

XII. ZEPHANIAH: “The God who punishes to create a remnant”

A. Orienting Data

1. *Content*: A single expanded oracle of coming catastrophic judgments against Jerusalem / Judah and surrounding nations and of restoration for the remnant of God’s people
2. *Author*: Zephaniah (“Yahweh hides, protects”), a potentially black prophet from Jerusalem, probably of the royal lineage of Hezekiah; his very presence in the lineage of David in the midst of a dark age gives hope.
3. *Date of prophetic activity*: sometime during the reign of Josiah of Judah (640–609 B.C.); in light of both an apparent awareness of Deuteronomy but the certainty of sins’ pervasiveness, the book was probably written in early 622, after the Book of the Law was found in the temple but before the full reformation was carried out.
4. *Likely historical backdrop*: The early part of the Josianic Reformation (2 Kgs 22–23).
5. *Emphases*:
 - a. The coming day of Yahweh as judgment for Judah and the nations.
 - b. Yahweh as divine warrior and guardian of his remnant.
 - c. A summons to satisfaction by means of a patient pursuit of God.
6. *Main Theme*: In light of the impending day of YHWH’s wrath, Zephaniah summons the remnant of Israel to patiently pursue YHWH as the means for ultimate delight in God and for God’s delight in saved sinners.

B. Outline: A Summons to Satisfaction

1. *The Superscription to the Summons* (1:1)
2. *The Setting for the Summons* (1:2–18)
 - a. The Reason for the Call to Silence Declared: Judgment Is Coming (1:2–6)
 - b. The Makeup of the Call to Silence Defined (1:7–18)
3. *The Essence of the Summons* (2:1–3:20)
 - a. Stage 1 of the Summons to Satisfaction: Pursue Yahweh to Avoid Judgment (2:1–4)
 - b. The Ground of the Summons to Satisfaction (2:5–3:7)
 - i. Ground 1 (“Woe”): The Lamentable State and Fate of the Rebels from the Foreign Nations, Colored with Statements of Hope for the Remnant (2:5–15)
 - ii. Ground 2 (“Woe”): The Lamentable State and Fate of the Rebels from Jerusalem (3:1–7)
 - c. Stage 2 of the Summons to Satisfaction: Wait on Yahweh, Ultimately to Enjoy Satisfaction (3:8–20)
 - i. The Charge to Wait for Yahweh Asserted (3:8)
 - ii. The Dual Basis of the Charge Declared (3:9–10)
 - iii. The Ultimate Motivation of the Charge Expounded: The Remnant of Judah’s Satisfying Salvation (3:11–20)

C. Message

1. *The Superscription to the Summons to Satisfaction* (1:1)
 - a. The nature of the prophecy: the Word of Yahweh
 - b. The messenger of the prophecy:

- i. Because Zephaniah was “son of Cushi” (1:1) and shows a unique interest in the sin and future restoration of the Cushites (i.e., Ethiopians, 2:12; 3:9–10), it is possible that the prophet was a black Jew. This could help explain his apparent interest in global judgment and restoration (1:2–3, 17–18; 3:8–10).
- ii. Zephaniah is the only prophet that includes a five generation genealogy, which suggests part of the purpose is to identify him with Hezekiah, likely reforming king in the line of David. The prophet’s participation in the royal family potentially explains his high awareness of and concern for Israel’s covenantal and religious heritage, the international climate (e.g., 2:5–15), and the ethics of Jerusalem’s political and religious leadership (esp. 1:4, 8–9; 3:3–4)..
- c. The time of the prophecy
 - i. Zephaniah’s prophetic ministry occurred sometime during Josiah’s three-decade reign (ca. 640–609 B.C.), yet the exact timing is difficult to pinpoint.
 - (1) The prophet’s anticipation of the destruction of Assyria’s capital Nineveh (2:13–15) makes the latest possible date 612 B.C., when the city was overthrown.
 - (2) On the spectrum’s other end, King Josiah began to reign in 640 B.C. at the age of eight, and in his eighth year (ca. 632 B.C.) “he began to seek the God of his father David” (2 Chr 34:3). In his twelfth year (ca. 628 B.C.), he started removing all Canaanite pagan shrines and emblems from Jerusalem and Judah on up into the area once designated to the northern kingdom (2 Chr 34:3–7). Finally, in his eighteenth year (ca. 622 B.C.), after the recovery of the Book of the Law of Moses (probably at least including the core of Deuteronomy; cf. Deut 29:21; 30:10; 31:26), the king instituted a mass religious reform throughout the land (2 Chr 34:8–35:19), which included the complete eradication of all remaining signs of Baal worship in Jerusalem and its environs (2 Kgs 23:4–20).
 - ii. A number of features suggest Zephaniah ministered early in 622 B.C., after the king’s initial 628 B.C. cleansing and after the finding of the Book of the Law but before the reform movement got fully underway:
 - (1) The book lacks any reference to child sacrifice, which suggests Josiah had already begun to curb the contaminating evil that made the previous reigns of Manasseh and Amon so foul (2 Kgs 21:6, 21; cf. 24:3–4).
 - (2) Zephaniah’s message confronts religious syncretism and indifference, covenantal disloyalty, and political and social oppression (Zeph 1:4–13; 3:1–4, 7), and it is characterized by calls back to the basics of seeking God, prayer, right order, humility, and patient trust (e.g., 1:6; 2:3; 3:2, 8)—all features consonant with early stages of reform.

- (3) Zephaniah appears to regularly allude to Deuteronomy (see especially 1:5, 13, 15, 17, 18; 2:3, 7, 9; 3:5, 7, 10, 17, 19), which implies he was acquainted with the book.
 - (4) A “remnant of Baal worship” including “idolatrous priests” still remained in Jerusalem (1:4), which means Josiah’s full reformation was yet complete (cf. 2 Kgs 23:5).
2. *The Setting for the Summons to Satisfaction* (1:2–18): A Call to Dreadful Silence in Light of the Nearness and Nature of Yahweh’s impending judgment on Judah and the World. Sets a context for the book’s main exhortations in chs. 2–3. The prophet calls his Judean listeners to pause in silence in light of the nearness and nature of Yahweh’s impending judgment on Judah and the world. Verses 2–6 highlight the base reason for the call, and vv. 7–18 define the makeup of the call.
 - a. The Reason for the Call to Silence Declared—Judgment Is Coming (1:2–6): Yahweh promises to bring devastating judgment on the broad world (vv. 2–3) and on Judah and Jerusalem in particular (vv. 4–6) in light of rampant wickedness and idolatrous rebellion.
 - b. The Nature of the Call to Silence Defined (1:7–18): Like a herald readying an audience for an angry king’s arrival, Zephaniah charges his audience to become quiet (v. 7a) and then further describes the basis for the call, detailing the imminent timing and sacrificial makeup of Yahweh’s impending judgment day with respect to both Judah (vv. 7b–13) and the whole world (vv. 14–18).
3. *The Essence of the Summons* (2:1–3:20): Charges to Repent and Wait upon the Lord in Light of the Impending Judgment Against Rebels and the Future Joy Promised to the Remnant. Building off the context of dreadful silence sparked by the encroaching day of Yahweh (1:2–18), the book’s main section calls the remnant of Judah to repent and wait for God (2:1, 3; 3:8). The dual charges frame 2:5–3:7, which highlights the lamentable state and fate of the rebels from the foreign nations (2:5–15) and from Jerusalem (3:1–7) in order to clarify some reasons why Judah should turn to Yahweh, looking and longing, hunting and hoping, entreating and trusting.
 - a. Stage 1 of the Summons to Satisfaction: Pursue Yahweh to Avoid Judgment (2:1–4). Stage 1 in the summons to satisfaction is repentance, defined here in two parts as gathering together (v. 1–2) and seeking Yahweh (v. 3abc). Only by this means may a remnant from Judah “perhaps . . . be sheltered” from God’s destruction of the wicked (v. 3d), like those from Philistia (v. 4).
 - b. The Ground of the Summons to Satisfaction (2:5–3:7): This unit develops the judgment mentioned in 2:4 and by this develops the rational basis for the charges to “seek” and “wait” found 2:3 and 3:8. The rebellious Judeans should patiently pursue Yahweh because he has promised to judge not only the rebels of the foreign nations (2:5–15) but also those from Jerusalem (3:1–7). Each reason for repentance and rest begins with the term “woe” (2:5; 3:1) and laments the state and fate of the respective groups.
 - i. Ground 1 (“Woe”): The Lamentable State and Fate of the Rebels from the Foreign Nations, Colored with Statements of Hope for the

- Remnant (2:5–15). With the call to Judah to repent in focus (2:1–4), this unit announces God’s judgment on the foreign peoples surrounding Israel, beginning with the Philistines to the west (vv. 5–7) and followed by the Moabites and Ammonites to the east (vv. 8–11) and the Cushites/Ethiopians and Assyrians to the south and north (vv. 12–15). Implied is that the judgment that spans the populated world will reach Judah (cf. Hab 2:16–17) unless they return to Yahweh and become part of the preserved remnant (see Zeph 3:7, 9).
- ii. Ground 2 (“Woe”): The Lamentable State and Fate of the Rebels from Jerusalem: A Woe Oracle against the City (3:1–7). As implied in the preceding lament against the rebels from the foreign nations (2:5–15), this brief unit further unpacks the sinful makeup and certain judgment of those in Jerusalem by highlighting their stubborn resistance to learn from God’s correction of them or from his punishment of the foreign nations (cf. 1:4–6). In turn it provides a further reason why the remnant from Judah should indeed pursue Yahweh (“gather” and “seek,” 2:1–3) with patient trust (“wait,” 3:8).
 - c. Stage 2 of the Summons to Satisfaction: Wait on Yahweh, Ultimately to Enjoy Satisfaction (3:8–20). Added to the command to repent (2:1–3) is here a call to enduring patience (3:8), and together they make up Zephaniah’s two-stage summons that explains the means to lasting joy, which climaxes in God’s delight in those he has saved (highlighted in the final section, 3:9–20).
 - i. The Charge to Wait for Yahweh Asserted (3:8a)
 - ii. The Dual Basis of the Charge Declared (3:8b–10). Both the clause beginning with “I have decided” in 3:8b and the sentence in 3:9 begin with Hebrew causal conjunctions (“because/for”) that stand in series. The two reasons why the remnant from Judah should continue to wait upon Yahweh is because he still intends both to judge the rebel nations (3:8b; cf. Hab 1:2; 3:17–19) and to save a group from the nations of the world, reversing the effects of the Tower of Babel (Zeph 3:9–10). Specifically, on the very day Yahweh stands in judgment as covenant witness (“then”), Yahweh will do a work of new creation, transforming peoples from all over the world into true worshippers—a picture now realized eternally in the church (Matt 28:18–20; Rom 11; Eph 2:11–22; Rev 5:9–10; 7:9–10).
 - iii. The Ultimate Motivation of the Charge Expounded: The Remnant of Judah’s Satisfying Salvation (3:11–20). The lack of conjunction at the head of 3:11 and the content of all that follows suggest that the whole unit from 3:11–20 clarifies for the remnant from Judah the implications of the global transformation highlighted in 3:8b–10. For the preserved from Jerusalem, the restoration through judgment will include the removal of the proud and the preservation of the God-dependent (vv. 11–13), the verbal expression of joy in the wake of the King’s irreversible victory (vv. 14–15), and Yahweh’s deliverance of and delight in his remnant, which secures provision and protection (vv.

16–20). Thus, the call to patiently pursue Yahweh that shapes the book’s body (2:1–3; 3:8) is nothing less than a summons to satisfaction. See Introduction: Message. The first and last sub-units, each of which begins with “on that day” (3:11, 16), expound the primary implications for Judah of Yahweh’s judicial decision (3:8), and they together frame vv. 14–15, which stand as an intrusive call to celebrate, as if the promise of unpolluted pleasure in God’s presence is already fulfilled.

D. Remnant Theme in Zephaniah

1. The remnant defined:
 - a. Remnant of Baal (1:4): Those in Judah and elsewhere identified more with Baal than with Yahweh (see 1:4–6, 12; 3:1–2).
 - b. Remnant of Yahweh/Judah (2:7, 9, 13): All from the earth who are surrendered solely to Yahweh, including those from Judah and Jerusalem (see 2:3).

Fig. 17.8. The Remnant of Baal vs. the Remnant of Yahweh/Judah

<i>Remnant of Baal</i>	<i>Remnant of Yahweh/Judah</i>
Their leaders are syncretistic (1:4). They worship creation in self-righteous ways (1:5a). They are hypocrites not fearing God (1:5b). They are rebellious, prayerless, self-guiding (1:6). They are objects of God’s wrath (1:7). They connect to closely with foreigners (1:8). They defame the temple due to their violence and fraud (1:9). They have unbridled craving for more (1:11, 13). They are complacent, thinking God will not judge their sin (1:12). They are self-confident in physical fortifications an wealth (1:16, 18). They are sinners against Yahweh (1:17). They are proud, taunting God’s people and having arrogance against their land (2:8, 10). They are self-exultant (2:15). They listen to no voice, accept no correction, and fail to trust in Yahweh or to draw near to him (3:2). Their leaders are greedy for gain (3:3). Their leaders are fickle and treacherous, doing violence to God’s law (3:4). They know no shame (3:5).	They are humble and carry out Yahweh’s judgments (2:3). They seek Yahweh, righteousness, and humility (2:3). Yahweh their God cares and provides for them (2:7). They wait for Yahweh (3:8). They call on Yahweh’s name, serve him, and seek refuge in him (3:9, 12). They are worshippers who bring offerings (3:10). They are forgiven, shameless, and humble, without pride or self-exultation (3:11–12). They do no injustice and do not deceive (3:13). They have no fear of judgment, evil, or enemies (3:13, 15–16). Yahweh their God is in their midst, rejoicing over them with gladness (3:15, 17). They grieve their inability to fully worship God as they ought (3:18).
—Repentance begins the move from judgment to life (3:7)—	

2. Moving from Remnant of Baal to Remnant of Yahweh through Repentance
 - Zeph. 3:7. I said, “Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you.” But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.
 - Jer. 18:7–10. If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, ⁸and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. ⁹And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, ¹⁰and if it does evil in

my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it.

- Ezek. 33:13–15. Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. ¹⁴Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, ¹⁵if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

XIII. Canonical Arrangement: Nahum–Zephaniah, the Punishment Prophets

A. Introductory Comments:

1. Zephaniah summarizes the punishment of the wicked similar to the way Micah summarizes their sin.
2. Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah are all prophets of “punishment”
 - a. Nahum declares punishment against haughty Assyria
 - b. Habakkuk declares punishment against haughty Judah and Babylon
 - c. Zephaniah declares punishment on all nations

B. Flow of thought:

1. *Nahum*: Know this for certain: Yahweh is a stronghold only for those who accept his terms of peace, but he will justly judge all his unrepentant enemies.
2. *Habakkuk*: Yahweh is just, and in his time he will indeed punish all wrongdoers and preserve all who walk by faith, looking to him for help, guidance, and satisfaction.
3. *Zephaniah*: Please be part of the remnant that draws near to God, so that the coming Day may be one of rejoicing! Yet for all who fail to heed God’s voice, the Day of Yahweh the warrior will be sure destruction!

XIV.HAGGAI: “The God of renews the temple”**A. Orienting Data**

1. *Content*: oracles encouraging the people to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem
2. *Author*: Haggai, a postexilic prophet in Jerusalem and contemporary of Zechariah (cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14)
3. *Date of prophetic activity*: a four-month period during the second year of Darius of Persia (520 B.C.)
4. *Emphasis*:
 - a. Yahweh’s passion for a place for his presence and worship (see Exod 33:15–16; 19:5–6).
 - b. Failure to rebuild the temple has brought on the present hardships.
 - c. A glorious future awaits the people of God and Zerubbabel (thus David’s kingly line); the glory of the future temple will far surpass the old one (Hag. 2:7, 9)

B. Literary Overview of Haggai

1. The Need for the Temple (1:1–15)
 - a. A call for a divine residence (1:1–12)
 - b. The promise of the divine presence (1:13–15)
2. Oracles Pointing to the Fulfillment of Abrahamic Promises (2:1–23)
 - a. The promise of divine presence (2:1–9)
 - b. The promise of community blessing (2:10–19)
 - c. The promise of a royal deliverer (2:20–23)

C. Message of Haggai:

1. Theme: God’s passion for his own renown
2. The Need for the Temple (1:1–15; see esp. vv. 5, 7)
 - a. Upon their return, Israel was experiencing some great problems in the land. What was the nature of these problems, and of what were they a sign?
 - b. For what reason did God call them to rebuild the temple?
 - c. What did God say that would have given assurance that success would be experienced?
3. Oracles Pointing to the Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Promises (2:1–23)
 - a. What purpose does recalling the earlier condition of the temple (2:3) play in Haggai’s message?
 - b. The opposition was great, so why should the remnant, “Be strong ... Be strong ... Be strong ... Work!” (2:4; cf. Josh. 1:6–7, 9, 18; 23:6; 24:14; Isa. 41:10)?
 - c. What does God promise?
 - d. What role does the imagery of holiness and uncleanness play (2:10–14)?
 - e. What has restored the reality of blessing rather than curse (2:19)?
 - f. How are we to understand the imagery of the signet ring (2:23)?
 - Hag. 2:23. On that day, declares Yahweh of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares Yahweh, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares Yahweh of hosts.
 - Jer. 22:24–25. As I live, declares Yahweh, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off²⁵ and give you into the hand of those who seek you life, into the hand of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

4. Summary:
 - a. God is passionate about establishing his kingdom.
 - b. He ensures his kingdom's success by placing his presence in the midst of his people and by making great and precious promises about his glory and his Messiah that enable and motivate lives that witness God to the world.

D. Haggai and Zechariah's Historical Context and Message

1. Political and Social Conditions
 - a. The short life of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (625–539 B.C.) vs. the extended life of the Persian Empire (539–323 B.C.): About 65 years after the dissolution of the Assyrian state with the fall of Carchemish, the glory of Babylon disappeared. Under the Indo-European Achaemenid dynasty the Persians would rule the ancient Near East for more than two centuries until the establishment of the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great.
 - b. In 538 B.C., Cyrus decrees that the Jews can return to Jerusalem & rebuild the temple of Yahweh. Only a small group return to Jerusalem (42,360 Jews + 7,337 servants = 49,697 individuals; see Ezra 1:64–65), which suggests life was good in “exile.” The first return was led by Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua the priest; Haggai and Zechariah were the prophets.
2. The Crisis of Faith
 - a. Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra 1–6 testify to a “crisis of faith,” which was not resolved even after 100 years into the ministries of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi.
 - b. The glorious hope held out by the prophets of a previous era had not been realized, and the people were paralyzed in a general climate of despondency and moral lethargy.
 - i. The land remained but a small province in the backwaters of the Persian empire (Ezra 9:8–9).
 - ii. The glorious Edenic future with the Messianic King had not yet been realized.
 - iii. Yahweh had not (yet) come to his temple (Mal. 3:1) with majesty and power to exalt his kingdom in the sight of the nations.
3. The Ministries of Haggai and Zechariah
 - a. Following the 538 return to rebuild the temple, the foundations were quickly laid with great praise, thanksgiving, and mourning.
 - Ezra 3:11–13. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to Yahweh, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.” And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praise Yahweh, because the foundation of the house of Yahweh was laid. ¹²But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, ¹³so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.
 - b. Soon construction ceased, due to oppression from outside and despondency within. Haggai and Zechariah helped rekindle the passion for the temple and its construction and helped spark new hope in God’s restoration promises (Ezra 5:1).

- i. *The question:* How can this remnant of re-gathered Israelites continue to be the people of God while under the lordship of Persia and in the absence of a Davidic ruler and full control of the entire land of Israel?
- ii. *The answer:* Only partial fulfillment now and hope for consummation in the future! Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah thrust the Davidic hope into the eschatological future (cf. Hag 2:21–23; Zech 4:6b–10a) and encourage the people to relax and take care of the business at hand.

E. Excursus: The Purpose of Dated Oracles in the Prophets

1. The dates of Haggai's oracles, as presented in Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 75* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1956):
 - a. Oracle 1 (1:1) – Aug. 29, 520
 - b. Oracle 2 (2:1) – Oct. 17, 520
 - c. Oracle 3 (2:10) – Dec. 18, 520
 - d. Oracle 4 (2:20) – Dec. 18, 520
2. Only three prophets have their oracles dated, and all are part of the exile: Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah. The dates suggest that the books' messages are bound up with a timeline, most likely associated with Jeremiah's "70 years."
 - a. While the 70 years is likely an ideal figure for a perfect period of exile (a sabbath rest) this does not stop the enslaved Jews from counting the time and viewing it as literal (see the discussion of Daniel and Zechariah below).
 - b. In Jeremiah's prophecy, the 70 years appear to point alone to Babylon's power over exiles (Jer. 25:11–12; 29:10), perhaps suggesting a span between ca. 605–538 B.C. (67 years: the initial exile when Daniel and his friends were taken to the initial decree of Cyrus that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple) or ca. 608–538 B.C. (70 years: the time of Josiah's death to Cyrus' initial decree).
 - Jer. 25:11–12. This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon *seventy years*. ¹²Then after *seventy years* are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares Yahweh, making the land an everlasting waste.
 - Jer. 29:10. For thus says Yahweh: "When *seventy years* are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place."
 - c. In the first year of Darius' reign (ca. 522–486 B.C.), some seventeen years after the Persian's ended the Babylonian empire (= 539 B.C.) and sixteen years after the first group of exiles returned to Jerusalem (= 538 B.C.), Daniel recalled the 70 year prophecy as having not yet been fulfilled (Dan. 9:2). Similarly, in the second year of Darius' reign, the prophet Zechariah was still holding fast to the hope of Jeremiah's predication (Zech. 1:12; 7:5). Both these references suggest that the end of the 70 included some of the Persian period while the Judean slaves awaited the rebuilding of the temple. Significantly, the period between the temple's destruction and rebuilding was 70 years to the month (586–516 B.C.).
 - Dan. 9:2. In the first year of [Darius'] reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of Yahweh to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

- *Zech. 1:12*. Then the angel of Yahweh said, “O Yahweh of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these seventy years?”
 - *Zech. 7:5*. Say to all the people of the land and the priests, “When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted?”
- d. As will be highlighted in the discussion of Daniel, Jeremiah’s prophecy of 70 years focused on the completion of only one part of exile—namely, return to the land. However, Daniel highlights that it will take another 70 weeks of years before the second part of exile—namely, forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God—will be realized. This happens only in the time of Christ.

XV. ZECHARIAH: “The God who renews Jerusalem as Zion”

A. Orienting Data

1. *Content*: Visions aimed at encouraging the postexilic community, esp. the leadership, to rebuild the temple; oracles about the future coming king who would be slain and eventually triumph
2. *Author*: Zechariah (“Yahweh remembered me”) of Jerusalem, a contemporary of Haggai, but with a longer known ministry (cf. *Zech. 1:1; 7:1* with *Hag. 1:1*; see also *Ezra 5:1; 6:4*)

B. Literary Overview

1. Theological Foundation for the Present (1:1–8:23)
 - a. Prologue: A Call for Repentance (1:1–6)
 - b. Zechariah’s Night Visions (1:7–6:15)
 - i. A – *The Report of the Patrols of the Earth* (1:7–17) [Global peace; Yahweh reigns in Jerusalem]
 - ii. B – *The Horns & the Craftsmen* (1:18–21) [The crushing of external opposition to kingdom restoration; God’s enemies defeated]
 - iii. C – *The Measurement of Jerusalem* (2:1–13) [The crushing of external opposition to kingdom restoration; Jerusalem exalted when Yahweh returns]
 - iv. D – *The Investiture of Joshua* (3:1–10) [The means for kingdom restoration: Joshua cleansed and “the Branch” victorious]
 - v. D’ – *The Lamp-stand & Olive Trees* (4:4–14) [The means for kingdom restoration: God’s Spirit will enable success to Joshua & Zerubbabal]
 - vi. C’ – *The Flying Scroll* (5:1–4) [The crushing of internal opposition to kingdom restoration; a curse against all theft and perjury]
 - vii. B’ – *The Ephah & Woman* (5:5–11) [The crushing of internal opposition to kingdom restoration; wickedness removed from God’s people]
 - viii. A’ – *Yahweh’s Patrols* (6:1–8) [Global Peace; Yahweh reigns, his wrath appeased]
 - c. Priest, Ruler, the Building of the Temple (6:9–15) [re-stressing the focus of the central visions]
 - d. Practical Oracles (7:1–8:19)
 - e. Epilogue: The Universal Longing for Yahweh (8:20–23)

2. Theological Foundation for the Future (9:1–14:21)
 - a. Yahweh’s Intervention: His Shepherd Rejected (9:1–11:17)
 - i. Yahweh’s Triumph from the North (9:1–8)
 - ii. The Arrival of the King (9:9–10)
 - iii. Cause for Celebration: Yahweh’s Victory (9:11–10:1)
 - iv. The Rebuke of False Leaders (10:2–3a)
 - v. Cause for Celebration: Israel’s Exaltation (10:3b–11:3)
 - vi. The Rejection of the Good Shepherd (11:4–17)
 - b. Yahweh’s Intervention: His Shepherd Slain (12:1–14:21)
 - i. Celebration in Jerusalem: Protection & Exaltation (12:1–9)
 - ii. Mourning for the Pierced One (12:10–13:1)
 - iii. The Purging of the Land (13:2–6)
 - iv. The Shepherd Slain, the People Scattered (13:7–9)
 - v. Fruit-Basket Upset in Jerusalem (14:1–15)
 - vi. Yahweh’s Triumph Acknowledged by All (14:16–21)

C. Message

1. It is not human might but God’s presence with the remnant community that brings about kingdom restoration (3:6)
2. Even in the restored community, God demands ethical conduct, both for the leaders (3:1–10) and the community as a whole (7:8–14)
3. Jerusalem and Judah’s bright future, full of peace and glory:
 - a. Israel’s king will return to Zion in triumph and save his own (9:9–10:1, 6–10; 12:7–9; 13:1, 9), yet he will be slain for the sins of the people (12:10–13:9).
 - b. God will punish his people’s enemies (9:1–6; 10:2–5; 14:3, 17–18), and many among the nations will come to know Yahweh (8:20–23; 9:17; 10:11–12; 14:16).
4. God is faithful to his eternal promises:
 - a. He will be their God (10:6; 13:9).
 - b. He will dwell among them (8:23) and be worshipped in Jerusalem (14:16, 20–21).
 - c. He will provide them with a righteous Shepherd (9:9–10; 10:2–4; 11:4–17; 13:7–9).
 - d. Both the people and the land will be holy (12:10–13:9; 14:21).
 - e. Through his people all nations will be blessed (8:13, 23; 14:16–21).

D. Excursus: Apocalyptic Literature

1. Key biblical books: Daniel 7–12; Ezekiel 1; Zechariah 1–6; cf. Joel 2; Isa. 24–27; 56–66; Ezek. 38–39; Zech. 9–14
2. Characteristics:
 - a. “Apocalyptic”: “uncovering, revealing”
 - b. Sub-genre of prophecy
 - c. Key distinctives: eschatology, symbolism, visions, conflict, triumph
 - d. *Core feature*: Eschatological expectation of God’s dramatic intervention in history to produce a glorious future for his people

3. Interpreting Apocalyptic:
 - a. The imagery is primarily that of fantasy (e.g., beasts with seven heads and ten horns; a woman clothed with the sun)
 - b. We read the vision through the lens of the divine interpretation. For example, in Revelation, John interprets most of the images:
 - i. 7 stars = 7 angels of 7 churches (1:20)
 - ii. 7 lamp-stands = 7 churches (1:20)
 - iii. 7 lamps = 7 spirits of God (4:5)
 - iv. Bowls of incense = prayers of saints (5:8)
 - v. Great dragon = Satan (12:9)
 - vi. 7 heads of beast = 7 hills (17:9)
 - vii. 10 horns of beast = 10 kings (17:12)
 - viii. Harlot = great city (17:18)
 - c. Some images are fixed (e.g., a beast coming out of the sea represent an empire [usually evil]; an earthquake represents divine covenant curses; etc.); other images are more fluid, used to evoke feeling as well as mental pictures.
 - d. Visions are to be seen as wholes and not pressed regarding details.

XVI.MALACHI: “The God who restores his people”

A. Orienting Data

1. *Content*: In five disputes with his people, Yahweh warns them of future judgments and promises redemption to the faithful
2. *Author*: Malachi (“my messenger”), otherwise unknown
3. *Date of prophetic activity*: unknown, around the time of Ezra and Nehemiah’s reforms (ca. 430 B.C.)
4. *Historical Setting*:
 - a. While the people temporarily heeded the voices of Haggai and Zechariah, as the decades past they once again began to turn from God.
 - b. God’s people in Malachi’s day are in a state similar to some at the end of the 1st century when Revelation was written: unheeding to the voice of God, apathetic, and cynical of religion.

B. Literary Overview:

1. Superscription (1:1)
2. The Basis of Covenant Relationship: A Call to Recognize God’s Love (1:2–5)
3. The Expression of Covenant Relationship: A Call to Recognize God’s Glory (1:6–3:15)
 - a. Honoring God in Corporate Worship (1:6–14)
 - b. Honoring God in Professional Ministry (2:1–9)
 - c. Honoring God in Marriage (2:10–16)
 - d. Honoring God in Everyday Life (2:17–3:7)
 - e. Honoring God in Generous Giving (3:8–15)
4. The Importance of Covenant Relationship: A Call to Recognize God’s Justice (3:16–4:3)
 - a. The Reward for Those who Fear God (3:16–18)
 - b. The Consumed Fate of Those who Refuse to Fear God (4:1)

- c. The Triumphant Fate of Those who Fear God (4:2–3)
5. Postscript (4:4–6)
- C. **Message**
 1. Theme: A Call to Fear and Honor God through Faith and Practice
 2. Malachi's aims:
 - a. Expose the symptoms of spiritual indifference, calling for moral and spiritual reform
 - i. Irreverence in worship (1:6–14)
 - ii. Lack of concern for God's Word (2:1–9)
 - iii. Unfaithfulness in marriage (2:10–16)
 - iv. Exploitation and oppression of the weak (3:5)
 - v. Stinginess in one's devotion to God (3:7–15)
 - b. Rekindle proper respect for Yahweh (See Mal. 1:6, 11, 14; 2:5; 3:5; 3:16.)
 - i. Yahweh's commitment to his exaltation:
 - Mal. 1:11. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says Yahweh of hosts.
 - Mal. 1:14. I am a great King, says Yahweh of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.
 - ii. The ways Malachi rekindles respect for Yahweh:
 - (1) By analogy: If we show respect to our fathers and masters (1:6) or the governor (1:8) how much more should we honor Yahweh, "the Great King" (1:14).
 - Mal. 1:6–8, 14. A son honor his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And I am a master, where is my fear? says Yahweh of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, "How have we despised your name?" ⁷By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, "How have we polluted you?" By saying that Yahweh's table may be despised. ⁸When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? Says Yahweh of hosts.... ¹⁴Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says Yahweh of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.
 - (2) By reference to God's activity: God is the sovereign Elector (1:2–3), Creator (2:10), Judge (3:1–5a)
 - Mal. 1:2–3. "I have loved you," says Yahweh. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother? Declares Yahweh. "Yet I have loved Jacob ³but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert."
 - Mal. 2:10. Have we not one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?
 - Mal. 3:2, 5. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? ... ⁵Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says Yahweh of hosts.

- (3) By his titles for God: God is “Father” (1:6; 2:10), “master” (1:6), “King” (1:14), and “Yahweh of Hosts” (24x in the book)
- iii. The prize for all who exalt Yahweh:
- Mal. 3:16–17. Then those who feared Yahweh spoke with one another. Yahweh paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared Yahweh and esteemed his name. ¹⁷They shall be mine, says Yahweh of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

XVII. Canonical Arrangement: Haggai–Malachi, the Restoration Prophets

- A.** Malachi is the last of the prophetic voices until John the Baptist. As recorded in 1 Mac. 9:26: “So there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them” (cf. 4:46; 14:41).
- B.** This final word from Yahweh stresses through and through the centrality of God over all things, and the need to glorify God in every area of life; it is thus an apt conclusion to the Minor Prophets.

XVIII. Flow of Thought in the Twelve

SIN	Hosea	Israel, Yahweh has a case against you: You have played the harlot and been like an unfaithful wife, departing from faithfulness, steadfast love, and knowledge. Please return to Yahweh, your husband!
	Joel	For the Day of Yahweh is at hand, and repentance is your only hope! I will be a refuge to my people, but a roaring, devouring lion against all who fail to heed my voice!
	Amos	How secure you feel, yet how insecure you actually are! I have disciplined you, yet you have not learned from the discipline. You anticipate my coming, but for you this Day will be darkness, not light. Prepare to meet your God, for the fulfillment of my kingdom promises is only for those who truly repent!
	Obadiah	Know this: Pride and hatred have no place in my coming kingdom; this is why your brother Edom will be destroyed.
	Jonah	Yet be warned, for your own pride and hatred of others resembles that of Edom and stands in direct contrast to the mercy Yahweh gives to whomever he wills. Don't be like Jonah; be like Yahweh and extend compassion rather than gloating in others' destruction, lest God's judgment fall on you!
	Micah	Yahweh, from his courtroom, has found you and the nations guilty! Yet your final judgment Day has not come, and in his mercy, he will still forgive your sins, if you but return. Soon God, through his Word and Messiah, will be exalted over all things. Will you be a part of the judgment or the redemption?
PUNISHMENT	Nahum	Know this for certain: Yahweh is a stronghold only for those who accept his terms of peace, but he will justly judge all his unrepentant enemies.
	Habakkuk	Yahweh is just, and in his time he will indeed punish all wrongdoers and preserve all who walk by faith, looking to him for help, guidance, and satisfaction.
	Zephaniah	Please be part of the remnant that draws near to God, so that the coming Day may be one of rejoicing! Yet for all who fail to heed God's voice, the Day of Yahweh the warrior will be sure destruction!
RESTORATION	Haggai	Drawing near to God necessitates that you take seriously the need for his presence in your midst, that he might bring forth the fulfillment of all he has promised, blessing for you and for the nations who surrender to him.
	Zechariah	You need God's presence among you, for his kingdom restoration will be brought not by human effort but by the power of his Spirit working through his slain and yet victorious priest-king.
	Malachi	This restoration is for you, if you will but fear and honor God in all areas of your life, awaiting the day when curse will give rise to full restoration blessing!
Prepared by Jason S. DeRouchie.		

XIX. Guided Reading for the Twelve:**A. Key chapters:**

1. Hosea 1–2
2. Joel 1–2
3. Amos 5:18–24; 9:10–15
4. Micah 3:9–4:5; 5:1–5; 6:6–8; 7:14–20
5. Habakkuk 1:1–4; 2:4; 3:16–19
6. Zephaniah 1:1–2:3
7. Zechariah 3–4, 8
8. Malachi 3:16–4:6

B. Questions:

1. Why are the 12 Minor Prophets called “minor”?
2. How is Israel portrayed in the first three chapters of Hosea?

3. Within the book of Joel, what do the massive locust plague and severe drought that open the book anticipate? In view of the context, what is the answer to the question raised in Joel 2:11?
4. According to Amos 4–5, what was the nature of Israel’s sin and what would be God’s response?
5. The message of Amos is dominated by a picture of the God of judgment as a roaring lion (Amos 1:2; 3:8). In view of this, how do the last five verses of the book balance out the book’s message?
6. What is the primary theme of the book of Obadiah?
7. Summarize the message of Jonah in your own words.
8. “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” In which book is this quote found?
9. What is the primary theme of the book of Nahum?
10. The makeup of Habakkuk is unique among the prophets in that it includes a dialogue between God and the prophet with no formal oracle addressed to God’s people. Why was Habakkuk perplexed, and what was God’s response? What amazing declaration of faith is seen in the last three verses of the book and how does it relate to message of Habakkuk 2:4?
11. What is the main theme of Zephaniah? According to the book, what characterizes a person in right relationship with God?
12. Which prophets were among the returned exiles?
13. With what other prophet did Zechariah minister, and what did their messages have in common?
14. What are some of the ways that Zechariah anticipates the Messiah? What do we learn about the nations at the end of Zechariah 8?
15. What were some of the discouraging factors in the post-exilic period that brought about a general religious demise among the people? According to Malachi, who are those that God will “remember” in his book and on whom the “sun of righteousness” will rise at the end of the age?