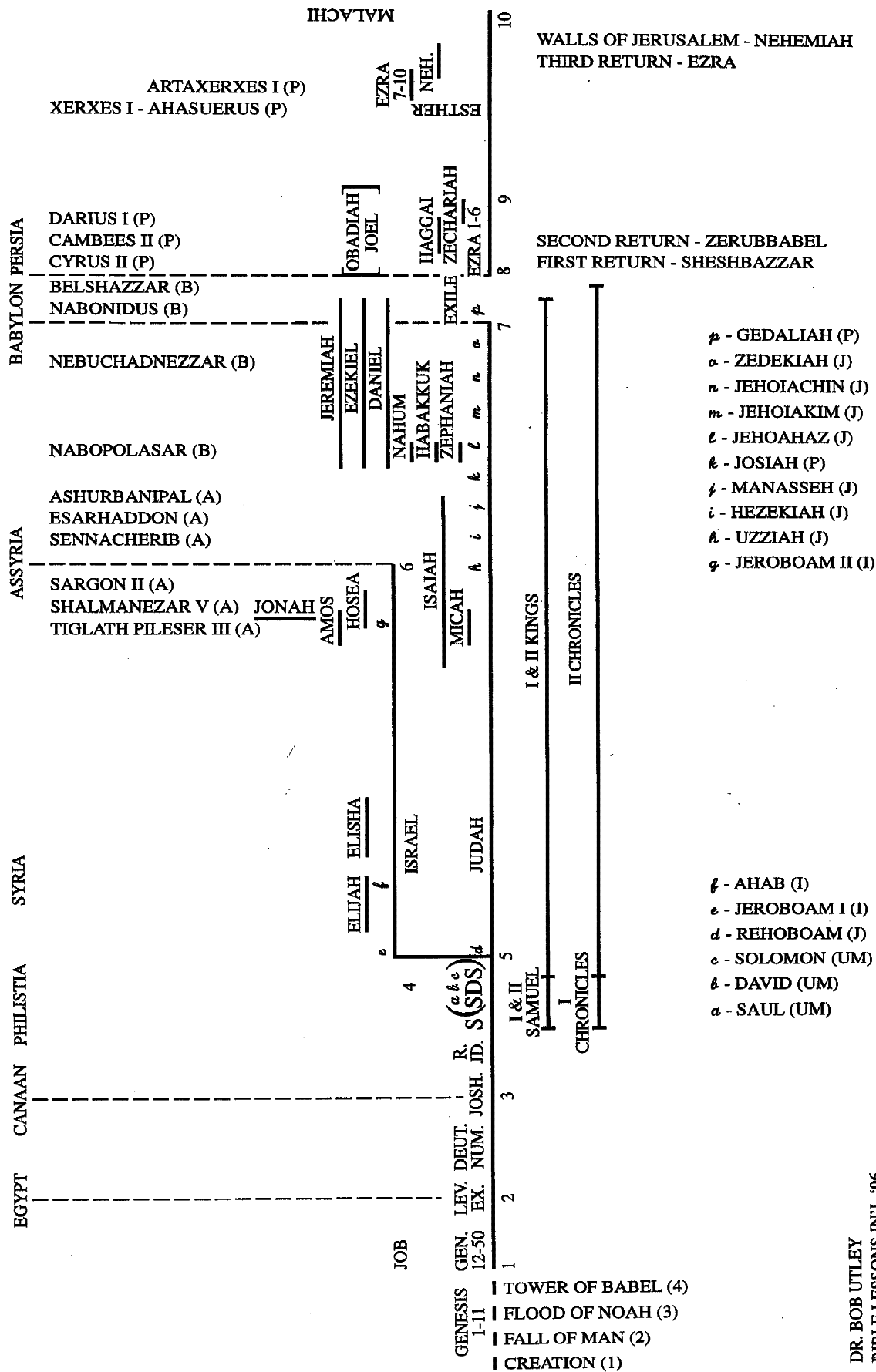
- C. Seleucids vs. Ptolemies struggle for control of Palestine:
 - 1. Syria (Seleucid Rulers):
 - a. 312-280 - Seleucus I
 - b. 280-261 - Antiochus I Soter
 - c. 261-146 - Antiochus II Theus
 - d. 246-226 - Seleucus II Callinicus
 - e. 226-223 - Seleucus III Ceraunus
 - f. 223-187 - Antiochus III the Great
 - g. 187-175 - Seleucus IV Philopator
 - h. 175-163 - Antiochus IV Epiphanes
 - i. 163-162 - Antiochus V
 - j. 162-150 - Demetrius I
 - 2. Egyptian (Ptolemaic Rulers):
 - a. 327-285 - Ptolemy I Soter
 - b. 285-246 - Ptolemy II Philadelphus
 - c. 246-221 - Ptolemy III Euergetes
 - d. 221-203 - Ptolemy IV Philopator
 - e. 203-181 - Ptolemy V Epiphanes
 - f. 181-146 - Ptolemy VI Philometor
 - 3. Brief Survey:
 - a. 301 - Palestine under Ptolemy rule for 181 years.
 - b. 175-163 - Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth Seleucid ruler, wanted to Hellenize Jews by force, if necessary:
 - (1) constructed gymnasiums
 - (2) constructed pagan altars of Zeus Olympius in the Temple
 - c. 168 - December 13 - Jesus slain on the altar in Jerusalem by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Some consider this to be “the abomination of desolation” in Daniel 8.

- d. 167 - Mattathias, priest in Modin, and sons rebel. The best known of his sons was Judas Maccabeas, "Judas the Hammer."
- e. 165 - December 25 - Temple rededicated. This is called Hanukkah or "Festival of Lights."

For a good discussion of the dating problems, procedures and presuppositions see *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 10-17.

APPENDIX FOUR

CHART OF THE ENTIRE OLD TESTAMENT
(on next page)



DR. BOB UTLEY
BIBLE LESSONS IN 'L '96

Undateable Events (Genesis 1-11)

1. Creation (Gen. 1-2)
2. Fall of Man (Gen. 3)
3. Flood of Noah's Day (Gen. 6-9)
4. Tower of Babel (Gen. 10-11)

Dateable Events

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Patriarchal Period (Gen. 12-50 and Job) | 2000 B.C. |
| 2. Exodus from Egypt (Exodus) | 1445 or 1290 B.C. |
| 3. Conquest of Canaan (Joshua) | 1440 or 1250 B.C. |
| 4. United Monarchy (Saul, David, Solomon) | 1000 B.C. |
| 5. Divided Monarchy (Rehoboam-Jeroboam I) | 922 B.C. |
| 6. Fall of Samaria (Israel) to Assyria | 722 B.C. |
| 7. Fall of Jerusalem (Judah) to Babylon | 586 B.C. |
| 8. Decree of Cyrus (Persia) to Return | 538 B.C. |
| 9. Temple Rebuilt | 516 B.C. |
| 10. Close of OT Period (Malachi) | 430 B.C. |

List of Kings

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. United Monarchy | D. Assyria |
| 1. Saul (a) | 1. Tiglath Pileser III (745-727) |
| 2. David (b) | 2. Shalmanesar V (727-722) |
| 3. Solomon (c) | 3. Sargon II (722-705) |
| B. Israel | 4. Sennacherib (705-681) |
| 1. Jeroboam I (e) | 5. Esarhaddon (681-669) |
| 2. Ahab (f) | 6. Ashurbanipal (669-663) |
| 3. Jeroboam II (g) | E. Babylon |
| C. Judah | 1. Nabopolasar (626-605) |
| 1. Rehoboam (d) | 2. Nebuchadnezzar (605-562) |
| 2. Uzziah (h) | 3. Nabonidus (556-539) |
| 3. Hezekiah (i) | 4. Belshazzar |
| 4. Manasseh (j) | F. Persia |
| 5. Josiah (k) | 1. Cyrus II (550-530) |
| 6. Jehoahaz (l) | 2. Cambes II (530-522) |
| 7. Jehoiakim (m) | 3. Darius I (522-486) |
| 8. Jehoiachin (n) | 4. Xerxes I (486-465) |
| 9. Zedekiah (o) | 5. Artaxerxes I (465-424) |
| 10. Gedaliah (p) | |

APPENDIX FIVE

Timeline of the Post-Exilic Period

KINGS	Cyrus I (550-530)	Cambyses II (530-522)	Darius I (522-486)	Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) (486-465)	Artaxerxes I (465-424)
PROPHETS	Obadiah then Joel, early post-exilic	Haggai (520) Zechariah (519)			Malachi (430)
DATES	538 Cyrus' decree		516 second temple built		400 close of OT
HISTORICAL BOOKS	Ezra 1-6 first and second returns			Esther	Ezra 7-10 Nehemiah third return

APPENDIX SIX

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."