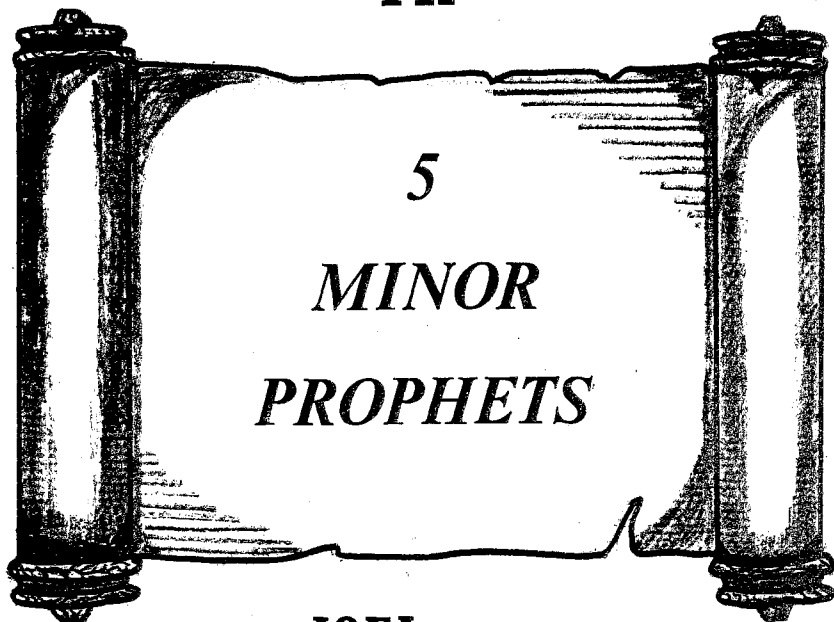


**COMMENTARY
STUDIES
in**



5

***MINOR
PROPHETS***

JOEL

AMOS

OBADIAH

JONAH

MALACHI

By Donald G. Hunt

FOREWORD

As a group, the Old Testament prophetic books at the end of the Old Testament are among the least understood books of the Bible--especially the last twelve books often called the "Minor Prophets".

We are pleased, therefore, to present to you what we hope will prove to be interesting studies in five of these "Minor Prophet" books. They are written in a style that we hope will simplify their contents to you and stimulate your thinking.

The studies were originally written for publication in the Volume 15 issues of "The Voice of Evangelism". After the studies in Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah had appeared serially, there was not enough room to include studies in Micah, so the shorter book of Malachi was written up instead; hence, the five particular books treated.

--The Author.

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Commentary Studies in Joel

CHAPTER 1

1. THE WORD OF THE LORD THAT CAME TO JOEL (The book announces itself as inspired of God) THE SON OF PETHUEL, (Many of the prophets inform us as to who was reigning in Israel and/or Judah at the time of their prophesying. Joel does not, and as a result commentators have varied widely as to just when they suppose he prophesied. Most of the prophets tell us in their opening verses as to whom they prophesied. Joel bypasses this in his opening verses, but later references in the book cause us to list him with those prophets to the southern kingdom.)

2. HEAR THIS, (Something important is to be announced) YE OLD MEN, (The traditional ones given to reminiscing) AND GIVE EAR, ALL YE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND, (The announcement would affect them all,) HATH THIS BEEN IN YOUR DAYS, OR EVEN IN THE DAYS OF YOUR FATHERS? (This that was to come to pass, have you old men seen the like in your lifetimes? or did your fathers ever tell you of having seen such days? Obviously this which Joel was to announce would be something far greater than they had ever experienced or even heard of.)

3. TELL YE YOUR CHILDREN OF IT, (It would be something to talk about,) AND LET YOUR CHILDREN TELL THEIR CHILDREN, (It would be so great that their children would be narrating it to the grandchildren,) AND THEIR CHILDREN ANOTHER GENERATION, (It would become a tradition among the coming generations. What was it to be, Joel?)

4. THAT WHICH THE PALMERWORM HATH LEFT HATH THE LOCUST EATEN; AND THAT WHICH THE LOCUST HATH LEFT HATH THE CANKERWORM EATEN; AND THAT WHICH THE CANKERWORM HATH LEFT HATH THE CATERPILLAR EATEN, (It was to be one of those things most feared by the inhabitants of Palestine—a plague of crop-destroying pests—and this one would be the worst

ever experienced. Apparently the times of Joel were wicked times, for the Lord used such means to punish His people: Deut. 28:15,38,39,42 and II Chron. 6:28-31. Your writer is one who believes that God is still the author of drouths and pestilences, and when such come to vex and harass our land, the reason is apparent. An eastern traveler describes a devastating locust plague which he witnessed in Palestine as follows: "Those which I saw were much bigger than our common grasshoppers, and had brown spotted wings, with legs and bodies of a bright yellow. Their first appearance was toward the latter end of March, the wind having been some time from the south. In the middle of April their numbers were so vastly increased that in the heat of the day they formed themselves into large and numerous swarms, flew in the air like a succession of clouds, and, as the prophet Joel expresses it, 'the sun... shall be dark'... In the month of May, when the ovaries of these insects were ripe and turgid, each of these swarms began gradually to disappear, and retired into the Metijiah and other adjacent plains, where they deposited their eggs. These were no sooner hatched, in June, than each of the broods collected itself into a compact body of an eighth of a mile square, and, marching afterward directly forward toward the sea, they let nothing escape them, eating up everything that was green and juicy, not only the lesser kinds of vegetables, but 'the vine' likewise, 'the fig tree, ...the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field.'" Thus we can see why the Palestinians feared such plagues. We have on file pictures from "Grit" and "Life" magazines of locust plagues in Palestine in recent times. They remind us of those lean, depression years of the thirties in this country, which were bad enough, but those of Palestine are worse, and the one that Joel was announcing was to be king of them all. How helpless man is before a God who has such fearful means at His disposal!)

5. AWAKE, YE DRUNKARDS, AND WEEP; AND HOWL, ALL YE DRINKERS OF WINE, BECAUSE OF THE NEW WINE; FOR IT IS CUT OFF FROM YOUR MOUTH. (Having been blessed with abundant harvests, they had perverted their rightful use into that which God condemned—drunkenness. Now He will show His displeasure with their actions, and they will feel it keenly. How they would weep and howl who had been given to drunkenness when they could not obtain their booze! When God visits men with judgment, "weep" and "howl" characterize them, Jas. 5:1; Matt. 8:12;

and others. We would do well to remember this and so please God that we not have to experience His wrathful visitation.)

6. FOR A NATION IS COME UP UPON MY LAND, (He calls them a "nation" in this verse and an "army" in 2:25. From what Joel goes on to say, it is evident that he is still talking about the beetle pests.) STRONG, (Yes, too strong for man to cope with. We personally recall the futile attempts made in the unforgettable summers of the thirties to combat the chinch bugs that ruined our crops. That eastern traveler writes of Palestine's futile efforts to combat the oncoming locusts: "The inhabitants, to stop their progress, made a variety of pits and trenches all over their fields and gardens, which they filled with water, or else they heaped up therein heath, stubble, and such-like combustible matter, which were severally set on fire upon the approach of the locusts. But this was all to no purpose, for the trenches were quickly filled up and the fires extinguished by infinite swarms succeeding one another, whilst the front was regardless of danger and the rear pressed on so close that a retreat was altogether impossible. A day or two after one of these broods was in motion others were already hatched to march and glean after them, gnawing off the very bark and the young branches of such trees as had before escaped with the loss only of their fruit and foliage.") AND WITHOUT NUMBER, (The grasshoppers were so thick in the depression years in this country that the radio announced that the gloominess prevailing was due to clouds of grasshoppers between us and the sun. Chinch bugs were so numerous that it looked like the dust underfoot was alive.) WHOSE TEETH (Their weapons,) ARE THE TEETH OF A LION, (Famous for devouring,) AND HE HATH THE CHEEK-TEETH OF A GREAT LION.

7. HE HATH LAID MY VINE WASTE, (The grape was one of Palestine's chief crops. The crop was not only ruined, but the vines were ruined. They would feel the effects of this for many years as it takes a good while to get a new vineyard into production,) AND BARKED MY FIG TREE: (The fig was another important crop. "Barking" the fig trees would kill them. This, too, would be felt for years to come.) HE HATH MADE IT CLEAN BARE, AND CAST IT AWAY; THE BRANCHES THEREOF ARE MADE WHITE, (The way a tree looks that has been barked. It is hard for us to imagine how pathetic the land looked when these

devouring insects did their work. Van Lennep says, "The ground over which the devastating hordes of locusts have passed at once assumes an appearance of sterility and dearth. Well did the Romans call them 'the burners of the land', which is the literal meaning of our word 'locust'."")

8. LAMENT LIKE A VIRGIN GIRDED WITH SACK-CLOTH FOR THE HUSBAND OF HER YOUTH, (Their sorrow would be like the keenly felt sorrow of a young lady whose husband has been taken from her by death. Sackcloth was worn by the ancients instead of their customary attire when smitten with grief.)

9. THE MEAT-OFFERING (the American Standard gives "meal-offering" instead. The ingredients in the offering show it to have been "meal" instead of "meat" as we think of it: Lev. 2:1 and 6:14,15,20,21.) AND THE DRINK-OFFERING IS CUT OFF FROM THE HOUSE OF THE LORD; (The drink offering consisted of a measure of wine; Exo. 29:40. The morning and evening sacrifices were accompanied by these two offerings: Exo. 29:38-41. These offerings would be cut off from the temple because there would be nothing to offer.) THE PRIESTS, THE LORD'S MINISTERS, MOURN. (Since there would be nothing to offer, they would mourn. But, they would also mourn because they would have nothing to live on as they depended upon what was presented to God by the people for their living.)

10. THE FIELD IS WASTED, THE LAND MOURNETH: (The fields where their grains grew and where their livestock grazed would also be affected.) FOR THE CORN IS WASTE: (Maize, which we call "corn", is not meant here as maize was not known in Palestine. A look at the dictionary shows our English word "corn" to mean "any small, hard seed; especially the seed of any one of the cereal grasses; collectively, the seeds of any of the cereal grasses used for food; grain. Corn is often specifically used for the important cereal crop of a given region; thus, in England it refers to wheat, in Scotland and Ireland to oats, and in the United States, Canada, and Australia to Indian corn, or maize." Wheat and barley were the most common grains in Palestine.) THE NEW WINE IS DRIED UP, THE OIL LANGUISHETH. (By "oil" is meant the oil of the olive, whose importance is seen in its many uses; in the preparation of food as we use lard

or shortening, in their lamps as fuel, for anointings both common and religious, and for medical purposes. The olive trees would also suffer from what Joel was forecasting.)

11. BE YE ASHAMED, O YE HUSBANDMEN; HOWL, O YE VINE-DRESSERS, FOR THE WHEAT AND THE BARLEY; BECAUSE THE HARVEST OF THE FIELD IS PERISHED. (Not only the drunkards and the priests would mourn, but those who derived their livelihood from agriculture would also be dismayed.)

12. THE VINE IS DRIED UP, THE FIG TREE LANGUISHETH, (These have been mentioned already, but the ones following have not.) THE POMEGRANATE TREE, THE PALM TREE ALSO, (Probably the date palm,) AND THE APPLE TREE, EVEN ALL THE TREES OF THE FIELD, ARE WITHERED: (When trees in general would die off, the drouth which accompanied this plague must have been a very serious one.) BECAUSE JOY IS WITHERED AWAY FROM THE SONS OF MEN. (The withering witnessed in vegetable life was reflected in human life. When man does not know where the next meal is coming from, his joy is gone.)

13. GIRD YOURSELVES, AND LAMENT, YE PRIESTS: HOWL, YE MINISTERS OF THE ALTAR; COME, LIE ALL NIGHT IN SACKCLOTH, YE MINISTERS OF MY GOD; FOR THE MEAT-OFFERING AND THE DRINK-OFFERING IS WITHOLDEN FROM THE HOUSE OF YOUR GOD. (The priests, who would also be affected by this coming calamity, were to lead the way in returning to God, whom they had forgotten and for which cause they were being so chastened.)

14. SANCTIFY YE A FAST, CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY, GATHER THE ELDERS AND ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND CRY UNTO THE LORD. (It would not be hard to get a good prayer meeting crowd out under those conditions.) The priests were not only to cry out to God themselves, but they were to gather the people and the leaders of the people into a solemn assembly and cry out to God in repentance, confession, and prayer that God might be merciful. This would be in keeping with God's promise in II Chron. 7:13,14: "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the

locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." It is easy to forget God when people are prosperous: Deut. 6:10-12 and 32:15. Hos. 13:6 gives us the following order: (a) they were filled; (b) their heart was exalted; and (c) they have forgotten God. But, when shortages are acute and lasting, then men call upon God: Hos. 5:15 and Psa. 78:34.)

15. ALAS FOR THE DAY! FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD IS AT HAND, AND AS A DESTRUCTION FROM THE ALMIGHTY SHALL IT COME. (I am constrained to believe that this verse is thrown in parenthetically just to remind them that these conditions would soon be upon them, for he continues in the following verses with the same situation that he has been discussing. It is the prophet himself who exclaims, "Alas for the day!" He believed that such a time was coming, and he realized that it would be a terrible destruction from Almighty God. Those who deliver a message from God usually comprehend more and take to heart more of it than those who do the listening.)

16. IS NOT THE MEAT CUT OFF BEFORE OUR EYES, YEA, JOY AND GLADNESS FROM THE HOUSE OF OUR GOD?

17. THE SEED IS ROTTEN UNDER THEIR CLOUDS, THE GARNERS (Where they normally stored their grain.) ARE LAID DESOLATE, THE BARNs ARE BROKEN DOWN; FOR THE CORN IS WITHERED. (It is hard to realize how bleak and desolate the land was and how unhappy the people were.)

18. HOW DO THE BEASTS GROAN! (The animals had done nothing wrong, but they were feeling the effects of man's sin.) THE HERDS OF CATTLE ARE PERPLEXED, BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO PASTURE; (Extreme drouth and such pests as locusts usually accompany each other.) YEA, THE FLOCKS OF SHEEP ARE MADE DESOLATE.

19. O LORD, TO THEE WILL I CRY; (To whom else could one turn in such an hour?) FOR THE FIRE HATH DEVoured THE PASTURES OF THE WILDERNESS, AND THE FLAME HATH BURNED ALL THE TREES OF THE

FIELD, (The drouth and the beetles had consumed everything, leaving everything barren just as if a fire had swept through the land.)

20. THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD CRY ALSO UNTO THEE: FOR THE RIVERS OF WATERS ARE DRIED UP, AND THE FIRE HATH DEVoured THE PASTURES OF THE WILDERNESS. (Their helpless bawlings sounded to the prophet as if they were calling upon God for immediate help. When man, the creature, sins, how much misery and grief he needlessly causes to so many others besides himself!)

CHAPTER 2

1. BLOW YE THE TRUMPET IN ZION, AND SOUND AN ALARM IN MY HOLY MOUNTAIN: LET ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND TREMBLE: FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD COMETH, FOR IT IS NIGH AT HAND; (The sound of the trumpet was used to call the Israelites together: Num. 10:1-3. In the time of war, an alarm was sounded: Num. 10:9; Jer. 4:19; 49:2. The sound of an alarm would strike fear into the hearts of the people. The invasion which they faced would be the invasion of the caterpillars, locusts, etc.—God's great, relentless army.)

2. A DAY OF DARKNESS AND OF GLOOMINESS, A DAY OF CLOUDS AND OF THICK DARKNESS, AS THE MORNING SPREAD UPON THE MOUNTAINS: (Ahead of time, people cannot conceive the straits, the difficulties, and the utter misery that a judgment from God will bring them. The real darkness and gloominess of sin are realized more in the day of God's judgment than in the day of the sinning. Probably the suddenness with which this judgment would strike is meant by the expression, "as the morning—the morning light—spread upon the mountains.") A GREAT PEOPLE AND A STRONG; THERE HATH NOT BEEN EVER THE LIKE, NEITHER SHALL BE ANY MORE AFTER IT, EVEN TO THE YEARS OF MANY GENERATIONS. (It was this unprecedented plague that was soon to alight upon them. God has the best of blessings for those whom He loves most, but He has the severest of punishments for those who go the farthest from Him. Such were His dealings with His Old Testament people.)

3. A FIRE DEVouRETH BEFORE THEM; AND BE-

HIND THEM A FLAME BURNETH; THE LAND IS AS THE GARDEN OF EDEN BEFORE THEM; AND BEHIND THEM A DESOLATE WILDERNESS; YEA, AND NOTHING SHALL ESCAPE THEM, (They would find the land like a lush garden and would leave it as a desolate wilderness.)

4. THE APPEARANCE OF THEM IS AS THE APPEARANCE OF HORSES; (The head of the locust bears a striking resemblance to the head of the horse,) AND AS HORSEMEN, SO SHALL THEY RUN, (They would soon cover the land.)

5. LIKE THE NOISE OF CHARIOTS ON THE TOPS OF MOUNTAINS SHALL THEY LEAP, LIKE THE NOISE OF A FLAME OF FIRE THAT DEVoureth THE STUBBLE, AS A STRONG PEOPLE SET IN BATTLE ARRAY. (Bochart remarks of locusts, "The locusts fly with a great noise so as to be heard six miles off, and while they are eating the fruits of the earth, the sound of them is like that of a flame driven by the wind.")

6. BEFORE THEIR FACE THE PEOPLE SHALL BE MUCH PAINED; ALL FACES SHALL GATHER BLACKNESS, (The people of Palestine were as terrified by the infestation of locusts as people of a city are terrified by a bombing or as people of the plains are by a tornado.)

7. THEY SHALL RUN LIKE MIGHTY MEN; (And they were mighty,) THEY SHALL CLIMB THE WALL LIKE MEN OF WAR; AND THEY SHALL MARCH EVERY ONE ON HIS WAYS, AND THEY SHALL NOT BREAK THEIR RANKS, (Locusts keep right on moving in the direction that they are headed regardless of what is in their way. Thus, they climb up over walls and enter into houses through open windows in their forward march.)

8. NEITHER SHALL ONE THRUST ANOTHER; THEY SHALL WALK EVERY ONE IN HIS PATH; AND WHEN THEY FALL UPON THE SWORD, THEY SHALL NOT BE WOUNDED, (Nothing could stop them in their orderly march.)

9. THEY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO IN THE CITY; THEY SHALL RUN UPON THE WALL, THEY SHALL CLIMB UP UPON THE HOUSES; THEY SHALL ENTER IN AT THE WINDOWS LIKE A THIEF, (See comment on v.7)

10. THE EARTH SHALL QUAKE BEFORE THEM; THE

HEAVENS SHALL TREMBLE; THE SUN AND THE MOON SHALL BE DARK, AND THE STARS SHALL WITHDRAW THEIR SHINING; (Heaven and earth are personified as are probably the sun, moon, and stars.)

11. AND THE LORD SHALL UTTER HIS VOICE BEFORE HIS ARMY: (The beetles, v. 25. God was their commander.) FOR HIS CAMP IS VERY STRONG THAT EXECUTETH HIS WORD: FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD IS GREAT AND VERY TERRIBLE; AND WHO CAN ABIDE IT? (The mightiness of God can be seen in nature about us; it will be felt when His judgment falls. Men are more impressed with what they feel than by what they merely look at and disregard.)

12. THEREFORE ALSO NOW, SAITH THE LORD, TURN YE EVEN UNTO ME (The One whom they had forgotten, the Source of all blessings, the Inflicter of their chastisement, the One who truly loved them) WITH ALL YOUR HEART, (He wanted them to mean it,) AND WITH FASTING, AND WITH WEEPING, AND WITH MOURNING: (When outward circumstances get bad enough, man is normally brought down to grief and to seeking the face of God.)

13. AND REND YOUR HEART, AND NOT YOUR GARMENTS, (This is strong language. God wanted no surface actions or ceremonies. God said in Isaiah's day that He was tired of outward ritual that did not come from the heart and that did not affect their lives, Isa. 1:10-15. He wants every religious act to come forth from the heart of man: John 4:24; II Cor. 9:7; Rom. 6:17; Heb. 10:22; and many others. Should these of Joel's day rend their garments and not their hearts, they could not fool God and would thus have but added one more sin, and that a big one, to their long list of sins before God,) AND TURN UNTO THE LORD YOUR GOD: FOR HE IS GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL, SLOW TO ANGER, AND OF GREAT KINDNESS, AND REPENTETH HIM OF THE EVIL. (Where are those who say that the Old Testament pictures God as a cruel God while the New pictures Him as a loving God? God is set forth as both loving and just in the Old Testament, and the same can be said for His description in the New. God is kind to mankind. He notices our failures, but He is slow to anger. Even then, He will be gracious and merciful if we shall repent in all sincerity before Him. Gladly then will He reverse His decision: He will "repent Him of the evil" that He was sending or said that He would

send, Joel, then, was sent not only to announce the judgment of God, but the mercy of God also—just like gospel preachers today.)

14. WHO KNOWETH IF HE WILL RETURN AND REPENT, AND LEAVE A BLESSING BEHIND HIM; EVEN A MEAT-OFFERING AND A DRINK-OFFERING UNTO THE LORD YOUR GOD? (Even though they had so sinned, if they would turn to the Lord as prescribed above, there was the possibility that these calamitous times could be averted, or even if such repentance were delayed until the calamity had already hit, God could perhaps be entreated to put an end to the plague.)

15. BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION, SANCTIFY A FAST, CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY: (Lose not time getting people right before God.)

16. GATHER THE PEOPLE, SANCTIFY THE CONGREGATION, ASSEMBLE THE ELDERS, GATHER THE CHILDREN, AND THOSE THAT SUCK THE BREASTS: (Everybody would be affected; therefore, everybody should be present at the solemn meeting.) LET THE BRIDEGROOM GO FORTH OF HIS CHAMBER, AND THE BRIDE OUT OF HER CLOSET. (Even the special occasions should give way to the importance of this imploring God for mercy.)

17. LET THE PRIESTS, THE MINISTERS OF THE LORD, WEEP BETWEEN THE PORCH AND THE ALTAR, AND LET THEM SAY, SPARE THY PEOPLE, O LORD, AND GIVE NOT THINE HERITAGE TO REPROACH, THAT THE HEATHEN SHOULD RULE OVER THEM; WHEREFORE SHOULD THEY SAY AMONG THE PEOPLE, WHERE IS THEIR GOD? (The priests, the divinely appointed intercessors, were to intercede for the people. Man, being unworthy to come before God personally, must depend upon God's appointed priesthood to make their plea to God. Can you not hear the cries of these men as they prostrated themselves in the sacred area before God and pleaded for Him to spare His people? Being weakened materially by this plague, they would naturally be weakened politically and would be an easy prey for their neighboring nations that were always ready for the opportunity to invade them. This prayer of the priests was not to be one of selfishness, for the purpose was that the enemies could not say, "Where is their God?")

18. THEN WILL THE LORD BE JEALOUS FOR HIS LAND, AND PITY HIS PEOPLE. (Man is so unpredictable, being driven by whims and fancies and so easily beset by sin and affected by surroundings and circumstances. But, God is predictable, for He moves by principle and is faithful to His decisions. If the people would repent, they could count upon His mercy. Both the land and the people had suffered; both would rejoice when His mercy came.)

19. YEA, THE LORD WILL ANSWER AND SAY UNTO HIS PEOPLE, BEHOLD, I WILL SEND YOU CORN, AND WINE, AND OIL, (The field grains, the vineyards, and the olive groves would again yield their abundance, and how welcome it would be!) AND YE SHALL BE SATISFIED THEREWITH: (Before the plague, when everything had been so abundant, it was hard to believe Joel's prediction that a shortage was ahead, but it was probably equally as hard for the people to believe in the days of the plague that abundance would come.) AND I WILL NO MORE MAKE YOU A REPROACH AMONG THE HEATHEN:

20. BUT I WILL REMOVE FAR OFF FROM YOU THE NORTHERN ARMY, (The locusts had probably been brought into the land by a strong north wind.) AND WILL DRIVE HIM INTO A LAND BARREN AND DESOLATE, (The Syrian Desert.) WITH HIS FACE TOWARD THE EAST SEA, (The Dead Sea,) AND HIS HINDER PART TOWARD THE UTMOST SEA, (The Mediterranean Sea,) AND HIS STINK SHALL COME UP, AND HIS ILL SAVOUR SHALL COME UP, BECAUSE HE HATH DONE GREAT THINGS. (The same power that brought them into the land was the only power that could remove them from the land. God would remove them with a mighty wind that would take them out of the land. Such winds have been known to remove them into the Mediterranean Sea, whose waters washed them upon the shore where, exposed to the rays of the sun, they sent up just such a stink and ill savour as are mentioned here. God having used these insects to accomplish His purpose, He now removes them at will. God has used various means to accomplish His purpose: a stormy sea, a sea monster, an east wind, a gourd, and a worm in Jonah's day; a talking ass in Balaam's day; and these plaguing beetles in Joel's day.)

21. FEAR NOT, O LAND; BE GLAD AND REJOICE: FOR THE LORD WILL DO GREAT THINGS. (The first

to enjoy relief from the beetles would be nature itself. It is the first called upon to rejoice.)

22. BE NOT AFRAID, YE BEASTS OF THE FIELD; FOR THE PASTURES OF THE WILDERNESS DO SPRING, FOR THE TREE BEARETH HER FRUIT, THE FIG TREE AND THE VINE DO YIELD THEIR STRENGTH. (The animals would be the next to experience relief from the plagues and drouth as the pastures began to supply them springing grass. They are the second group called upon to rejoice.)

23. BE GLAD THEN, YE CHILDREN OF ZION, AND REJOICE IN THE LORD YOUR GOD: (Man, the cause of the plague, would be the last to experience relief, for he would have to wait for the new crop. He is the last called upon to rejoice.) FOR HE HATH GIVEN YOU THE FORMER RAIN MODERATELY, AND HE WILL CAUSE TO COME DOWN FOR YOU THE RAIN, THE FORMER RAIN, AND THE LATTER RAIN (The farmers of Palestine planted their wheat in later summer and harvested it in spring. They depended upon the fall rains, here called the former rain, to germinate their planting and the latter rains, here called the latter rain, to fill the heads before harvest. Without these two rainy seasons, they would have no crops.) IN THE FIRST MONTH. (The first month of their sacred calender, Nisan or Abib, which corresponded to the normal time of their latter rain. Their civil calender has the year begin in the fall. God started them upon a new calender (the sacred calender) at the time of the Passover, which occurred in the month Nisan of their civil calendar, and He said that that was to be to them the beginning of months, Exo. 12:2.)

24. AND THE FLOORS (The threshing floors. They did not have our modern means of threshing their grain. Instead, they found a large area of native rock slab, slightly cupped in the middle, upon which they spread the grain to be threshed. Then they brought in their large hooved oxen that walked around over the unthreshed grain, and as they walked, the ripe kernels shattered to the bottom. Then they threw the straw off, and the grain remained on the floor ready to be gathered into their garner.) SHALL BE FULL OF WHEAT, AND THE FATS (The American Standard version says "vats", which is clearer to us. In order to press the juice out of their grapes and olives, they chiseled a basin out of the rock into which the grapes and olives were placed. These too were trampled under-

foot in order to press out the juice and the oil. Through a short orifice in the rock, the liquid flowed into a nearby vat at a lower elevation,) SHALL OVERFLOW WITH WINE AND OIL. (Never had a harvest seemed so wonderful to them as this first one following the drouth and plague.)

25. AND I WILL RESTORE TO YOU THE YEARS THAT THE LOCUST HATH EATEN, THE CANKERWORM, AND THE CATERPILLAR, AND THE PALMERWORM, MY GREAT ARMY WHICH I SENT AMONG YOU. (God was not obligated to do this, for they received what they deserved, but when people repent, He is more than glad to bless them richly and abundantly. This restoring to them what they had lost during those lean years would account for the great plenty that he spoke of in v. 24.)

26. AND YE SHALL EAT IN PLENTY, AND BE SATISFIED, AND PRAISE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, THAT HATH DEALT WONDROUSLY WITH YOU: (This chastening was to bring about the fruit of repentance which God wished for. How much happier God was to see them praising His name and He blessing them than to see them suffering at His hand because of their sins. Notice that they were not merely happy for better times—they were a spiritual people, praising God,) AND MY PEOPLE SHALL NEVER BE ASHAMED. (This is in contrast to the shame of the husbandmen mentioned in 1:11. In that verse, they were ashamed of their poor agriculture. When God finally got them ashamed of their lives before Him, the more important concern of the two, then He removed the curse, and they no longer had to be ashamed of either their lives before God nor the conditions of their vineyards.)

27. AND YE SHALL KNOW (So often do we find this expression, "And ye shall know," in the prophets' writings. God wants His people to know. When His Old Testament people did not know that He was the only God, they worshipped idols. When they did not know that it was He who gave them their blessings, they gave praise to others. When they did not know that He was going to take vengeance upon them, they did not fear before Him. When they did not worship Him, they did not do His will. People today should not proceed upon suppositions when the clear light of truth is available to them so that they can walk in knowledge and assurance,) THAT I AM IN THE MIDST OF ISRAEL. (His covenant people. As a people, they would be so blessed that not another nation on earth would be like them. God

wanted to be with them—in their very midst. When they built the tabernacle in the wilderness, the various tribes camped around it—it was in the center of them.) AND THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND NONE ELSE AND MY PEOPLE SHALL NEVER BE ASHAMED.

28. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS AFTERWARD, (Sometime after God's blessing them in a material way would He bless them in an even greater way spiritually in the way specified in the following verses. Joel does not say how long afterwards it would be except to say that it would be before the arrival of another terrible time of judgment mentioned in v. 31 as "the great and terrible day of the Lord".) THAT I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH; (According to Peter, this passage began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14-21. We who live this way from Pentecost are in a better position to appreciate the greatness of the blessings being promised in this passage, for we know the blessings that have come upon the human race because of the coming of the Holy Spirit, for when He came, came also the inception of the new covenant age. The apostles of Christ were the first to receive the Holy Spirit. After them, the Gentile Cornelius and his family received the same measure of the Spirit as did the apostles, the baptismal measure; various ones received miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit for use in the infant years of the church; and all who become children of God through Jesus Christ receive the Spirit in an indwelling manner. The expression, "all flesh," is not to be extended beyond the above limits.) AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS:

29. AND ALSO UPON THE SERVANTS AND UPON THE HANDMAIDS IN THOSE DAYS WILL I POUR OUT MY SPIRIT. (In order to show the width of bestowing the coming Spirit, Joel mentions the following groups; your sons and daughters, your old men and young men, and the servants and handmaids. The first group would show that both male and female would be recipients; the second group, both young and old; the third group, that even the slave class would be participants. Basically, it would seem that Joel is here predicting that which was fulfilled in the bestowal of miraculous gifts in the early church—prophecy, inspired dreams, and visions. While the recorded fulfillment of this prophecy would show that mostly men received these

powers, we do have recorded that Philip had four daughters who prophesied, Acts 21:9, and I Cor. 11:5 also refers to women prophesying. We are not to conclude, however, in the light of other passages that these women became evangelists or elders in the church.)

30. AND I WILL SHEW WONDERS IN THE HEAVENS AND IN THE EARTH, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND PILLARS OF SMOKE,

31. THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD COME, (Similar language was used by Jesus to foretell events that would precede His second coming, Matt. 24:29,30; Mark 13:24-26; Luke 21:25-28, According to Luke's account, these would be signs to the redeemed that the coming of the Lord would be near. But, notice that with this verse, the prophet introduces us to another "day of the Lord", the final day of the Lord. The first one discussed in Joel had to do with God's wrath against a sinning nation, this one will have to do with His wrath against a sinful world. Actually we can properly think of Joel as a prophet of the "day of the Lord", for in telling them of the one to come upon his nation. Inspiration carried him forward to the one to come upon the world. The first one may possibly be considered a type of the second. At this point, let us digress long enough to discuss a matter brought up by this passage. Some think that the day of the Lord mentioned in this section of Joel is the day of Pentecost, but this cannot be for the following reasons: (a) these things were to take place "before" that day; (b) on Pentecost, no women were granted the gift of prophecy; and (c) on Pentecost, the Spirit was not poured out upon "all flesh"—only on Jews.

32. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE DELIVERED: (This was a part of Peter's quotation. The deliverance that he was preaching through Christ was a spiritual deliverance, a deliverance from sin and a consequent deliverance from the wrath of God when that great and terrible day of the Lord would come upon the world. "Whosoever" would include Gentiles unto whom this same deliverance from sin was offered through the gospel. To "call on the name of the Lord" means to look to the Lord for deliverance, to turn to Him, to be a wor-

shipper of Him and a doer of His will. It implies much more than merely praying. In our quest for physical recovery, we "call on" the doctor, but when we do so, we place ourselves into his hands to diagnose and to prescribe, and our call upon him will do us no good unless we do what he says. Actually, turning to the Lord in gospel conversion is equivalent to "calling on the name of the Lord", Acts 22:16.) FOR IN MOUNT ZION AND IN JERUSALEM (Isa. 2:2,3 says the saving covenant message would go forth from Zion and Jerusalem.) SHALL BE DELIVERANCE, AS THE LORD HATH SAID; (If quoting Scripture, he probably refers to Oba. 17, although he could be referring to Isa. 46:13 and Isa. 59:20. On the other hand, he may be quoting a well known oral prophecy.) AND IN THE REMNANT WHOM THE LORD SHALL CALL. (The prophets never lost sight of the "remnant", the small portion of the nation that would be saved while the bulk of it perished because of unrighteousness.)

CHAPTER 3

1. FOR, BEHOLD, IN THOSE DAYS, AND IN THAT TIME, WHEN I SHALL BRING AGAIN THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM, (Such terminology is often employed throughout the books of the prophets to refer to great things that God was going to do for His people. It is usually in the language of His Old Testament people though the fulfillment frequently applies to His New Testament people. In the end of the preceding chapter, Joel has just told what great things God was going to do for His people in our dispensation.)

2. I WILL ALSO GATHER ALL NATIONS, AND WILL BRING THEM DOWN INTO THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT, AND WILL PLEAD WITH THEM THERE FOR MY PEOPLE AND FOR MY HERITAGE ISRAEL, WHOM THEY HAVE SCATTERED AMONG THE NATIONS, AND PARTED MY LAND. (Something different was in store for the enemy nations, most of whom have now ceased to exist upon earth. "Valley of Jehoshaphat" can also be translated "Valley of Jehovah's judgment". Since there is no valley in Palestine (or elsewhere) called the Valley of Jehoshaphat, many wonder if this should not be translated the valley of Jehovah's judgment. Verse 14 of this very chapter would suggest so where it refers to the same valley as the valley of decision (Jehovah's decision). Throughout the prophetic books, God

has the nation of His people surviving many ups and downs and becoming an exalted people and the enemy nations—like Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Edom, and others—becoming heaps and desolations.)

3. AND THEY HAVE CAST LOTS FOR MY PEOPLE; (This was customary in wartime among the allies who conquered. See Obadiah 11 and Nahum 3:10.) AND HAVE GIVEN A BOY FOR A HARLOT, (The conquered Jews had become slaves. Their cheap valuation is here suggested by a boy with all of his future before him being traded for a harlot.) AND SOLD A GIRL FOR WINE, THAT THEY MIGHT DRINK. (Another example of cheap evaluation, for the wine would soon be gone which they would receive in exchange for the girl.)

4. YEA, AND WHAT HAVE YE TO DO WITH ME, O TYRE, AND ZIDON, (Pheonician cities along the Mediterranean coast.) AND ALL THE COASTS OF PALESTINE? WILL YE RENDER ME A RECOMPENSE? AND IF YE RECOMPENSE ME, SWIFTLY AND SPEEDILY WILL I RETURN YOUR RECOMPENSE UPON YOUR OWN HEAD; (God had led His people in victories against these enemies. Because of their abuse of the Jews as a retaliation, God would visit them with an even heavier judgment.)

5. BECAUSE YE HAVE TAKEN MY SILVER AND MY GOLD, AND HAVE CARRIED INTO YOUR TEMPLES MY GOODLY PLEASANT THINGS; (It was customary for nations to plunder the temples of the conquered and to put the vessels and treasures taken into their own temples. See II Chron. 36:7.)

6. THE CHILDREN ALSO OF JUDAH AND THE CHILDREN OF JERUSALEM HAVE YE SOLD UNTO THE GRECIANS, THAT YE MIGHT REMOVE THEM FAR FROM THEIR BORDER. (It was also a practice of war for a nation to sell some of the captives to other nations for slaves. The Phoenicians had sold Jews to the Greeks, which took them far from their native home.)

7. BEHOLD, I WILL RAISE THEM OUT OF THE PLACE WHITHER YE HAVE SOLD THEM, AND WILL RETURN YOUR RECOMPENSE UPON YOUR OWN HEAD; (Men's own evil will return upon them sooner or later.)

8. AND I WILL SELL YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS

INTO THE HAND OF THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH, AND THEY SHALL SELL THEM TO THE SABEANS, (Arabians) TO A PEOPLE FAR OFF; FOR THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT. (During the Grecian wars of Alexandria, history records that the Jews bought Phoenician slaves from the Greeks and in turn sold them to the Arabs—just as was prophesied here.)

9. PROCLAIM YE THIS AMONG THE GENTILES; PREPARE WAR, WAKE UP THE MIGHTY MEN, LET ALL THE MEN OF WAR DRAW NEAR; LET THEM COME UP.

10. BEAT YOUR PLOUGHSHARES INTO SWORDS, AND YOUR PRUNING HOOKS INTO SPEARS: (Just the opposite of Isa. 2:4 and Mic. 4:3. Isaiah and Micah were foretelling a time of peace, Joel a time of conflict.) LET THE WEAK SAY, I AM STRONG.

11. ASSEMBLE YOURSELVES, AND COME, ALL YE HEATHEN, AND GATHER YOURSELVES TOGETHER ROUND ABOUT: THITHER CAUSE THY MIGHTY ONES TO COME DOWN, O LORD.

12. LET THE HEATHEN BE WAKENED, AND COME UP TO THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT: (This passage is a continuation of the judgment of God which began to be discussed in v. 2 of this chapter.) FOR THERE WILL I SIT TO JUDGE ALL THE HEATHEN ROUND ABOUT.

13. PUT YE IN THE SICKLE, FOR THE HARVEST IS RIPE: (For another place where judgment is likened to a grape harvest, see Rev. 14:14-20. What a picture of judgment—not one grape eludes being mashed and its juice pressed out, and just that thorough is the judgment of God upon nations and upon individuals. The figure shows that God had put up with a lot all the while that the grapes were growing and ripening, but there comes a time when God will take no more. He says, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.") FOR THE PRESS IS FULL, AND THE FATS OVERFLOW; FOR THE WICKEDNESS IS GREAT.

14. MULTITUDES, MULTITUDES IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION: (Jehovah's decision against them, the same as the "Valley of Jehoshaphat"). FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD IS NEAR IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION. (All these nations of Joel's day have suffered vengeance at the mouth of God as prophesied by Jeremiah and others. To these times of

vengeance, Joel may be referring, but just as Sodom and Gomorrah once destroyed from the face of the earth by God will yet face the judgment of the great day (Matt. 10:14,15), so will these nations have to face the Almighty in the same judgment, and it is likely that Joel refers to this latter judgment.)

15. THE SUN AND THE MOON SHALL BE DARKENED, AND THE STARS SHALL WITHDRAW THEIR SHINING. (See comment on chapter 2:30,31.)

16. THE LORD ALSO SHALL ROAR OUT OF ZION, AND UTTER HIS VOICE FROM JERUSALEM; (God consistently claims Zion and Jerusalem as the place from which He would speak.) AND THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH SHALL SHAKE: (When God spoke from Mt. Sinai, everything and everybody present were thus affected. We are told to tremble at the Word of the Lord, Isa. 66:2.) BUT THE LORD WILL BE THE HOPE OF HIS PEOPLE, AND THE STRENGTH OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. (Just as the mother cat is the comfort and the provider for the kittens, though a dread to every mouse about her, so is God the hope and strength of His people, though the destroyer of His enemies.)

17. SO SHALL YE KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD DWELLING IN ZION, MY HOLY MOUNTAIN: (Once again God claims Zion as His dwelling place. New Testament Israel, the new covenant people, are said to have come to Mt. Zion rather than to the earthly mountain of Sinai where the old covenant was given, Heb. 12:18,22.) THEN SHALL JERUSALEM BE HOLY, (Heb. 12:22 refers to it as the heavenly Jerusalem, and Paul speaks of it as "Jerusalem which is above", Gal. 4:26.) AND THERE SHALL NO STRANGERS PASS THROUGH HER ANY MORE. (The Old Testament city of Jerusalem knew what it was to have enemies besiege her, conquer her, and tread her down, but the Jerusalem that Joel refers to would be different. Nothing defiling or disrupting will ever enter the new Jerusalem, Rev. 21:27.)

18. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THAT DAY THAT THE MOUNTAINS SHALL DROP DOWN NEW WINE, AND THE HILLS SHALL FLOW WITH MILK, AND ALL THE RIVERS OF JUDAH SHALL FLOW WITH WATERS, (Speaking of heavenly, eternal, and spiritual things, God employed the language of men to picture a most desirable, ideal con-

dition.) AND A FOUNTAIN SHALL COME FORTH OUT OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, AND SHALL WATER THE VALLEY OF SHITTIM. (Surely this last statement helps us to settle for a spiritual fulfillment, for a fountain coming from the house of the Lord in Jerusalem would not naturally water the valley of Shittim on the other side of the Jordan River. Blessings to others beyond the borders of Israel, the Gentiles, would come forth from the Jerusalem here referred to, and so they have through the gospel.)

19. EGYPT (One of the enemy nations,) SHALL BE A DESOLATION, AND EDOM (Another enemy,) SHALL BE A DESOLATE WILDERNESS, FOR THE VIOLENCE AGAINST THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH, BECAUSE THEY HAVE SHED INNOCENT BLOOD IN THEIR LAND. (The book of Obadiah gives parallel material on this subject.)

20. BUT JUDAH SHALL DWELL FOR EVER, AND JERUSALEM FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. (God's people and God's city would abide.)

21. FOR I WILL CLEANSE THEIR BLOOD THAT I HAVE NOT CLEANSED: FOR THE LORD DWELLETH IN ZION. (This eternal life will be realized through the grace of God as explained in the New Testament epistles of Paul.)

Commentary Studies in Amos

CHAPTER 1

1. THE WORDS OF AMOS, WHO WAS AMONG THE HERDMEN OF TEKOA, WHICH HE SAW CONCERNING ISRAEL IN THE DAYS OF UZZIAH KING OF JUDAH, AND IN THE DAYS OF JEROBOAM THE SON OF JOASH KING OF ISRAEL, TWO YEARS BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE. (This opening verse identifies the writer, tells his occupation and location, and tells to whom he prophesied and when. Now let us break the matter down. Amos speaks of himself as a herdsman; elsewhere he mentions his gathering sycamore fruit, 7:14; thus, he was a rural man altogether. His town of Tekoa was toward the Dead Sea in a very bleak countryside. Some of the greatest thinkers have come out of barren surroundings where they have had time to think and meditate. It took a rugged, courageous man like Amos to fulfill the mission of preaching that he did. Though from the southern kingdom, he was sent to the northern kingdom. Most of the prophetic books of the Old Testament deal with Judah of the south; only Amos and Hosea were sent principally to the northern kingdom. In his day, Uzziah was reigning in the south and Jeroboam in the north. The north had two kings by the name of Jeroboam; this was the second Jeroboam for the first Jeroboam's date does not coincide with the date of Uzziah. This first verse even pinpoints the date as "two years before the earthquake". Amos's date is usually given as 787 B.C., which would make the earthquake in 786. That must have been a tremendous earthquake, for a whole 300 years later, they were still referring to it in a vivid way. Zechariah (300 years later) said to the people of his day, "Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains... yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah" (Zech. 14:5). Through the years, the Jews have held that the earthquake was sent because of God's wrath against King Uzziah for entering the temple to burn incense.)

2. AND HE SAID, THE LORD WILL ROAR (This word "roar" gives us a forewarning as to the nature of the

message in the book—one of divine thunderation) FROM ZION, AND UTTER HIS VOICE FROM JERUSALEM; (These were not welcome words to the inhabitants of the north who had so many years before withdrawn from Jerusalem and Zion. The first Jeroboam had set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel to keep the people of his segment of the old kingdom from going to Jerusalem for their annual festivals lest in time a sentimental and patriotic spirit would cause them to reunite the kingdom under the Jerusalem ruler; I Kings 12:26-29. But, Amos told them what was going to happen whether they liked it or not.) AND THE HABITATIONS OF THE SHEPHERDS SHALL MOURN, AND THE TOP OF CARMEL SHALL WITHER. (When the breath of God's mouth would utter the judgments coming up, things as far away as Carmel in the north would wither and everything in between.)

3. THUS SAITH THE LORD; (And the uttering begins.) FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF DAMASCUS, AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF: (A Bible dictionary is an indispensable book in studying these prophetic books, for there are so many nations, cities, mountains, and other geographical names mentioned in them. Damascus was the capital of Syria, the northern kingdom's neighbor to the north and east. God was going to punish Syria. The expressions, "For three transgression, and for four," is used of seven other nations in the first and second chapters of Amos. If God had three particular sins in mind, He does not list them. It is generally held that the expression is a Hebraism indicating a number of things with which God had been displeased, but when a particular transgression occurred, that was enough—the nation must be punished. At least, the expression indicates the longsuffering of God, proving that He is not triggerhappy, having no mercy. God does not have an insatiable mania to inflict punishment immediately.) BECAUSE THEY HAVE THRESHED GILEAD WITH THRESHING INSTRUMENTS OF IRON: (The land of Gilead lay just south of Syria east of the Jordan River. It was that country that Moses gave to the two and one-half tribes that settled east of the Jordan. Syria had been exceedingly brutal toward Gilead, thus bringing down God's axe of judgment. Elisha had predicted that Hazael, king of Syria, would be brutal toward the Israelites, II Kings 8:11,12, and II Kings 10:32,33 and 13:7 tells of the threshing that Syria gave them. God wanted Israel punished, but Syria did it out of hatred and not for divine punishment.)

4. BUT I WILL SEND A FIRE INTO THE HOUSE OF HAZAEL, WHICH SHALL DEVOUR THE PALACES OF BENHADAD. (Benhadad was Hazael's son and successor. Assyria would destroy Damascus as we shall cite later.)

5. I WILL BREAK ALSO THE BAR (Across the gates.) OF DAMASCUS, AND CUT OFF THE INHABITANT FROM THE PLAIN OF AVEN, AND HIM THAT HOLDETH THE SCEPTRE FROM THE HOUSE OF EDEN; (Locations in Syria. God would see that its defense collapsed and that the people were taken.) AND THE PEOPLE OF SYRIA SHALL GO INTO CAPTIVITY UNTO KIR, SAITH THE LORD. (II Kings 16:9 tells of the king of Assyria taking Damascus and carrying the people captive to Kir, probably the country of Cyrene.)

6. THUS SAITH THE LORD; FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF GAZA, (A chief city of Philistia,) AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF; (Punishment follows disobedience in God's order of things. These Gentile nations that Amos was condemning did not have the written Old Testament by which to measure their acts, but their sins consisted in violating the understanding of right and wrong that still remained from the knowledge of God's will that Adam carried out of the Garden. The things for which Amos condemns them are found in the list in Romans 1, of which things Paul said they knew the judgment of God and knew that those who committed such things were deserving of punishment, Rom. 1:32. God does not condemn without reason.) BECAUSE THEY CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE THE WHOLE CAPTIVITY TO DELIVER THEM UP TO EDOM. (The Philistines well knew the utter hatred that Edom held for Israel. The captives taken in their battles with Israel were apparently sold to the Edomites. What cruel masters those Edomites would make for poor Israelite slaves!)

7. BUT I WILL SEND A FIRE ON THE WALL OF GAZA, (All principal cities in those days were walled for protection. After conquering a city, it was often burned.) WHICH SHALL DEVOUR THE PALACES THEREOF:

8. AND I WILL CUT OFF THE INHABITANT FROM ASHDOD, AND HIM THAT HOLDETH THE SCEPTRE FROM ASHKELON, AND I WILL TURN MINE HAND AGAINST EKRON; (Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron were all principal cities of the Philistines.) AND THE REM-

NANT OF THE PHILISTINES SHALL PERISH, SAITH THE LORD GOD. (They too fell under the sway of Assyria and later to others.)

9. THUS SAITH THE LORD; FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF TYRUS, (The capital of Phoenicia,) AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF; BECAUSE THEY DELIVERED UP THE WHOLE CAPTIVITY TO EDOM, AND REMEMBERED NOT THE BROTHERLY COVENANT; (Besides being like guilty with Philistia of delivering Israelite slaves to the Edomites, Tyre had "broken the brotherly covenant". The Phoenicians and Israelites had long had the most peaceful relations, Hiram, king of Tyre, was always a lover of David, and he congratulated Solomon when he came to the throne, I Kings 5:1. Solomon called upon the Phoenicians to help with materials and craftsmen in the erection of his great temple, I Kings 5:2-12, but this neighborly spirit came to be broken in time, and God held the Phoenicians responsible.)

10. BUT I WILL SEND A FIRE ON THE WALL OF TYRUS, WHICH SHALL DEVOUR THE PALACES THEREOF. (Another nation that fell to the sway of Assyria, later to Greece, and still later to others.)

11. THUS SAITH THE LORD; FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF EDOM, (Israel's neighbors on the south,) AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF; BECAUSE HE DID PURSUE HIS BROTHER (The Israelites,) WITH THE SWORD, AND DID CAST OFF ALL PITY, AND HIS ANGER DID TEAR PERPETUALLY, (It exhibited itself at every opportunity,) AND HE KEPT HIS WRATH FOR EVER: (Edom warred against Israel not merely for gain, but because of hate.)

12. BUT I WILL SEND A FIRE UPON TEMAN, WHICH SHALL DEVOUR THE PALACES OF BOZRAH. (The two main cities of the Edomites.)

13. THUS SAITH THE LORD; FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF THE CHILDREN OF AMMON, (One of Israel's neighbors on the east, they were descendants of Lot by the younger of his two daughters who escaped the destruction of Sodom, Gen. 19:30-38,) AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF; BECAUSE THEY HAVE RIPPED UP THE WOMEN WITH

CHILD OF GILEAD, THAT THEY MIGHT ENLARGE THEIR BORDER; (They were condemned because of utter brutality in warfare. Gilead was that portion of Israel that lay next to Ammon. Jer. 49:1-6 also carries a prediction of the punishment of Ammon.)

14. BUT I WILL KINDLE A FIRE IN THE WALL OF RABBAH, (Capital of Ammon,) AND IT SHALL DEVOUR THE PALACES THEREOF, WITH SHOUTING IN THE DAY OF BATTLE, WITH A TEMPEST IN THE DAY OF THE WHIRLWIND: (Ammon likewise felt the lash of the Babylonian whp.)

15. AND THEIR KING SHALL GO INTO CAPTIVITY, HE AND HIS PRINCES TOGETHER, SAITH THE LORD. (Jer. 49:3 also takes note of the captivity of the king and princes and also adds the captivity of the "priests".)

CHAPTER 2

1. THUS SAITH THE LORD; FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF MOAB, (Descendants of Lot by the older of his two daughters, Gen. 19:36,37. Moab was the land in which Israel camped just before crossing the Jordan. It was the land of King Balak, who sought Balaam to curse Israel. Mt. Nebo, where Moses died, was in that land.) AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF; BECAUSE HE BURNED THE BONES OF THE KING OF EDOM INTO LIME: (It would sound as if Moab dug up the bones of some former king of Edom and burned them—if so, God was condemning their utter hatred and their disrespect for the dead. However, some think Amos refers to the battle recorded in II Kings 3:21-27. Some fanciful, speculative interpretation is necessary to accept this latter position.)

2. BUT I WILL SEND A FIRE UPON MOAB, AND IT SHALL DEVOUR THE PALACES OF KIRIOTH, (Capital city,) AND MOAB SHALL DIE WITH TUMULT, WITH SHOUTING, AND WITH THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET:

3. AND I WILL CUT OFF THE JUDGE FROM THE MIDST THEREOF, AND WILL SLAY ALL THE PRINCES THEREOF WITH HIM, SAITH THE LORD. (Isa. 15:1-9 and Jer. 48:1-46 both portray vividly this destruction at the hands of Babylon.)

4. THUS SAITH THE LORD; FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF JUDAH, (The people of the south with which the kingdom to whom Amos was prophesying had so often warred,) AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF; BECAUSE THEY HAVE DESPISED THE LAW OF THE LORD, AND HAVE NOT KEPT HIS COMMANDMENTS, (God condemns Judah for disobedience to His commandments. They were a part of His covenant people. The other nations had been condemned on general principles, but Judah for violating the commandments of this covenant.) AND THEIR LIES (Since idols were fakes, they were often labeled as "lies" by the prophets,) CAUSED THEM TO ERR, AFTER THE WHICH THEIR FATHERS HAVE WALKED: (Idolatry also got into the southern kingdom. It struck at the very foundation of the worship of Jehovah.)

5. BUT I WILL SEND A FIRE UPON JUDAH, AND IT SHALL DEVOUR THE PALACES OF JERUSALEM. (About two hundred years later, this punishment fell upon Judah at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.)

6. THUS SAITH THE LORD: (The true God whom they were sworn to worship, but to whom they had been unfaithful.) FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF ISRAEL, (Here is divine psychology. Having condemned the Gentile nations of Syria, Philistia, Phoenicia, Ammon, and Moab and the southern kingdom—all of which was music to the hearers' ears—the prophet in the last place considers the case of Israel. Paul used the same psychology in condemning the Gentiles first and then the Jews when writing Romans 1,2,3.) AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY THE PUNISHMENT THEREOF; (It will be interesting to see why God condemned them. Notice that it was not for one thing, but for many.) BECAUSE THEY SOLD THE RIGHTEOUS FOR SILVER, AND THE POOR FOR A PAIR OF SHOES; (It is generally held that this refers to a perversion of justice through bribes—"silver" being large bribes and a "pair of shoes" small bribes. God is against social injustices.)

7. THAT PANT AFTER THE DUST OF THE EARTH ON THE HEAD OF THE POOR, AND TURN ASIDE THE WAY OF THE MEEK: (The former statement is difficult, but both statements apparently represent the oppression of the poor and the meek by the rich and mighty.) AND A MAN AND HIS FATHER WILL GO IN UNTO THE SAME

MAID, TO PROFANE MY HOLY NAME; (The most disgraceful kind of immorality. It could be speaking of prostitution connected with their idolatrous worship.)

8. AND THEY LAY THEMSELVES DOWN UPON CLOTHES LAID TO PLEDGE (The law required that if one borrowed money and gave his raiment as a pledge, the raiment was to be returned to the poor man at night to sleep under, Exo. 22:26. They were keeping them—more oppression of the poor.) BY EVERY ALTAR, (Idolatrous altars.) AND THEY DRINK THE WINE OF THE CONDEMNED IN THE HOUSE OF THEIR GOD. (Their participation in idolatrous practices for which they would be justly punished.)

9. YET DESTROYED I THE AMORITE BEFORE THEM, (Rahab said they had heard what Israel had done to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites, Joshua 2:10. Num. 21:21-35 records these victories.) WHOSE HEIGHT WAS LIKE THE HEIGHT OF THE CEDARS, AND HE WAS STRONG AS THE OAKS; YET I DESTROYED HIS FRUIT FROM ABOVE, AND HIS ROOTS FROM BENEATH. (It made no difference to God how big they were. Amos is pointing out just how good God had been in giving Israel the land east of the Jordan, where the two and one-half tribes later settled.)

10. ALSO I BROUGHT YOU UP FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND LED YOU FORTY YEARS THROUGH THE WILDERNESS TO POSSESS THE LAND OF THE AMORITE. (He recalls God's goodness at the exodus and during the forty years in the wilderness. The victories over the Amorites were toward the end of the wilderness period.)

11. AND I RAISED UP OF YOUR SONS FOR PROPHETS, (Further blessings and honors conferred by God upon them.) AND OF YOUR YOUNG MEN FOR NAZARITES. ("Nazarite" means "separated one". Num. 6:1-21 gives the manner of becoming Nazarites. This again was a grace shown to the Israelites.) IS IT NOT EVEN THUS, O YET CHILDREN OF ISRAEL? SAITH THE LORD. (The piercingness of God's questions! It was so—as their history well showed. It was too bad that they had received so many kindnesses from God and then treated His Word as they did.)

12. BUT YE GAVE THE NAZARITES WINE TO DRINK; (In violation to their oath.) AND COMMANDED THE PROPH-

ETS, SAYING, PROPHECY NOT. (The very thing they were to do. Some of those prophets had been the young prophet of I Kings 13:1-4, Micalah, Elijah, and Elisha.)

13. BEHOLD, I AM PRESSED UNDER YOU, AS A CART IS PRESSED THAT IS FULL OF SHEAVES. (Various versions give various translations of this statement, but each one boils down to the thought that God had had enough!)

14. THEREFORE THE FLIGHT SHALL PERISH FROM THE SWIFT, AND THE STRONG SHALL NOT STRENGTHEN HIS FORCE, NEITHER SHALL THE MIGHTY DELIVER HIMSELF:

15. NEITHER SHALL HE STAND THAT HANDLETH THE BOW; AND HE THAT IS SWIFT OF FOOT SHALL NOT DELIVER HIMSELF: NEITHER SHALL HE THAT RIDETH THE HORSE DELIVER HIMSELF.

16. AND HE THAT IS COURAGEOUS AMONG THE MIGHTY SHALL FLEE AWAY NAKED IN THAT DAY, SAITH THE LORD. (Under the second Jeroboam, who was ruling in Amos's day, these words of coming doom seemed inconceivable to the hearers. But, time proved them to be true. The very things in which they trusted—swiftness, strength, military might, the bow, the horse, and their courage—were not sufficient in the day of destruction. Sixty some years later, the northern kingdom fell to Assyria just as Amos here predicted.)

CHAPTER 3

1. HEAR THIS WORD THAT THE LORD HATH SPOKEN AGAINST YOU (How people fear when people of might threaten them! How much more should Israel have feared when it was God who had spoken!) O CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, AGAINST THE WHOLE FAMILY (Amos condemned both northern and southern sections of the kingdom.) WHICH I BROUGHT UP FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT, (The people whom He started out to bless, He must now denounce and punish.) SAYING,

2. YOU ONLY HAVE I KNOWN OF ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH: (Israel alone was God's people under the Old Testament, Exo. 19:5 and Deut. 7:6.) THEREFORE I WILL PUNISH YOU FOR ALL YOUR INIQUITIES. (Exalted

privilege abused is followed by stern judgment. Where much is given, much is required, Luke 12:48.)

3. CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER, EXCEPT THEY BE AGREED? (The answer is "no". Whether this question goes with that which has just been discussed or with the chain of questions that follows is debatable. If with the foregoing, it refers to God and His people. I personally favor its going with what follows, it being the first of several questions whose conclusion is reached in vs. 7 and 8.)

4. WILL A LION ROAR IN THE FOREST, WHEN HE HATH NO PREY? (This second question, like all the others in this series, is answered by "no", for the lion roars over the prey he is about to catch.) WILL A YOUNG LION CRY OUT OF HIS DEN, IF HE HAVE TAKEN NOTHING?

5. CAN A BIRD FALL IN A SNARE UPON THE EARTH, WHERE NO GIN IS FOR HIM? (A gin was a stick that acted as a spring in a trap for birds or beasts.) SHALL ONE TAKE UP A SNARE FROM THE EARTH, AND HAVE TAKEN NOTHING AT ALL? (Two questions about lions are here followed by two questions about trapping birds. The next verse presents two questions about calamities befalling a city.)

6. SHALL A TRUMPET BE BLOWN IN THE CITY, AND THE PEOPLE NOT BE AFRAID? (The paralyzing fear that the alarm of a trumpet sent through people!) SHALL THERE BE EVIL IN A CITY, AND THE LORD HATH NOT DONE IT? (The word "evil" here does not mean sin, for God does not cause sin. It means "trouble" or "difficulties" here as it does in numerous other passages. See Eccl. 12:1; Job 2:10; and Isa. 45:7.)

7. SURELY THE LORD GOD WILL DO NOTHING, BUT HE REVEALETH HIS SECRET UNTO HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS. (Whatever calamity God is going to bring upon His people, He will first reveal it to the prophets that they might warn the people and call them to repentance. Furthermore, that which the prophets foretold was of divine origin; the prophets did not make up their own message.)

8. THE LION HATH ROARED, (God is ready to spring.) WHO WILL NOT FEAR? THE LORD GOD HATH SPOKEN, (Revealed His intentions to the prophets of whom Amos

was one.) WHO CAN BUT PROPHECY? (Amos was but speaking what God had declared to him. He should not be blamed for speaking it. If we take verse 3 as the first of this series of questions, it would be that God and the prophets were walking together because they agreed as to what was to happen and what the people should do.)

9. PUBLISH IN THE PALACES AT ASHDOD, (A city of the Philistines,) AND IN THE PALACES IN THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND SAY, ASSEMBLE YOURSELVES UPON THE MOUNTAINS OF SAMARIA, (The capital of the northern kingdom.) AND BEHOLD THE GREAT TUMULTS IN THE MIDST THEREOF, AND THE OPPRESSED IN THE MIDST THEREOF. (The news of the tumults in Samaria would indeed be welcome news to Philistia and Egypt that were enemy nations. They would be glad to gather on the surrounding mountains to watch the destruction. The God who had judged Egypt years before and had led David to such triumphs over Philistia was going to bring judgment upon Samaria.)

10. FOR THEY KNOW NOT TO DO RIGHT, SAITH THE LORD, WHO STORE UP VIOLENCE AND ROBBERY IN THEIR PALACES. (Samaria would not fall because of Assyria's military might. God could deliver from Assyria if they were obedient. But, Samaria would fall because she had forgotten God.)

11. THEREFORE THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD; AN ADVERSARY THERE SHALL BE EVEN ROUND ABOUT THE LAND; (The Assyrian army from Nineveh,) AND HE SHALL BRING DOWN THY STRENGTH FROM THEE, (Israel was in a powerful condition under Jeroboam II at the time of Amos's prophecy.) AND THY PALACES SHALL BE SPOILED. (Samaria had become the capital city under Omri, a very wicked king. His son Ahab succeeded him and was the most wicked of all the Israelitish kings. Through his marriage to Jezebel, Phoenician Baal worship had come into Israel. God had not had very good thoughts concerning Samaria from its beginning as capital.)

12. THUS SAITH THE LORD; AS THE SHEPHERD TAKETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE LION TWO LEGS, OR A PIECE OF AN EAR: (Only fragments.) SO SHALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BE TAKEN OUT THAT DWELL IN SAMARIA IN THE CORNER OF A BED, AND IN DAMASCUS IN A COUCH. (The lamb was

gone, though the bony legs and a piece of an ear remained. So Israel would be destroyed, though there would be a few survivors.)

13. HEAR YE, AND TESTIFY IN THE HOUSE OF JACOB, SAITH THE LORD GOD, THE GOD OF HOSTS,

14. THAT IN THE DAY THAT I SHALL VISIT (Punish,) THE TRANSGRESSIONS OF ISRAEL UPON HIM I WILL ALSO VISIT THE ALTARS OF BETHEL; AND THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR SHALL BE CUT OFF, AND FALL TO THE GROUND. (Jeroboam I, the northern kingdom's first king, had inaugurated calf worship at Bethel in the south and at Dan in the north to keep his people out of Jerusalem at feast times. From that day, God had set Himself against the northern kingdom. Even the religious objects to which the northern kingdom looked for deliverance could not even deliver themselves, but would share in the destruction of the hand of Jehovah.)

15. AND I WILL SMITE THE WINTER HOUSE WITH THE SUMMER HOUSE; AND THE HOUSES OF IVORY SHALL PERISH, AND THE GREAT HOUSES SHALL HAVE AN END, SAITH THE LORD. (The luxury of Israel at that time is suggested in this verse. So often, luxury leads to sin. Security usually typifies the attitude of the prosperous nation. But, Amos by inspiration could see beyond the splendor of the present to the ruins of the future.)

CHAPTER 4

1. HEAR THIS WORD, YE KINE OF BASHAN, (Bashan was a great pasture country east of the Sea of Galilee. Besides this reference in Amos, Psa. 22:12 speaks of the "bulls of Bashan".) THAT ARE IN THE MOUNTAIN OF SAMARIA, (Amos is speaking to the well fed—prosperous—ruling class of the northern kingdom under the language of "kine of Bashan". For other times when people were best described by characteristic animals, Jesus called Herod a "fox", John the Baptist called the Pharisees and Sadducees "vipers", etc. These are not complimentary titles, but they fit.) WHICH OPPRESS THE POOR, WHICH CRUSH THE NEEDEY, WHICH SAY TO THEIR MASTERS, BRING, AND LET US DRINK. (The prophets believed in social righteousness and sharply rebuked the oppressions of the rich.)

2. THE LORD GOD HATH SWORN (Taken an oath,) BY HIS HOLINESS, (The custom with oaths is for the one taking the oath to swear by something greater than himself. In this, God has a difficult time. He can do no better than to swear by Himself, Heb. 6:13,14, or by one of His attributes as in this verse,) THAT, LO, THE DAYS SHALL COME UPON YOU, (He didn't say how soon, but that they could be sure that in time it would happen,) THAT HE SHALL TAKE YOU AWAY WITHHOOKS, AND YOUR POSTERITY (Offspring,) WITH FISHHOOKS, (For similar language concerning the southern kingdom, see Jer. 16:16.)

3. AND YE SHALL GO OUT AT THE BREACHES, (The kingdom would collapse with rents here and there in the time of its defense. They would go out of their land like cows going through the breaches of a pasture fence. In this verse, Amos returns to the figure of "cows" first raised in verse 1.) AND YE SHALL CAST THEM INTO THE PALACE, SAITH THE LORD. (This clause has been rendered variously because of variations in the Hebrew text.)

4. COME TO BETHEL, (One of the first places of northern kingdom idolatry,) AND TRANSGRESS; AT GILGAL (That sacred place where Joshua and the children of Israel had first encamped inside the Promised land, Joshua 4:19, had apparently become another place of idolatry in Israel by Amos's time,) MULTIPLY TRANSGRESSION; AND BRING YOUR SACRIFICES EVERY MORNING, (The substitute religion of Jeroboam had borrowed many of the practices of the true religion, such as the sacrifice of the morning, Num. 28:3,4, just as denominationalism today has borrowed some of the aspects of the divine religion,) AND YOUR TITHES AFTER THREE YEARS: (This was in imitation of the three-year tithe of Deut. 14:28.)

5. AND OFFER A SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING WITH LEAVEN (In imitation of Lev. 7:13 and Lev. 23:17.) AND PROCLAIM AND PUBLISH THE FREE OFFERINGS: (They copied the free will offerings also. How disgusting it must be to God to see people pick out what they want of His religion and leave out what they don't want as they spin a religion of their own!) FOR THIS LIKETH YOU, O YE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, SAITH THE LORD GOD. (This "pleaseth" you, the American Standard version gives.

This is no higher than some people go in religion—just whatever pleases them instead of striving to do what will please God. But, the northern kingdom had ceased long ago striving to please Jehovah in their religion.)

6. AND I ALSO HAVE GIVEN YOU CLEANNESSE OF TEETH (Food shortages.) IN ALL YOUR CITIES, AND WANT OF BREAD (The staff of life,) IN ALL YOUR PLACES; (He had done this as chastening to get them to repent. When people fail to listen to the law of God, He has one recourse left in this world—chastening—and He uses it. His purpose in it is to get people to repent, Rev. 3:19.) YET HAVE YE NOT RETURNED UNTO ME, SAITH THE LORD. (Four other times in this chapter does Amos make the same statement; vs. 8,9,10,11. No matter what is done to some people, they will not repent. It is for such people that God has reserved wrath for eternity.)

7. AND ALSO I HAVE WITHHOLDEN THE RAIN FROM YOU, WHERE THERE WERE YET THREE MONTHS TO THE HARVEST: (That would ruin their hopes of a harvest.) AND I CAUSED IT TO RAIN UPON ONE CITY, AND CAUSED IT NOT TO RAIN UPON ANOTHER CITY: (Where they were godly, it rained; where they weren't, it didn't. God purposely made a distinction.) ONE PIECE HAS RAINED UPON, AND THE PIECE WHEREUPON IT RAINED NOT WITHERED. (Water is absolutely essential to agriculture.)

8; SO TWO OR THREE CITIES WANDERED UNTO ONE CITY, TO DRINK WATER: (The chastened cities had to go to the unchastened. You would think they would have put "two and two together", but they didn't. Satan has ways of blinding the thoughts of those who ought to repent. An unspiritual nature does not produce spiritual thoughts.) BUT THEY WERE NOT SATISFIED; YET HAVE YE NOT RETURNED UNTO ME, SAITH THE LORD.

9. I HAVE SMITTEN YOU WITH BLASTING AND MILDEW; (Numerous passages in the Old Testament link these two together: Deut. 28:22; I Kings 8:37; and Haggai 2:17. "Blasting" was hot wind, Gen. 41:6, and "mildew" was that which followed. The crops were ruined as a result.) WHEN YOUR GARDENS AND YOUR VINEYARDS AND YOUR FIG TREES AND YOUR OLIVE TREES INCREASED, (Vegetables, grapes, figs, and olives were among the leading products of the gardens and orchards of Palestine.)

THE PALMERWORM DEVOURED THEM: (Joel also spoke of the palmerworm, Joel 1:4.) YET HAVE YE NOT RETURNED UNTO ME, SAITH THE LORD.

10. I HAVE SENT AMONG YOU THE PESTILENCE AFTER THE MANNER OF EGYPT: (What a terrible plague that must have been!) YOUR YOUNG MEN HAVE I SLAIN WITH THE SWORD, AND HAVE TAKEN AWAY YOUR HORSES; (The northern kingdom had experienced numerous wars. Even the loss of their young men and their horses hadn't brought them to their knees. Horses were used for military rather than agricultural purposes in those years, oxen being the beasts of burden in the field.) AND I HAVE MADE THE STINK OF YOUR CAMPS TO COME UP UNTO YOUR NOSTRILS: (How revolting and distasteful!) YET HAVE YE NOT RETURNED UNTO ME, SAITH THE LORD.

11. I HAVE OVERTHROWN SOME OF YOU, AS GOD OVERTHREW SODOM AND GOMORRAH, AND YE WERE AS A FIREBRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE BURNING: (Just as God had made distinction in cities in giving and withholding rain, so had He done with reference to the destruction of certain cities and the sparing of others.) YET HAVE YE NOT RETURNED UNTO ME, SAITH THE LORD.

12. THEREFORE (In view of their failure to repent when He had chastened them so many, many times and in so many different ways,) THUS WILL I DO UNTO THEE, O ISRAEL: (Amos's book starts out with brief condemnations of other nations, but he settles down to preach to and predict the doom of Israel.) PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL. (Many take this as an evangelistic appeal, calling upon the nation to repent. However, everything God has done has failed to bring them to repentance. Amos is sent to tell them that God is going to wipe them out. In military language, they are called upon to "prepare" to withstand God in battle if they can. God will show them that they have trampled His will underfoot and that He is the only true God whom they should have been serving faithful.)

13. FOR, LO, HE THAT FORMETH THE MOUNTAINS, AND CREATETH THE WIND, AND DECLARETH UNTO MAN WHAT IS HIS THOUGHT, THAT MAKETH THE MORNING DARKNESS, AND TREADETH UPON THE HIGH

PLACES OF THE EARTH, THE LORD, THE GOD OF HOSTS, IS HIS NAME. (Here Amos exalts God in nature. In later portions of the book, there will be found other choice thoughts upon this subject. What a God to hope to resist in the day of His judgment! The sinners in Israel were "asking for it" just as slumbering, refusing-to-repent sinners are doing today.)

CHAPTER 5

1. HEAR YE THIS WORD WHICH I TAKE UP AGAINST YOU, EVEN A LAMENTATION, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL. (So certain was their doom that Amos was even penning a lamentation over them.)

2. THE VIRGIN OF ISRAEL IS FALLEN; SHE SHALL NO MORE RISE: (This flatly contradicts the doctrine that the northern kingdom will one day be restored. Amos 8; 14 also affirms the final doom of the north. Passages elsewhere that are sometimes cited to prove that the north will be restored have a spiritual fulfillment.) SHE IS FORSAKEN UPON HER LAND: THERE IS NONE TO RAISE HER UP. (What happened to her gods? What happened to her military might? What happened to her alliances? Hezekiah trusted God to spare his southern kingdom from the same Assyria that overthrew the northern kingdom. His trust in the true God was not in vain, for in one night God smote the enemy's proud army with death—185,000 casualties in one night, II Kings 18 and 19. The north trusted in its idols, its military power, and its alliances and fell; Hezekiah trusted in God, and his kingdom was spared. David, that great warrior, wrote, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God," Psa. 20:7. He also wrote, "I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies," Psa. 44: 6,7. Psa. 118:8 says, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in men." And Isa. 42:17 says, "They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods." These passages tell the difference between the northern and southern kingdoms in the eighth century B.C.)

3. FOR THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD: THE CITY THAT WENT OUT BY A THOUSAND SHALL LEAVE AN HUN-

DRED, (Nine-tenths wiped out!) AND THAT WHICH WENT FORTH BY AN HUNDRED SHALL LEAVE TEN, (Not enough even to make a town,) TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL.

4. FOR THUS SAITH THE LORD UNTO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, SEEK YE ME, AND YE SHALL LIVE: (God always promised to perpetuate the nation with blessings if it served Him. Though they have spent so many years in disobedience, nothing would please God more than for them to have turned to Him. He would have abundantly pardoned!)

5. BUT SEEK NOT BETHEL, NOR ENTER INTO GILGAL, AND PASS NOT TO BEERSHEBA: FOR GILGAL SHALL SURELY GO INTO CAPTIVITY, AND BETHEL SHALL COME TO NOUGHT. (God would not have been pleased to have been just one of the gods of the Israelites. He says, "Seek me, but not Bethel or Gilgal or anybody else or any other place." "Bethel" meant "house of God" and was a place sacred to the memory of the Israelites as the place where their father Jacob saw the ladder to heaven, Gen. 28:11-19. Gilgal was another place connected with their sacred history as the first place of encampment inside the Promised Land, Joshua 4:19. Beersheba was the place where God appeared to Isaac and gave him the Abrahamic promises, Gen. 26:23-25. The northern kingdom had turned all of these venerable places into centers of idolatry.)

6. SEEK THE LORD, AND YE SHALL LIVE LEST HE BREAK OUT LIKE FIRE IN THE HOUSE OF JOSEPH, (Both Ephraim and Manasseh, the tribes representing Joseph's offspring, were in the northern kingdom.) AND DEVOUR IT, AND THERE BE NONE TO QUENCH IT IN BETHEL. (When God started a fire, the "fire department" of Bethel could not put it out.)

7. YE WHO TURN JUDGMENT (Social justice—something desirable,) TO WORMWOOD (Something bitter and undesirable,) AND LEAVE OFF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE EARTH,

8. SEEK HIM THAT MAKETH THE SEVEN STARS (Something called the Pleides,) AND ORION, (These two groups of stars are spoken of in Job 9:9 and Job 38:31. Orion is the brightest constellation in the northern heavens and in Greek mythology was placed with his hound among the stars and pictured with a girdle, sword, lion's skin,

and club. The three bright stars across the center of the constellation are called Orion's belt. The seven stars of the Pleiades were in Greek mythology seven sisters who were being pursued by Orion. Many today can point out the seven stars and Orion on a starry night. Many ancients worshipped these various constellations. Amos says, "Seek him who made these stars.") AND TURNETH THE SHADOW OF DEATH (Darkness of night,) INTO THE MORNING, AND MAKETH THE DAY DARK WITH NIGHT: (Again Amos exalts the God of nature,) THAT CALLETH FOR THE WATERS OF THE SEA, (Evaporation,) AND POURETH THEM OUT UPON THE FACE OF THE EARTH: (Rain, Amos, living centuries before our scientific age, accurately traced the water cycle, Inspiration guiding him to do so.) THE LORD IS HIS NAME:

9. THAT STRENGTHENETH THE SPOILED (The attacked, the oppressed, the weak,) AGAINST THE STRONG, (THE aggressor, the oppressor,) SO THAT THE SPOILED SHALL COME AGAINST THE FORTRESS. (The language reminds one of Paul's words in I Cor. 1:27,28.)

10. THEY HATE HIM THAT REBUKETH IN THE GATE, (Generally speaking, correction is grievous, Prov. 15:10. Jesus said this was why the world hated Him, John 7:7. People would rather be flattered than corrected. Ahab hated the prophet Micaiah because he never prophesied good concerning him, I Kings 22:7,8. He considered Elijah an enemy because he opposed his sins, I Kings 21:20. Paul asked the Galatians in 4:16, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" The northern kingdom would not appreciate the rebukes of Amos either.) AND THEY ABHOR HIM THAT SPEAKETH RIGHTLY. (They should respect him and listen to him, but so often they don't. There is a "rub" existing between the just and the wicked, Prov. 29:27.)

11. FORASMUCH THEREFORE AS YOUR TREADING IS UPON THE POOR, AND YE TAKE FROM HIM BURDENS OF WHEAT; YE HAVE BUILT HOUSES OF HEWN STONE. (Expensive, luxurious houses at the expense of the poor.) BUT YE SHALL NOT DWELL IN THEM; YE HAVE PLANTED PLEASANT VINEYARDS, BUT YE SHALL NOT DRINK WINE OF THEM, (God had given their forefathers houses that they had not built and vineyards that they had not planted, Josh. 24:13. Now, because of their disobedience, the tables were to be reversed,)

12. FOR I KNOW YOUR MANIFOLD TRANSGRESSIONS AND YOUR MIGHTY SINS; (What a dual description of their sinning! They had gone "hog wild" in their sins.) THEY AFFLICT THE JUST, THEY TAKE A BRIBE, AND THEY TURN ASIDE THE POOR IN THE GATE FROM THEIR RIGHT. (Amos is here laying it on the leaders, who sat in the gate of the city to render verdicts regarding civil difficulties. With them, it was not a matter of which one was right, but who gave them a bribe. A perversion of justice has always been counted so wrong by the Lord.)

13. THEREFORE THE PRUDENT SHALL KEEP SILENCE IN THAT TIME; FOR IT IS AN EVIL TIME. (There comes a time that further talk is but "casting pearls before swine", Matt. 7:6. On the other hand, the "prudent" may mean the diplomatic person who is all for righteousness when righteousness is in sway, but who says nothing against evil when evil is in sway.)

14. SEEK GOOD, AND NOT EVIL, (Goodness is something to be sought, Matt. 6:33, and to be pursued, I Tim. 6:11. So often, though, people seek the evil and neglect the good. Good and evil are exact opposites; one must determine which he is going to seek, for he cannot seek both.) THAT YE MAY LIVE; AND SO THE LORD, THE GOD OF HOSTS, SHALL BE WITH YOU, (God will not bless those dedicated to wrongdoing, I Pet. 3:12. He answers the prayers of the godly, Jas. 5:16; I Tim. 2:8; I John 3:22.) AS YE HAVE SPOKEN. (They claimed that God was with them. That was probably because of the material prosperity and peace reigning in the time of Jeroboam II.)

15. HATE THE EVIL, AND LOVE THE GOOD, (Their feelings were to be involved, too. Merely seeking the good is not sufficient—love the good; merely refraining from evil is not sufficient—hate the evil. Rom. 12:9, Paul's instruction to Christians, parallels Amos's instruction here. Heb. 1:8,9 takes particular note of the fact that Christ loved righteousness and hated iniquity; we are to follow His example.) AND ESTABLISH JUDGMENT IN THE GATE; (In the foregoing, Amos was urging the judges to hate the evil and love the good, which would result in their giving righteous decisions, upholding the righteous man and condemning the wicked.) IT MAY BE (It may not be too late.) THAT THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS WILL BE GRACIOUS UNTO THE REMNANT OF JOSEPH. (When

leaders are corrupt, the times become corrupt, calling for the wrath of God. Therefore, Amos and most of the prophets directed their messages to the leaders. If they could be corrected, there might yet be hope for the sparing of the nation.)

16. THEREFORE THE LORD, THE GOD OF HOSTS, THE LORD, SAITH THUS; WAILING SHALL BE IN ALL STREETS; AND THEY SHALL SAY IN ALL THE HIGHWAYS, ALAS! ALAS! (When God punishes the wicked, the joy of their sinning is replaced by weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth; Jas. 5:1-3; Luke 6:25; Matt. 22:13; Matt. 13:41, 42. Oh that man would think of this fact ahead of time!) AND THEY SHALL CALL THE HUSBANDMAN TO MOURNING, AND SUCH AS ARE SKILLFUL OF LAMENTATION TO WAILING. (In those times, they hired mourners to weep and wail and carry on; Jer. 9:17; Matt. 9:23; and others. They were usually women because of their greater emotional expression. The husbandmen would wall because of the pathetic condition of their vineyards.)

17. AND IN ALL VINEYARDS SHALL BE WAILING: (Places where their festivals had once prevailed,) FOR I WILL PASS THROUGH THEE, SAITH THE LORD. (When the Lord passes through in judgment, He is like a destructive storm, Nah. 1:3; like a flood, Nah. 1:8; like a burning fire, Nah. 1:10. It is a fear thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. 10:31.)

18. WOE UNTO YOU THAT DESIRE THE DAY OF THE LORD! (Many did not fear the coming day of judgment as they should—much like people today, who acknowledge a coming judgment, but who are little disturbed about it.) TO WHAT END IS IT FOR YOU? THE DAY OF THE LORD IS DARKNESS, AND NOT LIGHT. (Joel 2:2 and Zeph. 1:15 similarly describe that day. It will be a most undesirable day for those who are not on God's side.)

19. AS IF A MAN DID FLEE FROM A LION, AND A BEAR MET HIM; (Darkness is a fearful thought to many people, and the Bible speaks of the wicked being cast into outer darkness, Matt. 22:13. But, some would be unaffected by a threat of darkness. Consequently, Amos describes it in terms that all would fear—a man fleeing from a lion. Normally, he would have very little chance of escape, but to make matters worse, in his flight he meets a bear. What is he going to do now? Fortunately, he sees a door

and dashes inside with a sigh of relief. In exhaustion, he leans against the wall of the house, and see what happens to him.) OR WENT INTO THE HOUSE, AND LEANED ON THE WALL, AND A SERPENT BIT HIM, (The dirt walls of their houses were sometimes infested with serpents. In some places, the mongoose was kept as a pet to keep the dwelling free of them.)

20. SHALL NOT THE DAY OF THE LORD BE DARKNESS, AND NOT LIGHT? EVEN VERY DARK, AND NO BRIGHTNESS IN IT? (There will be nothing good about it to the condemned—no happiness, no comfort, no hope. That these words were fulfilled upon the northern history is indelibly written into the history of that people, and God's warnings of future judgment should be carefully respected and heeded.)

21. I HATE, I DESPISE YOUR FEAST DAYS, (No stronger words could be employed to show God's feelings toward the part of their religious life that was directed to Him. God was no more pleased for Israel to two-time Him than a husband is for his wife to do so. What man would be pleased to have his wife have a suitor? God is no different. When Israel turned from a complete and hearty obedience to Jehovah, every act of worship by them was abominable to Him, Prov. 28:9 and Prov. 15:8.) AND I WILL NOT SMELL IN YOUR SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES, (An acceptable sacrifice is said to have a sweet smelling savour to God, Eph. 5:2 and Gen. 8:21. The burning of incense likewise sent up a sweet aroma. God is likened to one who would come to the bowers of heaven when His people sacrificed or burned incense to smell their sweet savour, but when they were wicked, God did not like the smell; incense is said to have been offensive to His smell—"abomination" means to have a terribly offensive smell, Isa. 1:13.)

22. THOUGH YE OFFER ME BURNT OFFERINGS AND YOUR MEAT OFFERINGS, I WILL NOT ACCEPT THEM: (This corrects the prevailing idea that God will accept anything that is done in the name of religion. He will not. God had commanded these very things—burnt offerings and meat offering—but even these He rejected when the other aspects of their lives and religion were not right. God later sent a similar message to the southern kingdom by the prophet Isaiah, Isa. 1:10-15.) NEITHER WILL I REGARD THE PEACE OFFERINGS OF YOUR FAT BEASTS. (All their religion, then, really amounted to a lot of waste

since God did not regard it. They might as well have kept their fat beasts and have done as they pleased with the time that they spent in their religious acts, for their religion was unavailing with God.)

23. TAKE THOU AWAY FROM ME THE NOISE OF THY SONGS; (To God, their songs were nothing but noise. When music on the radio sounds like noise rather than music to us, we shut it off, and God said, "Take away from me the noise.") FOR I WILL NOT HEAR THE MELODY OF THY VIOLS, (The musicians worked hard to produce what to them was very beautiful music, but because of their unscriptural, unspiritual religion, God would not listen to their music. Some try to see in this passage a charge against instrumental music, but if that be true, "songs" would be outlawed too, for they were likewise condemned in this same verse. The truth is that God had commanded all of these things—burnt offerings, meat offerings, peace offerings, singing, and instrumental music—but He wanted such corrupt people to refrain from doing these things for which they were no longer qualified.)

24. BUT LET JUDGMENT RUN DOWN (The marginal reading says, "Roll down.") AS WATERS, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A MIGHTY STREAM. (To me, this is one of the most beautiful pictures in all the Bible; righteousness rolling down like a great waterfall and moving its way through the countryside like a mighty stream. This appeal of Amos is parallel to praying, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," Matt. 6:10. How delighted God would have been if the wickedness of Israel could have been turned to such righteousness!)

25. HAVE YE OFFERED UNTO ME SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS IN THE WILDERNESS FORTY YEARS, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? (They sacrificed in the wilderness, but God apparently regarded very little of their wilderness religion as acceptable. Their murmurings, disbelief, and constant disobedience rendered their religion invalid as far as He was concerned.)

26. BUT YE HAVE BORNE THAT TABERNACLE OF YOUR MOLOCH AND CHIUN YOUR IMAGES, THE STAR OF YOUR GOD, WHICH YE MADE TO YOURSELVES. (Stephen in his sermon refers to this passage, Acts 7:41-43. God disclaims any connection with such abominations; He calls them "your Moloch and Chiun," "your images",

"your god," Moloch, in other places called Molech, Malcam, and Milcom, was an Ammonite god corresponding to the Moabite god Chemosh. Acts 7:43 gives "Remphan" instead of "Chiun". It is thought to have represented some planet or star which they worshipped. At least, they were gods of their own making.)

27. THEREFORE WILL I CAUSE YOU TO GO INTO CAPTIVITY BEYOND DAMASCUS, (Assyria, who would be their captor, lay beyond Damascus, the capital of Syria.) SAITH THE LORD, WHOSE NAME IS THE GOD OF HOSTS. He would be abundantly able to accomplish this which He said was to come upon the northern kingdom.)

CHAPTER 6

1. WOE TO THEM THAT ARE AT EASE IN ZION, (The marginal reading is, "Them that are secure," which is likely correct. It is similar to the woe that Jesus pronounced in Luke 6:24,25. The mention of "Zion" indicates that momentarily Amos has sidestepped long enough to include a brief message concerning the southern kingdom, though he returns to the northern kingdom in the next statement.) AND TRUST IN THE MOUNTAIN OF SAMARIA, (The northern kingdom was doing the same thing concerning their governmental setup.) WHICH ARE NAMED CHIEF OF THE NATIONS, TO WHOM THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL CAME! (The Revised version gives, "The notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!" The leaders of Israel considered themselves chief among all nations. This thought parallels the warnings just given in this verse.)

2. PASS YE UNTO CALNEH, AND SEE; AND FROM THENCE GO YE TO HAMATH THE GREAT; THEN GO DOWN TO GATH OF THE PHILISTINES: (Calneh was a city in Babylon, Hamath a city of Syria, and Gath a city of neighboring Philistia. These cities, all idol worshippers, had either fallen or would fall before Israel and Judah. They were to take warning from them.) BE THEY BETTER THAN THESE KINGDOMS? OR THEIR BORDER GREATER THAN YOUR BORDER? (Because of their sins, they would all fall in due time—none would be better off than the others.)

3. YE THAT PUT FAR AWAY THE EVIL DAY, (These

words were addressed to the leaders, who had fallen into the prevailing thought that their nation would probably someday fall, just as all nations do in time, but they had said in their minds that that day was far off. Doom is sometimes closer than people realize.) AND CAUSE THE SEAT OF VIOLENCE TO COME NEAR; (When men think of judgment as something far off, they continue to sin, Eccl. 8:11. Nineveh repented immediately because they understood that judgment was but forty days away.)

4. THAT LIE UPON BEDS OF IVORY, (Luxury and licentiousness usually go hand in hand.) AND STRETCH THEMSELVES UPON THEIR COUCHES, AND EAT THE LAMBS OUT OF THE FLOCK, AND THE CALVES OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE STALL;

5. THAT CHANT TO THE SOUND OF THE VIOL, AND INVENT TO THEMSELVES INSTRUMENTS OF MUSICK LIKE DAVID;

6. THAT DRINK WINE IN BOWLS, AND ANOINT THEMSELVES WITH THE CHIEF OINTMENTS; (In short, they were eating, drinking, and making sinful merry while the time of judgment drew nearer and nearer. But, such fun can come to an abrupt halt when judgment suddenly falls, as it did at the feast of Belshazzar in Daniel's time.) BUT THEY ARE NOT GRIEVED FOR THE AFFLICTION OF JOSEPH. (They should have been weeping over the sinful conditions that would bring God's wrath upon the nation. But, when there is the most to grieve about, there is usually little of it done.)

7. THEREFORE NOW SHALL THEY GO, CAPTIVE WITH THE FIRST THAT GO CAPTIVE, AND THE BANQUET OF THEM THAT STRETCHED THEMSELVES SHALL BE REMOVED. (First in privilege, first in sinning, first in punishment, and punishment would put an end to their revelry.)

8. THE LORD GOD HATH SWORN (Made an oath, which cannot be changed,) BY HIMSELF, SAITH THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS, I ABHOR THE EXCELLENCY OF JACOB, AND HATE HIS PALACES; ("Abhor" and "hate" are strong words. He deplored their earthly elegance, security, and revelry.) THEREFORE WILL I DELIVER UP THE CITY WITH ALL THAT IS THEREIN. (And He did in the year 721 B.C., when the northern kingdom fell to Assyria.)

9. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, IF THERE REMAIN TEN MEN IN ONE HOUSE, THAT THEY SHALL DIE. (By famine, we suppose from what follows.)

10. AND A MAN'S UNCLE (His nearest relatives are dead, so an uncle assumes the disposition of the dead body with no pomp or ceremony.) SHALL TAKE HIM UP, AND HE THAT BURNETH HIM, (The city was shut up because of the enemy encamped without, who not only caused the starvation, but now made it impossible to take the bodies to the customary burial grounds, leaving cremation the only way to dispose of the remains.) TO BRING OUT THE BONES OUT OF THE HOUSE, AND SHALL SAY UNTO HIM THAT IS BY THE SIDES OF THE HOUSE, IS THERE YET ANY WITH THEE? (One of the few remaining persons, and he was probably too weak to assist the uncle with the dead.) AND HE SHALL SAY, NO. THEN SHALL HE SAY, HOLD THY TONGUE: FOR WE MAY NOT MAKE MENTION OF THE NAME OF THE LORD. (This punishment having come because of God's oath made because of their disobedience, it would do no good to pray to Him now to have mercy. The day of mercy for them had ended when the punishment began.)

11. FOR, BEHOLD, THE LORD COMMANDETH, AND HE WILL SMITE THE GREAT HOUSE WITH BREACHES, AND THE LITTLE HOUSE WITH CLEFTS, (Great and small alike would suffer as a result of this punishment.)

12. SHALL HORSES RUN UPON THE ROCK? (No, that is no place for a race.) WILL ONE PLOW THERE WITH OXEN? (Of course, not.) FOR YE HAVE TURNED JUDGMENT INTO GALL, AND THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS INTO HEMLOCK: (Israel's conduct had been as foolish and as inconsistent as having a horse race on a rock or trying to plow a rock with oxen. Their judicial system, which should have been a blessing to the people, had become as bitter as gall because of a perversion of justice, and the fruit of righteousness, which should have been a desirable thing, had been turned to hemlock, a plant whose juice was extremely bitter.)

13. YE WHICH REJOICE IN A THING OF NOUGHT, (Probably meaning their idolatry.) HAVE WE NOT TAKEN TO US HORNS (Great power.) BY OUR OWN STRENGTH? (They felt very independent of Jehovah, who had constituted them a nation and had given them their place in the land

of Palestine.)

14. BUT, BEHOLD, I WILL RAISE UP AGAINST YOU A NATION, (The Assyrians, according to history,) O HOUSE OF ISRAEL, (He speaks with great feeling,) SAITH THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS; AND THEY SHALL AFFLICT YOU FROM THE ENTERING IN OF HEMATH (On the north,) UNTO THE RIVER OF THE WILDERNESS. (Probably one of the streams near their southern border.)

CHAPTER 7

1. THUS HATH THE LORD GOD SHEWED UNTO ME: (With this verse, Amos begins a series of five visions running through chapters 7 and 8 and into chapter 9. The visions had to do with the fall of the northern kingdom, which has been the theme of the book.) AND, BEHOLD, HE FORMED GRASSHOPPERS (The Revised Version says "locusts" while the King James margin gives "green worms". Any of the three was a devourer of crops, which is the thought,) IN THE BEGINNING OF THE SHOOTING UP OF THE LATTER GROWTH; AND, LO, IT WAS THE LATTER GROWTH AFTER THE KING'S MOWINGS. (The king apparently took his hay out of the first cutting, and the plague would move in to devour the latter cutting. A hard winter would face the people.)

2. AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT WHEN THEY HAD MADE AN END OF EATING THE GRASS OF THE LAND, THEN I SAID, O LORD GOD, FORGIVE, I BESEECH THEE: BY WHOM SHALL JACOB ARISE? FOR HE IS SMALL. (For Amos to behold their destruction even by vision was more than he could bear. He prayed for mercy for the northern kingdom, showing that God has called such men to denounce the sins of the people who have a genuine feeling for them and who would rather see them repent than see them destroyed.)

3. THE LORD REPENTED FOR THIS; IT SHALL NOT BE, SAITH THE LORD. (It is thought that this vision prophesied of the Assyrians' first invasion of Israel when King Menahem paid the king of Assyria to withdraw from the land, II Kings 15:19,20. The nation would have been destroyed at that time had Assyria fought on, but God mercifully spared it.)

4. THUS HATH THE LORD GOD SHEWED UNTO ME: AND, BEHOLD, THE LORD GOD CALLED TO CONTEND BY FIRE, AND IT DEVOURED THE GREAT DEEP, AND DID EAT UP A PART. (Many fiery trials lay before Israel. Most of her kings following Jeroboam's reign were assassinated by aspirants for the throne, II Kings 15:8-25, and the Assyrians under Tiglath-pileser again entered the land, taking some of the land and carrying off some of the people, II Kings 15:29.)

5. THEN SAID I, O LORD GOD, CEASE, I BESEECH THEE: BY WHOM SHALL JACOB ARISE? FOR HE IS SMALL. (When Amos beheld this vision of destruction, he prayed that it might not be the final end of the northern kingdom, and it wasn't, as the following verse brings out.)

6. THE LORD REPENTED FOR THIS: THIS ALSO SHALL NOT BE. (Probably meaning, "Shall not be the end.") SAITH THE LORD GOD.

7. THUS HE SHEWED ME: AND, BEHOLD, THE LORD STOOD UPON A WALL MADE BY A PLUMBLINE, (What a builder uses to see if the wall is perpendicularly true.) WITH A PLUMBLINE IN HIS HAND. (To test the plumbness of the wall.)

8. AND THE LORD SAID UNTO ME, AMOS, WHAT SEEST THOU? AND I SAID, A PLUMBLINE. THEN SAID THE LORD, BEHOLD, I WILL SET A PLUMBLINE IN THE MIDST OF MY PEOPLE ISRAEL: (And, of course, He found them far from plumb. God was doing the same thing to the northern kingdom that Jesus did to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2 and 3.) I WILL NOT AGAIN PASS BY THEM ANY MORE: (God was tired of repenting. This time, He declared He would forgive them no more. Amos does not pray for them this time, for prayer could not change the intention of God concerning the sinfulness of the nation.)

9. AND THE HIGH PLACES OF ISAAC (The places of idolatrous worship.) SHALL BE DESOLATE, AND THE SANCTUARIES OF ISRAEL (Idolatrous sanctuaries.) SHALL BE LAID WASTE; AND I WILL RISE AGAINST THE HOUSE OF JEROBOAM (The northern kingdom which he had built to such a glorious state.) WITH THE SWORD. (The sword of the Assyrians. II Kings 17:1-23 tells of the last days of the kingdom under King Hoshea and of its final overthrow.)

10. THEN AMAZIAH THE PRIEST OF BETHEL (An idolatrous priest,) SENT TO JEROBOAM KING OF ISRAEL, (If the king could be enlisted against Amos, he would soon be gotten rid of.) SAYING, AMOS HATH CONSPIRED AGAINST THEE (Amos's mention of Jeroboam's house in verse 9 gave Amaziah an opportunity to run to the king about his prophesying.) IN THE MIDST OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL: THE LAND IS NOT ABLE TO BEAR ALL HIS WORDS. (He was preaching a message they did not like and did not propose to see continued.)

11. FOR THUS AMOS SAITH, JEROBOAM SHALL DIE BY THE SWORD, (Not exactly what Amos said in verse 9, but about as near as you can expect an angry enemy to report it.) AND ISRAEL SHALL SURELY BE LED AWAY CAPTIVE OUT OF THEIR OWN LAND. (We are not told whether the king became alarmed at Amos or not. Probably he didn't. Amaziah apparently took it upon himself to banish Amos according to the next verses.)

12. ALSO AMAZIAH SAID UNTO AMOS, O THOU SEER, GO, FLEE THEE AWAY INTO THE LAND OF JUDAH, AND THERE EAT BREAD, AND PROPHECY THERE:

13. BUT PROPHECY NOT AGAIN ANY MORE AT BETHEL: FOR IT IS THE KING'S CHAPEL, AND IT IS THE KING'S COURT. (By telling him to "flee", he may have been trying to scare him, but God's preachers have never "scared" very easily. "Get back to Judah" where Jeroboam cannot get you. "Prophecy there" where they believe as you do, but don't preach any more here. Many preachers have been told similarly when trying to straighten out congregations. "Why don't you preach where they believe in immersion? Leave us alone." "Why don't you preach where they believe in sending their money direct. We have always sent our money to our missionary headquarters." "Why don't you preach where people are narrow minded in their beliefs. We want to have fellowship with all the churches." And so the tendency to apostatize and to refuse reformatory measures is the same today as it was 800 years before Christ.)

14. THEN ANSWERED AMOS, AND SAID TO AMAZIAH, I WAS NO PROPHET, (This had not been his work.) NEITHER WAS I A PROPHET'S SON; (A younger man coming up who would someday be a prophet.) BUT I WAS AN HERDMAN, AND A GATHERER OF SYCAMORE FRUIT:

(A rural man altogether with no connections with the prophetic office before.)

15. AND THE LORD TOOK ME AS I FOLLOWED THE FLOCK, AND THE LORD SAID UNTO ME, GO, PROPHECY (Many of God's special servants have come from lowly, rural beginnings.) UNTO MY PEOPLE ISRAEL. (Amos carefully notes to Amaziah that God called the northern kingdom "my people Israel". Amos still wished for their spiritual welfare whom God designated as His people. It was not with glee that he bore his message of doom to the people of the north.)

16. NOW THEREFORE HEAR THOU THE WORD OF THE LORD: (This is not what Amos says, but what God says.) THOU SAYEST, PROPHECY NOT AGAINST ISRAEL, AND DROP NOT THY WORD AGAINST THE HOUSE OF ISAAC.

17. THEREFORE THUS SAITH THE LORD; THY WIFE SHALL BE AN HARLOT IN THE CITY, (Amos here announces God's personal judgment upon Amaziah and his family because of his attempt to resist the message of Amos. Elisha did the same to the official who refused his prophecy, II Kings 7:1,2. Jeremiah did the same to Jekolaiim, Jer. 36:21-32.) AND THY SONS AND THY DAUGHTERS SHALL FALL BY THE SWORD, AND THY LAND SHALL BE DIVIDED BY LINE; AND THOU SHALT DIE IN A POLLUTED LAND: (And then he went on to reaffirm what he had previously said concerning Israel.) AND ISRAEL SHALL SURELY GO INTO CAPTIVITY FORTH OF HIS LAND.

CHAPTER 8

1. THUS HATH THE LORD GOD SHEWED UNTO ME: (The visions continue after the interruption caused by Amaziah.) AND BEHOLD A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT. (Harvest time.)

2. AND HE SAID, AMOS, WHAT SEEST THOU? AND I SAID, A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT. THEN SAID THE LORD UNTO ME, THE END IS COME UPON MY PEOPLE OF ISRAEL; (Judgment is often pictured as harvest time in the Bible: Matt. 3:12; Rev. 14:14-20; and others.) I WILL NOT AGAIN PASS BY THEM ANY

MORE. (He would be merciful to them no more. When God withdraws His mercy, eternal night has set in upon that soul or upon that nation. The result would be that mentioned in the next verse.)

3. AND THE SONGS OF THE TEMPLE SHALL BE HOWLINGS IN THAT DAY, SAITH THE LORD GOD: (Their joy would be turned to sorrow, their happy occasions to howlings.) THERE SHALL BE MANY DEAD BODIES IN EVERY PLACE; THEY SHALL CAST THEM FORTH WITH SILENCE. (Many would die of starvation in the siege, and many would die in the battle.)

4. HEAR THIS, O YE THAT SWALLOW UP THE NEEDY, EVEN TO MAKE THE POOR OF THE LAND TO FAIL, (The rich who had gotten rich by making the poor people poorer.)

5. SAYING, WHEN WILL THE NEW MOON (A feast that came every twenty-eight days.) BE GONE, THAT WE MAY SELL CORN? AND THE SABBATH, THAT WE MAY SET FORTH WHEAT, (They were forbidden to engage in their merchandising at such stated times. They refrained outwardly from selling them, but they did not refrain willingly. They are like those who cease their work on Sunday today to go to church, but who think about their business while in church instead of thinking on the purpose for which they have attended.) MAKING THE EPHAH (One of their measures, about a bushel.) SMALL, AND THE SHEKEL (One of their coins.) GREAT, AND FALSIFYING THE BALANCES (Scales.) BY DECEIT? (Crookedness in business—upping the price, shorting the measure, and using tricky scales.)

6. THAT WE MAY BUY THE POOR FOR SILVER, AND THE NEEDY FOR A PAIR OF SHOES; YEA, AND SELL THE REFUSE OF THE WHEAT? (The poor of the wheat that should not be sold, but which the poor were forced to buy and use because of their circumstances.)

7. THE LORD HATH SWORN BY THE EXCELLENCY OF JACOB, (Thought in this case to refer to God Himself.) SURELY I WILL NEVER FORGET ANY OF THEIR WORKS, (In judgment, God would not overlook a single sin which they had committed.)

8. SHALL NOT THE LAND TREMBLE FOR THIS, AND

EVERY ONE MOURN THAT DWELLETH THEREIN? AND IT SHALL RISE UP WHOLLY AS A FLOOD; (They would be helpless before it.) AND IT SHALL BE CAST OUT AS BY THE FLOOD OF EGYPT, (Possibly referring to the inundations of the Nile.)

9. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THAT DAY, SAITH THE LORD GOD, THAT I WILL CAUSE THE SUN TO GO DOWN AT NOON, AND I WILL DARKEN THE EARTH IN THE CLEAR DAY; (In prophecy, God often uses the darkening of the earth and the heavenly bodies' ceasing to shine to portray the coming gloominess and sorrow to overtake them.)

10. AND I WILL TURN YOUR FEASTS (Happy occasions,) INTO MOURNING, AND ALL YOUR SONGS (Expressing joy.) INTO LAMENTATION; (Much as Jesus taught in Luke 6:25.) AND I WILL BRING UP SACKCLOTH UPON ALL LOINS, (The ancients, in times of great grief, laid aside their customary clothes and made themselves coverings made out of their cheap cloth of which they customarily made sacks. This practice is alluded to many times throughout the Bible.) AND BALDNESS UPON EVERY HEAD; (They also shaved their heads during lamentation.) AND I WILL MAKE IT AS THE MOURNING OF AN ONLY SON, (One of the strongest lamentations known to man, Especially was this true among the Jews, who thought much of one's name being blotted out with no son to perpetuate it.) AND THE END THEREOF AS A BITTER DAY.

11. BEHOLD, THE DAYS COME, SAITH THE LORD GOD, THAT I WILL SEND A FAMINE IN THE LAND, (Nothing could have been worse news to the carnally minded nation than that God was about to send a famine. To realize that one's nation was about to be plunged into a devastating famine would bring a fear of the future.) NOT A FAMINE OF BREAD, NOR A THIRST FOR WATER, BUT THE HEARING THE WORDS OF THE LORD: (That would not be so bad, the people probably thought. The only famine that unspiritual people can conceive as being something to worry about would be a famine of food and drink. This predicted famine, however, was to be a famine of the Word of God. At that time, they had ample access to it, but often the thing that we have and neglect is in time taken from us, and it is then that we would give anything to have it back. That would be the case with the northern kingdom after it went into Assyrian captivity. They would be taken from

their land; their nation would be forever disorganized; they would be slaves of the Assyrians and to whatever other nations some of them would be sold; never again would they meet as a people for their religious ceremonies; their false prophets would be dead, and even if they were alive, they would not listen to them because of the ruin they had brought upon them; and to top matters off, God was through with the nation—He had had enough, they had refused the correction of His prophets, and it was after long forbearing that He had cast them off forever.)

12. AND THEY SHALL WANDER FROM SEA TO SEA, AND FROM THE NORTH EVEN TO THE EAST, THEY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO TO SEEK THE WORD OF THE LORD, AND SHALL NOT FIND IT.

13. IN THAT DAY SHALL THE FAIR VIRGINS AND YOUNG MEN FAINT FOR THIRST. (Oh for the good days of the past to be back when they had access to God's Word! But, when God abandons people, they are abandoned, and they feel it! The "thirst" of the virgins and young men would be for the Word of the Lord.)

14. THEY THAT SWEAR BY THE SIN OF SAMARIA, AND SAY, THY GOD, O DAN, LIVETH; AND THE MANNER OF BEERSHEBA LIVETH: EVEN THEY SHALL FALL, AND NEVER RISE UP AGAIN. (Their fall would be because of their idolatry, three places that were centers of it being pointed out. To "swear" by something meant that they claimed it as their god. But, while they were swearing by a Dan that was supposed to continue indefinitely and the same with Beersheba, Amos was here announcing that the whole kingdom, including those idol centers, was going to fall, and he said, "They shall never rise up again," and they have not.)

CHAPTER 9

1. I SAW THE LORD STANDING UPON THE ALTAR: (The American Standard Version says, "Beside the altar," though it gives "upon the altar" as a marginal note.) AND HE SAID, SMITE THE LINTEL OF THE DOOR, THAT THE POSTS MAY SHAKE; AND CUT THEM IN THE HEAD, ALL OF THEM; AND I WILL SLAY THE LAST OF THEM WITH THE SWORD; HE THAT FLEETH OF THEM SHALL NOT FLEE AWAY, AND HE THAT ESCAPETH

OF THEM SHALL NOT BE DELIVERED. (This is the last of Amos's five visions, and it pictures the Lord taking vengeance upon the idolatry, the leaders, and the idol-worshippers of the northern kingdom. The following verses, as well as this verse, show how futile will any attempt at escape be.)

2. THOUGH THEY DIG INTO HELL, (The American Standard Version says, "Sheol," the Hebrew correspondent of "Hades" in Greek, It does not refer to a state in eternity like our word "Hell", which is a translation of the Greek "Gehenna". Nations that forget God will be turned into "Sheol", Psa. 9:17 R.V.) THENCE SHALL MINE HAND TAKE THEM: THOUGH THEY CLIMB UP TO HEAVEN, THENCE WILL I BRING THEM DOWN:

3. AND THOUGH THEY HIDE THEMSELVES IN THE TOP OF CARMEL, I WILL SEARCH AND TAKE THEM OUT THENCE; AND THOUGH THEY BE HID FROM MY SIGHT IN THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA, THENCE WILL I COMMAND THE SERPENT, AND HE SHALL BITE THEM:

4. AND THOUGH THEY GO INTO CAPTIVITY BEFORE THEIR ENEMIES, THENCE WILL I COMMAND THE SWORD, AND IT SHALL SLAY THEM: (All of this reminds one of Psa. 139:7-12 and of Jonah's futile attempt to flee from the presence of God, Jonah 1:3,4,7,15,17.) AND I WILL SET MINE EYES UPON THEM FOR EVIL, AND NOT FOR GOOD. (That divine power that would have blessed them must now curse them because of their sins.)

5. AND THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS IS HE THAT TOUCHETH THE LAND, AND IT SHALL MELT, AND ALL THAT DWELL THEREIN SHALL MOURN: AND IT SHALL RISE UP WHOLLY LIKE A FLOOD; AND SHALL BE DROWNED, AS BY THE FLOOD OF EGYPT. (At God's command, all nature obeys. See note on Amos 8:8 for an explanation of similar language.)

6. IT IS HE THAT BUILDETH HIS STORIES IN THE HEAVEN, AND HATH FOUNDED HIS TROOP IN THE EARTH; (The American Standard reads, "His chambers in the heavens, and hath founded his vault upon the earth.") HE THAT CALLETH FOR THE WATERS OF THE SEA, AND POURETH THEM OUT UPON THE FACE OF THE EARTH: (The foregoing is an exaltation of God in nature

and what He is able to do.) THE LORD IS HIS NAME.

7. ARE YE NOT AS CHILDREN OF THE ETHIOPIANS UNTO ME, O CHILDREN OF ISRAEL? SAITH THE LORD. (Because of their idolatry, God was not claiming them any more than He was the Ethiopians.) HAVE NOT I BROUGHT UP ISRAEL OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT? AND THE PHILISTINES FROM CAPHTOR, AND THE SYRIANS FROM KIR? (Their actions meant that their deliverance from Egyptian bondage now meant no more to God than the deliverance of one nation from the hands of another. They had lost their election,)

8. BEHOLD THE EYES OF THE LORD GOD ARE UPON THE SINFUL KINGDOM, AND I WILL DESTROY IT FROM OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH; SAVING THAT I WILL NOT UTTERLY DESTROY THE HOUSE OF JACOB, SAITH THE LORD. (The northern kingdom was destroyed, but the southern kingdom still stood, and given individuals of the northern kingdom survived,)

9. FOR, LO, I WILL COMMAND, AND I WILL SIFT THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AMONG ALL NATIONS, LIKE AS CORN IS SIFTED IN A SIEVE, YET SHALL NOT THE LEAST GRAIN FALL UPON THE EARTH.

10. ALL THE SINNERS OF MY PEOPLE SHALL DIE BY THE SWORD, WHICH SAY, THE EVIL SHALL NOT OVERTAKE NOR PREVENT ("Meet," American Standard US. (In this great sifting, every evil Israelite would get what was coming to him, and every good Israelite would be spared. The Lord will judge His people, Heb. 10:30. His vengeance will be upon the evildoers, Heb. 10:30. He knoweth them that are His, II Tim. 2:19. The wheat will be gathered into His garner, but the chaff will be burned, Matt. 3:12. The good will be gathered into vessels, but the bad will be cast away, Matt. 13:48-50,)

11. IN THAT DAY WILL I RAISE UP THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID THAT IS FALLEN, AND CLOSE UP THE BREACHES (Rents.) THEREOF; (God's people were united under David, but the decree that the kingdom would be divided came in the reign of his son Solomon, I Kings 11: 11-13. God is here forecasting a coming together of all of His people.) AND I WILL RAISE UP HIS RUINS, AND I WILL BUILD IT AS IN THE DAYS OF OLD:

12. THAT THEY MAY POSSESS THE REMNANT OF EDOM, AND OF ALL THE HEATHEN, (The kingdom was at a peak in David's day, and his conquering exploits are recalled in this passage. Were we given no clue as to how and when these predictions would come true, we would naturally suppose them to have literal, material fulfillments; that is, the physical kingdom of Israel would be restored, and it would again reach forth in a strong military way. But, we are not left unguided in our understanding of this prediction. At the Jerusalem circumcision council in the days of the apostles, they were discussing the standing of the Gentiles who were embracing Christianity. After Peter told about God's sending him to the Gentile Cornelius, and after Paul related God's dealings with the Gentiles through him and Barnabas, the apostle James arose and commented upon Gentile evangelism in words that involved these words from Amos, "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets: as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things," Acts 15:14-17. The conquest of the Edomites and other nations predicted by Amos, then, was evangelistic conquest of the surrounding Gentiles. The New Testament does apply military language to the Christian: the graces are referred to as "armor", Eph. 6:13; the Scriptures are the "sword of the Spirit", Eph. 6:17; and they are commanded to war a good warfare, I Tim. 1:18. We, therefore, understand that this closing section of Amos has a spiritual rather than a material fulfillment.) WHICH ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, SAITH THE LORD THAT DOETH THIS.

13. BEHOLD, THE DAYS COME, SAITH THE LORD, THAT THE PLOWMAN SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER, AND THE TREADER OF GRAPES HIM THAT SOWETH SEED; (Before the reaper can get the bumper crop reaped, it will be time to plow for the next crop, etc. Great spiritual times are prophesied under the figure of material prosperity.) AND THE MOUNTAINS SHALL DROP SWEET WINE, AND ALL THE HILLS SHALL MELT. (Great flights of oratory often characterized the prophets when describing the glories of the Messianic Age. Joel 3:18 uses similar language concerning the same subject.)

14. AND I WILL BRING AGAIN THE CAPTIVITY OF MY PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, AND THEY SHALL BUILD THE WASTE CITIES, AND INHABIT THEM; AND THEY SHALL PLANT VINEYARDS, AND DRINK THE WINE THEREOF; THEY SHALL ALSO MAKE GARDENS, AND EAT THE FRUIT OF THEM.

15. AND I WILL PLANT THEM UPON THEIR LAND, AND THEY SHALL NO MORE BE PULLED UP OUT OF THEIR LAND WHICH I HAVE GIVEN THEM, SAITH THE LORD THY GOD. (The Jews of Jesus' day interpreted these Old Testament predictions in a material sense. This mistaken notion caused them to reject Jesus as their king, His parables about the kingdom did not make sense to them, and they didn't accept the kingdom of God when it came. Jesus declared that His kingdom was not of this world, and it is not. It is not an earthly type of kingdom at all such as they were looking for. Those today who reject the spiritual fulfillment of these predictions are making the same mistake made by the Jews of Jesus' day.)

Commentary Studies *in Obadiah*

1. THE VISION OF OBADIAH. (The book opens announcing the author. There are a number of Obadiahs in the Bible, but it cannot be determined which one this man was or whether he was any of the others mentioned. No identity of parentage, home, or background is given in the book to help us. The problem of when he prophesied will be discussed in connection with verse 17.) THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD CONCERNING EDOM; (Normally God sent His prophets with a message for His people; Obadiah's message concerns the people of Edom, who lived south of Judah and were descendants of Edom, Jacob's twin brother better known by the name of Esau.) WE HAVE HEARD A RUMOUR ("Tidings"—Revised Version,) FROM THE LORD, AND AN AMBASSADOR IS SENT AMONG THE HEATHEN, (From the Lord signifying His workings among the heathen nations to bring about His purpose against Edom.) ARISE YE, AND LET US RISE UP AGAINST HER IN BATTLE. (God was putting it into the hearts of the heathen to battle against Edom. They probably had one motive in attacking Edom; God had another.)

2. BEHOLD, I HAVE MADE THEE SMALL AMONG THE HEATHEN; (Belittled, insignificant, ready to be attacked.) THOU ART GREATLY DESPISED. (But, they were small in their own eyes. See following verses.)

3. THE PRIDE OF THINE HEART HATH DECEIVED THEE, THOU THAT DWELLEST IN THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK, WHOSE HABITATION IS HIGH; (One writer has observed that all the southern part of Palestine was full of caverns hewn out of the rocks in which people lived. Some of the most amazing ruins of the old world are those found in Petra, the capital city of Edom. In order to enter the city, one had to climb, climb, climb. The city itself was surrounded by steep faces of mountain-like walls, and the entrance into the city was a narrow crack in one of the mountains. In that day of hand-to-hand combat, this seemed impregnable to its inhabitants. This accounted for their pride here referred to.) THAT SAITH IN HIS HEART, WHO SHALL BRING ME DOWN TO THE GROUND? (Edom

did not expect to fall, Its trust was in its military fortifications.)

4. THOUGH THOU EXALT THYSELF AS THE EAGLE, (The bird that symbolizes freedom because of its place of abode.) AND THOUGH THOU SET THY NEST AMONG THE STARS, (Like the eagle.) THENCE (From there.) WILL I BRING THEE DOWN, SAITH THE LORD. (In the preceding verse, Edom complacently said, "Who shall bring me down?" This verse gives the answer, "I will bring thee down, saith the Lord." Those who are proud encounter the displeasure of God: I Pet. 5:5; Prov. 6:16, 17. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled by God: Luke 18:14; Matt. 23:12. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall: Prov. 16:18. When we think that we stand, we are warned to be careful lest we fall: I Cor. 10:12. Peter fell through over confidence: Matt. 26:31-35,40,41,69-75.)

5. IF THIEVES CAME TO THEE, IF ROBBERS BY NIGHT, (HOW ART THOU CUT OFF!) WOULD THEY NOT HAVE STOLEN TILL THEY HAD ENOUGH? IF GRAPEGATHERERS CAME TO THEE, WOULD THEY NOT LEAVE SOME GRAPES?

6. HOW ARE THE THINGS OF ESAU SEARCHED OUT! HOW ARE HIS HIDDEN THINGS SOUGHT UP! (One of the best comments upon this passage possible to print is a parallel passage in Jer. 49:9,10: "If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not." In other words, by the time that God had finished His work upon Esau, there would be nothing left. This is strongly suggested in verse 5's parenthetic statement, "How art thou cut off!")

7. ALL THE MEN OF THY CONFEDERACY HAVE BROUGHT THEE EVEN TO THE BORDER: THE MEN THAT WERE AT PEACE WITH THEE HAVE DECEIVED THEE, AND PREVAILED AGAINST THEE; THEY THAT EAT THY BREAD HAVE LAID A WOUND UNDER THEE: (Alliances are usually entered into for selfish reasons and broken for selfish reasons. When a ship is going to go down, everybody abandons it, and when the doom of

Edom was apparent, it became an abandoned nation by the other nations.) THERE IS NONE UNDERSTANDING IN HIM.

8. SHALL I NOT IN THAT DAY, SAITH THE LORD, EVEN DESTROY THE WISE MEN OUT OF EDMOM, AND UNDERSTANDING OUT OF THE MOUNT OF ESAU? (Mt. Seir. In addition to Edom's confederates failing them, their military leaders would be at an utter loss to know what to do in the siege.)

9. AND THY MIGHTY MEN, O TEMAN, (The southern district of Edom,) SHALL BE DISMAYED, TO THE END THAT EVERY ONE OF THE MOUNT OF ESAU MAY BE CUT OFF BY SLAUGHTER.

10. FOR THY VIOLENCE AGAINST THY BROTHER JACOB SHAME SHALL COVER THEE, AND THOU SHALT BE CUT OFF FOR EVER. (Now Obadiah begins to point out why God was going to destroy Edom: "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob." God was dealing with nations in the book, but He speaks in the language of the individuals behind the nations. The struggle between Jacob and Esau began at birth, Gen. 25:26, and demonstrated itself throughout their lifetimes. The same spirit possessed their descendants, for Edom refused Israel passage through their land when Israel was traveling from Egypt to Canaan, Num. 20:14-21. Ezekiel's prophecy against Edom was because of the Edomites' hostility toward Judah, Eze. 25: 12-14. The same was true of Amos's condemnation of Edom, Amos 1:11.)

11. IN THE DAY THAT THOU STOODST ON THE OTHER SIDE, (Like the priest and the Levite in the parable,) IN THE DAY THAT STRANGERS CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE HIS FORCES, (One finds out who his true friends are in his days of calamity.) AND FOREIGNERS ENTERED INTO HIS GATES, AND CAST LOTS UPON JERUSALEM, EVEN THOU WAST AS ONE OF THEM, (Edom was numbered with the enemies of Israel in the time of calamity being discussed.)

12. BUT THOU SHOULDEST NOT HAVE LOOKED ON THE DAY OF THY BROTHER IN THE DAY THAT HE BECAME A STRANGER; NEITHER SHOULDEST THOU HAVE REJOICED OVER THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH IN THE DAY OF THEIR DESTRUCTION; NEITHER SHOULDEST THOU

HAVE SPOKEN PROUDLY IN THE DAY OF DISTRESS. (Edom's jealousy through the years had caused them to rejoice in the downfall of Israel and Judah. The calamities befalling Jacob had brought not only an inward satisfaction, but an outward expression of their own proud feelings.)

13. THOU SHOULDEST NOT HAVE ENTERED INTO THE GATE OF MY PEOPLE IN THE DAY OF THEIR CALAMITY, YEA, THOU SHOULDEST NOT HAVE LOOKED ON THEIR AFFLICTION IN THE DAY OF THEIR CALAMITY, NOR HAVE LAID HANDS ON THEIR SUBSTANCE IN THE DAY OF THEIR CALAMITY; (They had even taken advantage of Jacob's calamity by helping pillage and spoil.)

14. NEITHER SHOULDEST THOU HAVE STOOD IN THE CROSSWAY, TO CUT OFF THOSE OF HIS THAT DID ESCAPE; NEITHER SHOULDEST THOU HAVE DELIVERED UP THOSE OF HIS THAT DID REMAIN IN THE DAY OF DISTRESS. (Even those of Jacob that had been able to escape the enemy, Edom had intercepted and turned them over to those from whom they had escaped. They lost no opportunity to do God's people harm. That is the way hate is.)

15. FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD IS NEAR UPON ALL THE HEATHEN; (Not only upon Edom, but also upon the neighbor nations that had opposed God's people. When those nations fell, they probably thought it was merely that military might had overpowered their strength, but it was because of the decree of God that they were brought down to the dust.) AS THOU HAST DONE, IT SHALL BE DONE UNTO THEE; THY REWARD SHALL RETURN UPON THINE OWN HEAD. (That God requites or pays back is taught and seen throughout the Bible. He makes men reap what they have sown. Edom would be the same. In no way is the fairness of God seen more than in His treating people as we have treated others. As they had seen Judah in great affliction and had rejoiced over it, the day was coming when calamity would also crush them.)

16. FOR AS YE HAVE DRUNK UPON MY HOLY MOUNTAIN, (In gaiety and in triumph,) SO SHALL ALL THE HEATHEN DRINK CONTINUALLY. (In punishment. The Lord's anger is often pictured as being in a cup of which He makes the punished drink, Rev. 14:10; Jer. 25:15,16; Isa. 51:17. What a terrible drink that is! None would want to drink, but they must drink of that cup even when they do

not want to, Jer. 25:27,28,) YEA, THEY SHALL DRINK, AND THEY SHALL SWALLOW DOWN, AND THEY SHALL BE AS THOUGH THEY HAD NOT BEEN. (Utter destruction awaited not only Edom, but all the surrounding nations.)

17. BUT UPON MOUNT ZION (In Jerusalem of the Israelites—not upon Mt. Seir of the Edomites.) SHALL BE DELIVERANCE. (The question of when the book of Obadiah was written hinges much upon this passage. The contents of the book favor its being written after the fall of Jerusalem, for it would seem that Edom was rejoicing over that fall. That would argue for a date in the 500's. But, the book of Joel is usually dated in the 800's, and in chapter 2, verse 32 of Joel, it says, "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said," which appears to be a quotation from this verse in Obadiah. If it is, then Obadiah's date would have to be earlier than Joel's. Joel, however, may have been quoting a well known oral prophecy extant among the Jews of his day to the effect that "in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance".) AND THERE SHALL BE HOLINESS; (Numerous passages in the prophets and elsewhere predict the holiness of Jerusalem, Joel 3:17; Nah. 1:15; Rev. 21:27. Beyond a doubt, the ultimate fulfillment of this promise is in the heavenly Jerusalem rather than in the earthly Jerusalem) AND THE HOUSE OF JACOB SHALL POSSESS THEIR POSSESSIONS. (At first one might suppose that this refers to the fact that what was left of the Edomites became swallowed up in Judah, which did happen, but by what follows, one cannot so restrict it.)

18. AND THE HOUSE OF JACOB SHALL BE A FIRE, AND THE HOUSE OF JOSEPH A FLAME, AND THE HOUSE OF ESAU FOR STUBBLE, AND THEY SHALL KINDLE IN THEM, AND DEVOUR THEM; AND THERE SHALL NOT BE ANY REMAINING OF THE HOUSE OF ESAU; FOR THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT. (God's having said it would be just reason for understanding that it would come to pass. There is no house of Esau today. It passed out of existence long ago, and while one may wander about in the remains of its former abode, he will not find the Edomites themselves. They are gone just as God said they would be.)

19. AND THEY OF THE SOUTH SHALL POSSESS THE MOUNT OF ESAU; (With this statement, the prophet envisioned Jerusalem as a center of conquest with the people

of God of the south conquering the Edomites who lived to the south,) AND THEY OF THE PLAIN THE PHILISTINES; (Next the people of God who lived toward the Maritime Plain would conquer the Philistines who lived near them,) AND THEY SHALL POSSESS THE FIELDS OF EPHRAIM, AND THE FIELDS OF SAMARIA; (Apparently the people of God of the north would be the ones who would conquer Ephraim where Samaria was the capital city.) AND BEN-JAMIN SHALL POSSESS GILEAD. (Gilead lay east of the Jordan, thus completing the area to be conquered; the south, the west, the north, and now the east.)

20. AND THE CAPTIVITY OF THIS HOST OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL POSSESS THAT OF THE CANAANITES, EVEN UNTO ZAREPHATH; (Even those afar off.) AND THE CAPTIVITY OF JERUSALEM, WHICH IS IN SEPHARAD, (Sepharad is as yet unidentified,) SHALL POSSESS THE CITIES OF THE SOUTH. (We are constrained to believe that these conquests were to be of an evangelistic nature rather than a military because of two considerations; (1) from the time that God returned Judah to its land until He destroyed the nation in 70 A.D., they were never such a military power as described here; and (2) these prophecies of conquest are said in Acts 15:14-17 to be fulfilled in the evangelism by the church. True Acts 15 is quoting a prophecy from Amos 9:11,12, but it says the "prophets"—plural, not just Amos—predicted such "victories".)

21. AND SAVIOURS (Men whom God would use.) SHALL COME UP ON MOUNT ZION (So often referred to as God's headquarters.) TO JUDGE THE MOUNT OF ESAU; (The struggle between Jacob and Esau would end in complete victory for Jacob.) AND THE KINGDOM SHALL BE THE LORD'S. (Under the gospel, when the Sword of the Spirit was to be used to bring all nations into subjection to God, we have a realization of this prophecy. Psa. 22:27,28 likewise predicted, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations." Of the kingdom that Daniel said God would set up, he predicted, "It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever," Dan. 2:44. Thus, the book of Obadiah closes with a clear ringing bell proclaiming God's victory.)

Commentary Studies *in Jonah*

CHAPTER 1

1. NOW THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO JONAH THE SON OF AMITTAL, SAYING, (More people are familiar with the message of Jonah than of any other prophetic book of the Old Testament, due to its being presented in narrative form, and yet this four-chapter book presents some questions that even the greatest student is not altogether sure about. His father's name was Amittai, and according to II Kings 14:25, God had used him to announce other predictions at other times, being called in that passage the "servant" of God and giving the fulfillment of one of his predictions. The II Kings passage also states that he was from Gathhepher, which was in the land allotted to Zebulun, a village about three miles northeast of Nazareth. Though he was from what was in Jesus' time known as the land of Galilee, and his book was a part of the Hebrew Bible, due to God's broad and generous spirit that extended mercy to the repenting Gentiles of Assyria demonstrated in the book of Jonah, it was easy for the chief priests and Pharisees of Jesus' day to overlook Jonah in their statement to Nicodemus in John 7:52, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.")

2. ARISE, (A commandment that God employed to show that He meant for His order to be obeyed immediately,) GO TO NINEVEH, (The capital city of ancient Assyria, whose founding is mentioned in Gen. 10:11.) THAT GREAT CITY, (It was the mistress city of the world in Jonah's day. Some students contend that it was more elaborately and gigantically built than even the city of Babylon. It was a city greatly feared in Jonah's day because of the military might of its cruel armies. For years, critics attacked the Bible's record of such a city that was totally unknown until it was unearthed by archaeologists,) AND CRY AGAINST IT; (One small prophet against such a large, ancient, wicked city seemed like an unmatched duel, but God sends His servants out upon major tasks, assuring them of His presence with them. None, however,

have gone who have been afraid to die.) FOR THEIR WICKEDNESS IS COME UP BEFORE ME. (It would be extremely difficult to know what all this wickedness consisted of, but probably of immorality and violence that would come from their devotion to idolatry and their proud military standing. Whatever it was, Jonah was to go and cry against the city for God. God's preachers have always been those who have cried out against sinning. Whatever men do is said "to come up" before God, whether it be the prayers and alms of a sincere Cornelius, Acts 10:5, or the wicked deeds of a city like Nineveh.)

3. BUT JONAH ROSE UP TO FLEE UNTO TARSHISH FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, AND WENT DOWN TO JOPPA; AND HE FOUND A SHIP GOING TO TARSHISH: SO HE PAID THE FARE THEREOF, AND WENT DOWN INTO IT, TO GO WITH THEM UNTO TARSHISH FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD. (The opening word "but" suggests the contrast between what God told him to do and what he actually did. Jonah "rose up" all right, but not to go eastward to Nineveh but westward to Tarshish, a well known ancient seaport presumably Tarsessus in far away Spain. He went by land to Joppa, where he boarded the ship for his supposed trip across the Mediterranean. With the Hebrews' conception of an omnipresent God, it is difficult to know in what sense Jonah was endeavoring to flee from His presence. The reason for his disobedience will be discussed when we get to chapter 4:2. The following outline of the material in the book of Jonah has been suggested: running from God—chapter 1; running to God—chapter 2; running with God—chapter 3; and running ahead of God—chapter 4. In Jonah's disobedience in this chapter, we can see him running from God.)

4. BUT THE LORD SENT OUT A GREAT WIND INTO THE SEA, (This book records many acts of special dealings by God: this great wind, 1:4; the lot falling upon Jonah, 1:7; the sea's ceasing to rage when Jonah was cast overboard, 1:15; the fish that swallowed him, 1:16; the preservation of his life for the several days within the animal, 1:16; the fish's vomiting out Jonah, 2:10; the gourd that grew up over his head, 4:6; the worm that killed the gourd vine, 4:7; and the vehement east wind that wearied him, 4:8.) AND THERE WAS A MIGHTY TEMPEST IN THE SEA, (The worst of storms occur on large bodies of water, where men feel the most helpless.) SO THAT THE

SHIP WAS LIKE TO BE BROKEN. (The wooden vessels of those days were no match for the fury of the aroused elements, especially when God was after His man on board.)

5. THEN THE MARINERS WERE AFRAID, (Even the hardness and manliness that would characterize those engaged in this business did not exempt them from a healthy fear before such a storm.) AND CRIED EVERY MAN UNTO HIS GOD, (Even people who do not normally pray will usually do so in such extremities. The language shows them to have been heathen men who worshipped various gods.) AND CAST FORTH THE WARES THAT WERE IN THE SHIP INTO THE SEA, TO LIGHTEN IT OF THEM. (Besides praying, they did everything within their knowledge and power to secure safety to themselves. This was the same thing done when the ship Paul was on was in dire circumstances, Acts 27:18,38. It was deemed better to lose the cargo and save themselves than to try to keep the cargo on board and both it and them perish.) BUT JONAH WAS GONE DOWN INTO THE SIDES OF THE SHIP; AND HE LAY, AND WAS FAST ASLEEP. (He for whose sake the storm was sent was the only one who slept, being unaware of the danger they were all in. The soundness of his sleep can probably be accounted for by the fact that the mental anguish that he had been under in fleeing from God had ultimately cast him into the deepest of sleep through physical exhaustion. Asleep in spite of a guilty conscience! God also may have wanted him to sleep and be awakened when the storm was at its highest.)

6. SO THE SHIPMASTER CAME TO HIM, AND SAID UNTO HIM, WHAT MEANEST THOU, O SLEEPER? ARISE, CALL UPON THY GOD, IF SO BE THAT GOD WILL THINK UPON US, THAT WE PERISH NOT. (The shipmaster could not understand how Jonah could sleep in such a time as this when he should have been up praying for deliverance. It is ironical that the only man on board who was a worshipper of the true God was the only one not praying, and all who were praying were doing so to gods that did not actually exist. Sometimes the adherents to error rebuke with their zeal the slovenness and inactivity of those who know the truth. Not to have a god upon whom one called was unthinkable in those days, atheism not being common either then or now.)

7. AND THEY SAID EVERY ONE TO HIS FELLOW,

COME, AND LET US CAST LOTS, THAT WE MAY KNOW FOR WHOSE CAUSE THIS EVIL IS UPON US. (Their superstitions caused them to suppose that every misfortune was due to somebody's sin. This time, their superstition was right, for Jonah was aboard. The practice of casting lots to determine the mind of the Higher Power is a very ancient practice.) SO THEY CAST LOTS, AND THE LOT FELL UPON JONAH. (God directed the lot in this instance so that it would fall upon the man He was after.)

8. THEN SAID THEY UNTO HIM, (Can't you see them as they all gather around Jonah and look daggers at him for causing them so much difficulty?) TELL US, WE PRAY THEE, FOR WHOSE CAUSE THIS EVIL IS UPON US; WHAT IS THINE OCCUPATION? AND WHENCE COMEST THOU? WHAT IS THY COUNTRY? AND OF WHAT PEOPLE ART THOU? (Up to this time, all they knew was he had paid his fare and was making the trip to Tarshish. Now they bombard him with questions.)

9. AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, I AM AN HEBREW; AND I FEAR THE LORD ("Jehovah", Revised Version,) THE GOD OF HEAVEN, WHICH HATH MADE THE SEA AND THE DRY LAND. (That was not good news to the mariners to hear that his God was the God of heaven who had made the sea and the land. It was easy to see that his God was after him in the raging of the sea.)

10. THEN WERE THE MEN EXCEEDINGLY AFRAID, AND SAID UNTO HIM, WHY HAST THOU DONE THIS? (That which is recorded in verse 9 does not indicate that he told them what he had done, but their question implies that he did, and then as if to let us know that he did tell them, this present verse goes on to say:) FOR THE MEN KNEW THAT HE FLED FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, BECAUSE HE HAD TOLD THEM. (If he ever told them why he had run from God, we are not told, but their question was probably not asked to get an answer, the paraphrase of it being, "Why did you ever do this, anyway?")

11. THEN SAID THEY UNTO HIM, WHAT SHALL WE DO UNTO THEE, THAT THE SEA MAY BE CALM UNTO US? FOR THE SEA WROUGHT AND WAS TEMPESTUOUS, (The marginal reading says, "The sea grew more and more tempestuous." They were aware that something had

to be done, and they consulted him for whose sake the sea was so tempestuous to tell them what would be necessary for them to do to him.)

12. AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, TAKE ME UP, AND CAST ME FORTH INTO THE SEA; SO SHALL THE SEA BE CALM UNTO YOU: (To make such a statement would indeed be difficult, for it was fearful enough to be in the ship on such a sea without being thrown into the sea itself. Jonah had every reason to suppose that his life was about to end.) FOR I KNOW THAT FOR MY SAKE THIS GREAT TEMPEST IS UPON YOU. (There was no doubt in his mind as to why the storm beat upon them. The sin of one person often inconveniences many who are closely related or associated with him.)

13. NEVERTHELESS THE MEN ROWED HARD TO BRING IT TO THE LAND; (They went out of their way to save Jonah from such a fate.) BUT THEY COULD NOT; FOR THE SEA WROUGHT, AND WAS TEMPESTUOUS AGAINST THEM. (The God who sent the storm would not permit His purpose to be thwarted. He was out to get Jonah, and the combined efforts of the good hearted mariners could not save him.)

14. WHEREFORE THEY CRIED UNTO THE LORD, AND SAID, (Before throwing Jonah overboard, they wanted to clear themselves with Jonah's God.) WE BESEECH THEE, O LORD, WE BESEECH THEE, LET US NOT PERISH FOR THIS MAN'S LIFE, AND LAY NOT UPON US INNOCENT BLOOD: FOR THOU, O LORD, HAST DONE AS IT PLEASED THEE. (They wanted to let God know that what they were about to do to Jonah was being done in innocence, it being evident that God would not be satisfied unless they did so.)

15. SO THEY TOOK UP JONAH, AND CAST HIM FORTH INTO THE SEA; (As much as they hated to do it, they cast him overboard, and apparently Jonah offered no resistance.) AND THE SEA CEASED FROM HER RAGING. (This confirmed in their minds that they had acted according to the will of God in the matter.)

16. THEN THE MEN FEARED THE LORD EXCEEDINGLY, AND OFFERED A SACRIFICE UNTO THE LORD, AND MADE VOWS. (Being a foreigner to Jonah, this was probably the first time they had ever tried to sacrifice

to Jehovah, the God of the Jews. What they sacrificed and what vows they made, we are not told. The vows probably involved a solemn promise to worship Him the rest of their lives. With no more knowledge about the true God than they had, they could probably not have promised more than to worship Him as well as their other gods.)

17. NOW THE LORD HAD PREPARED A GREAT FISH TO SWALLOW UP JONAH. (Because of this harrowing experience, the book of Jonah is probably the best known of all the Old Testament prophetic books. The book of Jonah speaks of it as a "great fish" that swallowed him. The book of Matthew speaks of it as a "whale", Matt. 12:40. The Hebrew of Jonah and the Greek of Matthew actually state it was some large sea animal, maybe a whale as the King James translators suggest or maybe some other sea monster. Much has been written back and forth as to whether a whale can swallow a man. Some deny it while others cite actual cases where such have happened. Not to be overlooked in this case is that this verse says God had "prepared" this great fish to swallow him. It is also noteworthy from this book that man alone of God's creation has been given a will that is permitted to resist God's will—the wind obeyed, the sea obeyed, the fish obeyed, and in the 4th chapter other things obeyed, but Jonah was disobedient. It is the granting of this right that will someday call for a day of judgment to reward or to punish man according to his use or abuse of this right.) AND JONAH WAS IN THE BELLY OF THE FISH THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS. (If we are surprised to read that he was still alive, Jonah himself was probably more surprised, for no doubt he considered it the end for him when he left the ship and for sure when he was swallowed. But, God wasn't through with Jonah, and He miraculously kept him alive. Oh the mercy of God that gave Jonah another opportunity to obey His call to go to Nineveh! In his being in the animal for this period of time and then coming forth, Jonah is a type of the resurrected Christ, Matt. 12:39,40.)

CHAPTER 2

1. THEN JONAH PRAYED UNTO THE LORD HIS GOD OUT OF THE FISH'S BELLY, (Jonah was a very stubborn, determined type of person who could be brought to his

knees only by the most severe experiences. Being mixed in with all the mass of meat, sea weed, water, etc. that the monster had swallowed, Jonah was no doubt in a sticky, smelly, detestable condition. God's mercy was just as determined to bring Jonah back as had Jonah's determination been to get away. After three long days and nights, God finally won, and in repentance Jonah prayed. Some people won't pray until they are so hedged in with darkness that they know no other way to turn.)

2. AND SAID, I CRIED BY REASON OF MINE AFFLICTION UNTO THE LORD, (Jonah is penning these words sometime later—after the experience is over.) AND HE HEARD ME; OUT OF THE BELLY OF HELL (The Revised version more correctly translates "Sheol") CRIED I, (And we can be sure that he "cried" to the Lord for help.) AND THOU HEARDEST MY VOICE. (In this verse and the verse that follows, Jonah is praising God for his deliverance from the fish.)

3. FOR THOU HAST CAST ME INTO THE DEEP, (An apt name for an ocean or sea like the Mediterranean.) IN THE MIDST OF THE SEAS; AND THE FLOODS COMPASSED ME ABOUT; ALL THY BILLOWS AND THY WAVES PASSED OVER ME. (It is possible that these statements and others that follow refer to his experience before he was swallowed, but it is more likely that they refer to him as within the fish at the time.)

4. THEN I SAID, I AM CAST OUT OF THY SIGHT; (Oh how God-forsaken he felt! He realized his disobedience had brought this upon him.) YET I WILL LOOK AGAIN TOWARD THY HOLY TEMPLE. (He knew that Jehovah was a merciful God, Jonah 4:2. At first, he may have had his doubts as to whether God would be merciful to him for the backslidden state that he was in, but the prolonging of the agony in which he found himself finally caused him to look to Him for that mercy. Being inside the fish, he probably did not know which direction the temple was in, but the Hebrews were taught to pray toward the temple when they were in distress, I Kings 8: 35-50.)

5. THE WATERS COMPASSED ME ABOUT, EVEN TO THE SOUL; (He continues to narrate his experience.) THE DEPTH CLOSED ME ROUND ABOUT, THE WEEDS WERE WRAPPED ABOUT MY HEAD. (If there was ever

a man sick, fearful, and helpless, it was Jonah, yet all who forsake God will ultimately find themselves in a nightmare condition before the same God who so severely dealt with Jonah. Yet, his dealings with Jonah were not for punishment, but for chastening to get him to repent. Oh how terrible it will be then, to fall into God's hands for punishment!)

6. I WENT DOWN TO THE BOTTOMS OF THE MOUNTAINS; (The base of all land is under water. Islands are here likened to mountains thrusting their heads above the surface of the water.) THE EARTH WITH HER BARS WAS ABOUT ME FOR EVER: (He was enclosed as a prisoner without hope.) YET HAST THOU BROUGHT UP MY LIFE FROM CORRUPTION, O LORD MY GOD. (How he does praise God for restoring him to dry land, freedom, desirable conditions, and another opportunity to live!)

7. WHEN MY SOUL FAINTED WITHIN ME I REMEMBERED THE LORD: (Most people do then if they ever do. In Hosea 5:15, God said, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.") AND MY PRAYER CAME IN UNTO THEE, INTO THINE HOLY TEMPLE. (Jonah learned that one of the most wonderful things that can happen to a person is for God to answer his prayer; he had just previously learned that one of the most blessed things that a person can do is to pray. Why, then, will people wait to pray until they get in such straitened circumstances when they can pray at all times?)

8. THEY THAT OBSERVE (Regard, worship,) LYING VANITIES (Idols, I Kings 17:15,16; Jer. 10:8-11; Jer. 16:19,20. They are called "vanities" inasmuch as they are valueless as far as helping one is concerned; they are called "lying" inasmuch as idolaters trusted in them, but that trust was misplaced.) FORSAKE THEIR OWN MERCY. (Jonah realized that if his God had not been a living and true God, he could never have obtained merciful help for deliverance.)

9. BUT I WILL SACRIFICE UNTO THEE WITH THE VOICE OF THANKSGIVING; (Praise is spoken of as sacrifice, Heb. 13:15. Jonah was made to realize how much he had for which to be thankful. When elated over a triumph, he praised God; many today "celebrate" by indulging in sinful merriment: we are told to sing praises

when happy, Jas. 5:13.) I WILL PAY THAT THAT I HAVE VOWED. (Men make vows to God as to what they will do if He spares them. Jonah, too, had made some vows; his probably included a promise to go to Nineveh if spared.) SALVATION (Deliverance) IS OF THE LORD. (Jonah knew that his deliverance from the fish was as much from the Lord as was his being swallowed by the fish. He well knew he had not saved, delivered, himself from the fish.)

10. AND THE LORD SPAKE UNTO THE FISH, (The fish was God's servant throughout this whole incident.) AND IT VOMITED OUT JONAH UPON THE DRY LAND. (Dry land was something that Jonah never expected to see again. Except for God's mercy, he would never have seen it.)

CHAPTER 3

1. AND THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME UNTO JONAH THE SECOND TIME, (The first time, he ran in disobedience.) SAYING,

2. ARISE, GO UNTO NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY, AND PREACH UNTO IT THE PREACHING THAT I BID THEE. (Every preacher is to preach the preaching that God bids.)

3. SO JONAH AROSE, AND WENT UNTO NINEVEH, ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF THE LORD. (He had learned what can happen to one who disobeys God.) NOW NINEVEH WAS AN EXCEEDING GREAT CITY OF THREE DAYS' JOURNEY. (This statement taken alone might mean Nineveh was such a great city that it would take three days to walk around it or that it was a great city three days' journey from where Jonah picked himself up. But, the language of the next verse seems to imply that it was such a great city that it would take three days to spread his message throughout its streets.)

4. AND JONAH BEGAN TO ENTER INTO THE CITY A DAY'S JOURNEY, AND HE CRIED, AND SAID, YET FORTY DAYS, AND NINEVEH SHALL BE OVERTHROWN. (We often hear that Jonah told them to repent, or they would perish. If he said anything about their repenting, it is not recorded in his book. It appears that the brief message he cried was that the great city had less than

two months of time to stand.)

5. SO THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED GOD, (For some reason, they knew that Jonah was bearing a divine message. But, how? Probably Matt. 12:38-41 and Luke 11:29,30 tell us. Those passages indicate that both Jonah and Jesus were sent of God. As a special sign to the people of His day, Jesus gave them the sign of His resurrection, which He said was comparable to Jonah's sea-monster experience (burial) and being vomited out alive (resurrection). Luke's account specifically mentions that Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites. How was he a sign? In that they had apparently learned of his miraculous deliverance from the fish, the report of which had either preceded him to Nineveh or which he bore with his own lips after he arrived.) AND PROCLAIMED A FAST, (This they did because they recognized the urgency of the situation.) AND PUT ON SACKCLOTH, (Cheap, black clothes that replaced their customary attire when they were sorrowful and grieving.) FROM THE GREATEST OF THEM EVEN TO THE LEAST OF THEM. (From the king on down. Oh that men would so believe God today and humble themselves before Him!)

6. FOR WORD CAME UNTO THE KING OF NINEVEH, AND HE AROSE FROM HIS THRONE, AND HE LAID HIS ROBE FROM HIM, AND COVERED HIM WITH SACKCLOTH, AND SAT IN ASHES. (Wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes are often connected in the Bible: Matt. 11:1; Esth. 4:1.)

7. AND HE CAUSED IT TO BE PROCLAIMED AND PUBLISHED THROUGH NINEVEH BY THE DECREE OF THE KING AND HIS NOBLES, SAYING, LET NEITHER MAN NOR BEAST, HERD NOR FLOCK, TASTE ANY THING: LET THEM NOT FEED, NOR DRINK WATER:

8. BUT LET MAN AND BEAST BE COVERED WITH SACKCLOTH, AND CRY MIGHTILY UNTO GOD: (The cry of mournful men and bawling of hungry beasts were to unite as a petition to God for mercy.) YEA, LET THEM TURN EVERY ONE FROM HIS EVIL WAY, AND FROM THE VIOLENCE THAT IS IN THEIR HANDS. (Their petition for God's mercy was attended by repentance upon their part. Jesus recognized that the Ninevites repented, Matt. 12:41.)

9. WHO CAN TELL IF GOD WILL TURN AND REPENT, (Change His decree,) AND TURN AWAY FROM HIS FIERCE ANGER, THAT WE PERISH NOT? (Possibly the fact that a few days had been given them before the actual destruction caused them to see a faint hope of mercy being extended to them. They had no promise that God would be merciful, but they were going to attempt through repentance, fasting, and prayer to prevail upon God to be merciful to them.)

10. AND GOD SAW THEIR WORKS, THAT THEY TURNED FROM THEIR EVIL WAY; (He was as much pleased with their repentance as He had been displeased with their former disobedience.) AND GOD REPENTED OF THE EVIL, THAT HE HAD SAID THAT HE WOULD DO UNTO THEM; AND HE DID IT NOT. (He reversed the decree. Does this mean that God does not keep His Word? Jer. 18:7,8 gives a good answer to this question: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." In other words, when God says a nation will perish because of its sins, He has in mind that it will unless it repents, whether he states that fact or not.)

CHAPTER 4

1. BUT IT DISPLEASED JONAH EXCEEDINGLY, AND HE WAS VERY ANGRY.

2. AND HE PRAYED UNTO THE LORD, AND SAID, I PRAY THEE, O LORD, WAS NOT THIS MY SAYING, WHEN I WAS YET IN MY COUNTRY? THEREFORE I FLED BEFORE UNTO TARSHISH; FOR I KNEW THAT THOU ART A GRACIOUS GOD, AND MERCIFUL, SLOW TO ANGER, AND OF GREAT KINDNESS, AND REPENTEST THEE OF THE EVIL. (Jonah had the typical Hebrew attitude toward the Gentiles—one of disdain and hatred. He did not want them to be spared and had, therefore, refused the first time to go preach to them lest they would repent, and God would spare them. We see from this that he had even voiced his objection to God when being called the first time, so it was not because he was afraid to go to such a wicked city as Nineveh that he had fled.)

3. THEREFORE NOW, O LORD, TAKE, I BESEECH

THEE, MY LIFE FROM ME; FOR IT IS BETTER FOR ME TO DIE THAN TO LIVE. (He was so displeased that God was sparing Nineveh that he would rather die than live. As one writer observed, he was asking to die when he was in the poorest spiritual condition to die. We marvel at his forwardness thus to resist God and to talk up to Him, and marvel just as much at God's mercy extended toward Jonah, who was wanting to keep that mercy from the Ninevites.)

4. THEN SAID THE LORD, DOEST THOU WELL TO BE ANGRY?

5. SO JONAH WENT OUT OF THE CITY, AND SAT ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE CITY AND THERE MADE HIM A BOOTH, AND SAT UNDER IT IN THE SHADOW, TILL HE MIGHT SEE WHAT WOULD BECOME OF THE CITY. (As we read this passage, we are left wondering just why Jonah would sit down to see the outcome of the city, for from the foregoing conversation, it would seem that Jonah knew it was going to be spared. Some light may be thrown on the question by the fact that the verse could be translated, "Now Jonah had gone out of the city, and had sat..." If this rendering is correct, it would be a parenthetical statement thrown in to tell us what had gone before: Jonah had done his preaching and had gone out of the city to see what would happen. If it was destroyed, he would rejoice; if it was spared, he would complain. While sitting there, God apparently made known his merciful intentions, and Jonah blew up, which is where the beginning of the chapter cut into the story. If this latter rendering is correct, the meaning seems clear; if the King James rendering is correct, the meaning of the passage is hard to interpret.)

6. AND THE LORD GOD PREPARED A GOURD, AND MADE IT TO COME UP OVER JONAH, THAT IT MIGHT BE A SHADOW OVER HIS HEAD, TO DELIVER HIM FROM HIS GRIEF. SO JONAH WAS EXCEEDING GLAD OF THE GOURD. (He knew the relief that came from its shadow.)

7. BUT GOD PREPARED A WORM WHEN THE MORNING ROSE THE NEXT DAY, AND IT SMOTE THE GOURD THAT IT WITHERED.

8. AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN THE SUN DID ARISE,

THAT GOD PREPARED A VEHEMENT EAST WIND; AND THE SUN BEAT UPON THE HEAD OF JONAH, THAT HE FAINTED, AND WISHED IN HIMSELF TO DIE, AND SAID, IT IS BETTER FOR ME TO DIE THAN TO LIVE. (God again sends Jonah through a bitter physical experience, though not as severe a one as the fish experience. Jonah was a man who went on his feelings: in v. 1, he was displeased and angry because Nineveh was to be spared; in v. 6, he was glad because of the shade of the gourd; in v. 8, he is weary and wants to die.)

9. AND GOD SAID TO JONAH, DOEST THOU WELL TO BE ANGRY FOR THE GOURD? (Jonah was wearing his feelings on the ends of his sleeves and was peeved at God's having smitten the gourd.) AND HE SAID, I DO WELL TO BE ANGRY, EVEN UNTO DEATH. (Again we marvel at Jonah's rashness and at God's forbearance.)

10. THEN SAID THE LORD, THOU HAST HAD PITY ON THE GOURD, FOR THE WHICH THOU HAST NOT LABOURED, NEITHER MADEST IT GROW; WHICH CAME UP IN A NIGHT, AND PERISHED IN A NIGHT:

11. AND SHOULD NOT I SPARE NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY, WHEREIN ARE MORE THAN SIXSCORE THOUSAND PERSONS THAT CANNOT DISCERN BETWEEN THEIR RIGHT HAND AND THEIR LEFT HAND; AND ALSO MUCH CATTLE? (The book closes with God's showing Jonah's unreasonableness in feeling sorry for the gourd, but not for the Ninevites. He draws three contrasts, either stated or implied, for Jonah's benefit: Jonah had not labored to produce the gourd while God had done much for Nineveh; the gourd had come up but recently—in a night—while Nineveh had been a city of long standing; and Jonah was concerned over one gourd—vegetation—while God was concerned over many individuals and much cattle—humanity and animals, both of which are higher forms of life than vegetation. The 120,000 persons who knew not their right hand from their left may have been infants—if so, we have some idea of the tremendous size of that ancient city—or the Ninevites may have been so spiritually benighted that they are thus referred to. The book ends with an abruptness that leaves us asking, "How did Jonah turn out? Did this straighten him out, or does he continue the role of 'goat' with which the book closes?" If the II Kings 14:25 refers to a prophecy that Jonah uttered at a latter day, we know he gets straight-

ened out. Another consideration in Jonah's favor is that he is the reputed author of the book, and the language of chapter 2:1-9 would confirm it, and if so, God inspired him to write the book after the events transpiring in it had happened. Of Jonah, we can say that he lived and learned, but he learned the hard way.)

Commentary Studies *in Malachi*

CHAPTER 1

1. THE BURDEN OF THE LORD TO ISRAEL BY MALACHI. (This verse sets the stage for the entire book; it is the Word of Jehovah to His Old Testament people through the prophet Malachi; the nature of the message is a "burden", a term used a number of times by the prophets when their message involved a judgment from God upon a people. For other instances of it, see Isa. 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; Nahum 1:1. This book portrays the spiritual conditions of the Jews about four hundred years before Christ; the conditions were anything but good. With this book, God would terminate His revealing until the time of John the Baptist. In the days of Malachi, the Jews had been re-established in their land for more than one hundred years. The historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell of their returning; the prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah tell of their rebuilding the temple; the book of Malachi shows us the state of things one hundred years after Haggai and Zechariah. The covenant name "Israel" is applied in this opening verse to the people of the southern kingdom because they constituted that part of the covenant people with whom God was still dealing.)

2. I HAVE LOVED YOU, SAITH THE LORD. (Before He begins to bring His charges against them, He wishes to remind them of His love for them, and that what He is about to say against them does not grow out of His lack of love for them, but of their lack of love for Him. In this world of doubts and qualms, one fact seems to stand out without much doubt: the love of God for mankind. But, in this verse, He is not affirming His love for mankind in general, but His love for Israel in particular.) YET YE SAY, WHEREIN HAST THOU LOVED US? (This was the retort of the Jews of Malachi's day to God's affirmation. Malachi often anticipated the hearers' objection, stated it, and then replied to it.) WAS NOT ESAU JACOB'S BROTHER? SAITH THE LORD: YET I LOVED JACOB,

3. AND I HATED ESAU, (For His love for Israel, God

goes back as far as His choosing Jacob and rejecting Esau, Rom. 9:13 quotes this verse in its discussion of Jacob and Esau,) AND LAID HIS MOUNTAINS AND HIS HERITAGE WASTE FOR THE DRAGONS OF THE WILDERNESS. (The Edomites, who lived to the south of the Jews, were the descendants of Esau. As a nation, Edom was overthrown by Babylon immediately after the Babylonians overthrew Jerusalem. Edom never recovered from that blow though God had already returned Israel to its land. The American Standard version more properly gives "jackals" instead of "dragons". The land of Edom was a wilderness waste in Malachi's day especially as compared to the restored Jerusalem and its surroundings.)

4. WHEREAS EDMO SAITH, WE ARE IMPOVERISHED, BUT WE WILL RETURN AND BUILD THE DESOLATE PLACES; (It was but natural for the Edomites to hope for a restoration to their former condition,) THUS SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, THEY SHALL BUILD, BUT I WILL THROW DOWN; (The history between Malachi and Matthew shows that the Jews, under the Maccabees, subdued the Edomites who were left and forced them to be circumcised and to become to an extent swallowed up in the Jewish state,) AND THEY SHALL CALL THEM, THE BORDER OF WICKEDNESS, (because of the divine punishment meted out against them) AND, THE PEOPLE AGAINST WHOM THE LORD HATH INDIGNATION FOREVER. (Because God promised to be merciful to Israel, it was often remarked that God would not retain His anger forever. See Psa. 103:9; 30:5; Isa. 26:20. Though He punished Israel with a seventy year captivity, He returned to them with mercy. See Zech. 1:16,17. But, Edom had no such period of restoration.)

5. AND YOUR EYES SHALL SEE, AND YE SHALL SAY, THE LORD WILL BE MAGNIFIED FROM THE BORDER OF ISRAEL. (The real purpose for which God had showed His unusual love for Israel was yet to be fully realized in future years when He would bring the Messiah into the world through them and when from their Jerusalem, the everlasting gospel would be sounded forth. There could be no doubt about the love that Jehovah had shown for Malachi's people.)

6. A SON HONOURETH HIS FATHER (This was commanded in both Old and New Testaments, Exo. 20:12;

Eph. 6:2. People in Paul's time were accustomed to parent-honoring children, Heb. 12:9, disobedience to parents being a state of affairs yet future to their times, II Tim. 3:1,2, but well known in our day. Too much leniency and too little accounting are prime causes of present day delinquency. A Biblical curse is pronounced upon the dishonoring, disobedient child, Prov. 30:17. Under the Old Testament, the disobedient son was to be stoned by the men of his city, Deut. 21:18-21.) AND A SERVANT HIS MASTER: (The master-servant relationship existed throughout Bible times. The servant owed both honor and service to the master who fed, clothed, and housed both him and his family. The New Testament gives instructions to both master and servant, Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22--4:1.) IF THEN I BE A FATHER, WHERE IS MINE HONOUR? AND IF I BE A MASTER, WHERE IS MY FEAR, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS (God laid claim to being both a Father and a Master to His people. His pointed questions here indicate their failure to honor and revere Him as they should.) UNTO YOU, O PRIESTS, THAT DESPISE MY NAME. (Of all people who should have honored and feared God, it was the priests, the religious leaders. But, often those who should lead the people closer to God are actually found leading them away from God. All the charges God raises against them in Malachi are based upon the fact that they despised God, whom they should have honored and feared. What a sad state exists among the people when their leaders are corrupt like these priests!) AND YE SAY, WHEREIN HAVE WE DESPISED THY NAME? (So often, people are blind to their true condition before God. Before God began to specify the exact thing they were doing, He wanted them to know its serious involvement, that of despising Him.)

7. YE OFFER POLLUTED BREAD UPON MINE ALTAR; (That which was placed upon the altar was dedicated to God. Calling it "bread", as in this passage, or "food", as in Lev. 3:11,16; 21:6, likens the altar to a table as if God did eat from it as the fire consumed that which was upon it.) AND YE SAY, WHEREIN HAVE WE POLLUTED THEE? IN THAT YE SAY, THE TABLE OF THE LORD IS CONTEMPTIBLE. (The priests were apparently still in a quandary as to what Malachi was driving at. It would seem that his charge of their offering "polluted" bread—offerings that were not according to the law of God—would have been definite enough. But, in the next verse, he comes right out with his specification.)

8. AND IF YE OFFER THE BLIND FOR SACRIFICE, IS IT NOT EVIL? AND IF YE OFFER THE LAME AND SICK, IS IT NOT EVIL? (These were the "polluted" offerings: animals that were blind, lame, and sick. They had no market value to the ones offering them, and there was the possibility that they might die at any time. Instead of sacrificing animals without blemish as their law demanded, Lev. 22:19,20, they were trying to slough these off upon God. What a combination of thoughts! that God must be worshipped, but we can give Him the left-overs, that which we will not miss. Such is not real worship, for that which we give and do not miss represents no sacrifice upon our part. What a way to treat God from whom all blessings flow!) OFFER IT NOW UNTO THE GOVERNOR; WILL HE BE PLEASED WITH THEE, OR ACCEPT THY PERSON? SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS. (It was customary to present gifts when visiting governmental dignitaries or upon special occasions, such as the Queen of Sheba's gift to Solomon, I Kings 10:1,2, and the wise men's gifts for the newly born King, Matt. 2:11. Malachi employed irony when he suggested that they try such tactics on their governor. Of course, he would not regard such a gift except with contempt, which was the same way that God regarded them. Such gifts, instead of procuring the favor of the governor or of God, would be the cause of obtaining disfavor. Those who offer nothing are at least not guilty of insulting God with the unworthiness of that which is offered.)

9. AND NOW, I PRAY YOU, BESEECH GOD THAT HE WILL BE GRACIOUS UNTO US: THIS HATH BEEN BY YOUR MEANS (Hebrew: 'from your hand'): WILL HE REGARD YOUR PERSONS? SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS. (This verse is admittedly difficult. Some think it is an entreaty for the priests to call upon God as intercessors. But, it seems more like irony, for the polluted sacrifices were blamed upon them, and God would not accept them as intercessors for the people. Notice that the exhortation was to them as intercessors for the people—not entreating God to be merciful upon their own sins.)

10. WHO IS THERE EVEN AMONG YOU THAT WOULD SHUT THE DOORS FOR NAUGHT? NEITHER DO YE KINDLE FIRE ON MINE ALTAR FOR NAUGHT. (The American Standard reads instead, "Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain!" The King James rendering would be rebuking the priests' mercenary at-

titude: none would so much as close the doors of the temple or kindle a fire on the altar without thinking uppermost of getting paid for it. Many preachers in the religious world today are like this. The American Standard rendering would be the strongest kind of statement of the way God felt toward the corrupt priesthood. If we have concluded right about verse 9's being irony, then the American Standard rendering is probably to be preferred in this verse. What hope would there be for a people when their very leaders, their intercessors, were so corrupt that God wanted them to stay out of the temple and away from the altar?) I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN YOU, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, NEITHER WILL I ACCEPT AN OFFERING AT YOUR HAND. (This seems to confirm the positions we have taken on verses 9 and 10.)

11. FOR FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN EVEN UNTO THE GOING DOWN OF THE SAME MY NAME SHALL BE GREAT AMONG THE GENTILES; AND IN EVERY PLACE INCENSE SHALL BE OFFERED UNTO MY NAME, AND A PURE OFFERING; FOR MY NAME SHALL BE GREAT AMONG THE HEATHEN, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS. (God was looking forward to better things in the future when, under the gospel dispensation, Gentile subjects would do His will. Throughout the books of the prophets, when one reads of Gentiles worshipping Jehovah, he knows he is reading of new covenant times. Catholics try to find great comfort in this passage. They say it pictures the incense burning continually upon their altars everywhere. They claim this as a mark of their being the true church, for they alone are doing such. But, there is a principle of interpreting these prophetic writings that they are overlooking; namely, the prophets employed the terminology of their times in speaking of the future. For instance, take Isa. 60:3-7 in which Isaiah looked to the present age under the Messiah. He foresaw the Gentiles worshipping Jehovah, bringing their gold and incense and offering their animals as sacrifices upon God's altar. Now, we know that we are expressly forbidden to offer animal sacrifices today. All three things mentioned—gold, incense, and animal sacrifices—were in vogue in Isaiah's day. The prophet was using the language of his day in speaking of our day. The same is true of keeping solemn feasts and performing vows in Nahum 1:15, of keeping the feast of the new moon in Isa. 66:23, and of keeping the feast of tabernacles in Zech. 14:18.)

12. BUT YE HAVE PROFANED IT, IN THAT YE SAY, THE TABLE OF THE LORD IS POLLUTED; AND THE FRUIT THEREOF, EVEN HIS MEAT, IS CONTEMPTIBLE. (Malachi brings the Gentiles into the picture to show a marked contrast between the way that God's name would be honored by them and the way that the Jews were then dishonoring it.)

13. YE SAID ALSO, BEHOLD, WHAT A WEARINESS IS IT! (Those whose hearts are not in the matter feel that serving God is wearisome. God wants service from the heart, Mark 7:6; II Cor. 9:7. He deplores lukewarmness, Rev. 3:15,16. Those who love God do not think His commandments are grievous, I John 5:2,3. AND YE HAVE SNUFFED AT IT, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS: (This is a figure of speech borrowed from cattle blowing through their nostrils upon feed that they do not care for. What a way to treat the service of Jehovah! Let all today claiming to be God's servants be careful not to think of it as a wearisome task that is to be snuffed at. Some are weary in well doing.) AND YE BROUGHT THAT WHICH WAS TORN, AND THE LAME, AND THE SICK: THUS YE BROUGHT AN OFFERING: SHOULD I ACCEPT THIS OF YOUR HAND? SAITH THE LORD. (Already commented upon under verse 8.)

14. BUT CURSED BE THE DECEIVER, WHICH HATH IN HIS FLOCK A MALE, AND VOWETH, AND SACRIFICETH UNTO THE LORD A CORRUPT THING: (God pronounces a curse upon those who have that which He asks for and who give Him some shameful thing instead. What a rebuke today to those who instead of bringing their tithes and offerings resort to selling faded, patched, and worn out garments at rummage sales in order to finance religion! What a rebuke to those who own their farms or businesses, live in fine homes, wear expensive clothes, and drive big cars and then give mere "chicken feed" change when they attend church services,) FOR I AM A GREAT KING, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, (You would never guess it by such paltry ways of financing His work) AND MY NAME IS DREADFUL AMONG THE HEATHEN. (May His name ever be hallowed by us who were heathen then, but Christians now.)

CHAPTER 2

1. AND NOW, O YE PRIESTS, (Having dealt with the corrupt priests throughout chapter 1, God continues to deal with

them in this chapter.) THIS COMMANDMENT IS FOR YOU. (He is about to tell them what He will do to them because of their ways. This announcement is called a "commandment" because He was going to command trouble to come upon them. For a similar use of the term, see Lev. 25:21.)

2. IF YE WILL NOT HEAR, AND IF YE WILL NOT LAY IT TO HEART, (Some have ears with which to hear, but they do not hear, and hearts with which to understand, but they do not understand, Matt. 13:15. Even today there is great need for people to "take to heart" what God says. David said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee," Psa. 119:11.) TO GIVE GLORY UNTO MY NAME, (The charge brought against them in chapter 1 is here reiterated.) SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, (One of the prophets' favorite titles for God. It is used no less than twenty-four times in this short book of Malachi. "Hosts" implies the idea of "many". He is the Lord of many. It probably implies more than anything else that He has a multitude of angelic beings at His disposal to carry out His judgments upon the disobedient. It should have smitten fear into their hearts.) I WILL EVEN SEND A CURSE UPON YOU, AND I WILL CURSE YOUR BLESSINGS: YEA, I HAVE CURSED THEM ALREADY, BECAUSE YE DO NOT LAY IT TO HEART. (The idea of "curse" is found in every chapter of Malachi: 1:14; 2:2; 3:9; 4:6. It implies just the opposite of "blessing". God both blesses the godly and curses the ungodly. Some do not believe that He does either; everything that happens is ascribed only to natural causes. God said in Zeph. 1:12 that He was going to punish such people. "I will curse your blessings" indicates that whereas He had blessed them, He now would curse them instead. Actually, the process was already being reversed at the time Malachi wrote. Blessings discontinued and curses sent—all because they would not "lay it to heart"!)

3. BEHOLD, I WILL CORRUPT YOUR SEED, (In chapter 3:9-12, Malachi discusses God's curse upon them in material things in which he shows the effect of God's curse upon their crops. The present passage shows that God would get at the very root of their hope for a crop by ruining the seed that they would plant.) AND SPREAD DUNG (manure) UPON YOUR FACES, (Instead of man's using it for increased crop yields, God was going to smear it, so to speak, upon their faces. People hate to have something like that on them anywhere; how terrible to have it smeared on their faces! It is possible, since these words are spoken

to the priests, that he is talking about the dung of the sacrificial animals, which was to be carried outside the camp and burned, Lev. 16:27,28. If that be the thought, God was going to throw it into their faces instead, thus making this one of the strongest ways for God to express His contempt for their sacrifices.) EVEN THE DUNG OF YOUR SOLEMN FEASTS; AND ONE SHALL TAKE YOU AWAY WITH IT. (God's utter repudiation of those priests was very evident.)

4. AND YE SHALL KNOW THAT I HAVE SENT THIS COMMANDMENT UNTO YOU, THAT MY COVENANT MIGHT BE WITH LEVI, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS. (When the fulness of His curse fell upon them, they would know that He had rejected them as priests, but not His priestly covenant with Levi. God frequently told the unbelieving and unfaithful that they would come to know how wrong they had been and how right He was when they experienced His punishing hand upon them: Exo. 14:18; Num. 16:26-30; I Kings 22:19-28; Eze. 6:13,14; 7:23-27; 12:15; and many others. We see also in this place that they would find themselves out of the priesthood, though the priesthood would go on. Many even to this day, through their own unfaithfulness, wake up to find themselves out of the gospel ministry, though the work of evangelism goes on; out of the eldership, though the work of pastoring goes on; out of the church, though the church goes on. God may cut off unworthy individuals, but He will not abandon His plan and program. The covenant with Levi did continue—in actuality until it had fulfilled its course with the passing of the Old Covenant, Heb. 8:4-6; 7:12-16, and in antitype in the priesthood of all Christians, Rev. 1:6; Mal. 3:3; I Pet. 2:5.)

5. MY COVENANT WAS WITH HIM OF LIFE AND PEACE; AND I GAVE THEM TO HIM FOR THE FEAR WHEREWITH HE FEARED ME, AND WAS AFRAID BEFORE MY NAME. (In those earlier years, the Levites seemed to be noticeably stronger in their faith and adherence to the law of God than the other Israelites. They refused to take part in the calf worship at Mt. Sinai, Ex. 32:26. When the Israelites fell into idolatrous fornication in the plains of Moab, the Levite Phinehas showed his indignation with forthright action, Num. 25:1-8. At that time, God approvingly said of the priest Phinehas, "Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace; and he shall have it, and his seed after him," Num. 25:12,13. God apparently refers to this statement in the Malachi passage under consideration.

6. THE LAW OF TRUTH WAS IN HIS MOUTH, AND INIQUITY WAS NOT FOUND IN HIS LIPS; HE WALKED WITH ME IN PEACE AND EQUITY, AND DID TURN MANY AWAY FROM INIQUITY. (The priest was the representative of the people before God in making atonement for their sins, but he was the representative of God to the people in the law that he taught and exemplified. Faithful priests made for faithful people whereas the corrupt priests of Malachi's day made for a corrupt people before God.)

7. FOR THE PRIEST'S LIPS SHOULD KEEP KNOWLEDGE, AND THEY SHOULD SEEK THE LAW AT HIS MOUTH; FOR HE IS THE MESSENGER OF THE LORD OF HOSTS. (According to Lev. 10:11 and Deut. 33:10, God had appointed the priest to be a teacher of the people as well as an officiator at the altar. In this twofold responsibility, he was a true mediator: God's messenger to the people and a representative of the people before God.)

8. BUT YE ARE DEPARTED OUT OF THE WAY; (They had not stayed right themselves.) YE HAVE CAUSED MANY TO STUMBLE AT THE LAW; (Instead of causing people to keep the law, they had gone along with the corrupt sacrifices dealt with in chapter 1 and with other sinful practices yet to be discussed in the book.) YE HAVE CORRUPTED THE COVENANT OF LEVI, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS. (Instead of being a credit to their office, they had actually corrupted the priestly covenant itself. Unworthy bunch! Priests only in name!)

9. THEREFORE HAVE I ALSO MADE YOU CONTEMPTIBLE AND BASE BEFORE ALL THE PEOPLE, (Instead of lifting the people, they stooped to the people's level. Those who see what such leaders have done cannot respect them for it. Sinners may think us to be too strict, but they have more respect for us now than they would if we stooped to their level. In summary, a person receives no more honor than his person deserves.) ACCORDING AS YE HAVE NOT KEPT MY WAYS, BUT HAVE BEEN PARTIAL IN THE LAW. (The American Standard reads instead, "Have had respect of persons in the law." Those who trifle with the law out of respect for certain men's persons are disqualified to represent that law that respects no man's person. With the next verse, he begins a new topic.)

10. HAVE WE NOT ALL ONE FATHER? (The answer

is "yes".) HATH NOT ONE GOD CREATED US? (Again the answer is "yes".) WHY DO WE DEAL TREACHEROUSLY EVERY MAN AGAINST HIS BROTHER, BY PROFANING THE COVENANT OF OUR FATHERS? (Malachi was about to deal with the Israelites of his day for their violation of the law of God concerning marriages with those outside of Israel. All Israel worshipped the one God, who had created them, and this fact should have bound them so close together that they would never have put away an Israelite in order to marry a foreigner. This was counted a violation of brotherliness as well as a profaning of the law that God gave to their fathers in Deut. 7:3.)

11. JUDAH HATH DEALT TREACHEROUSLY, AND AN ABOMINATION IS COMMITTED IN ISRAEL AND IN JERUSALEM; (Notice the strong language used to depict God's attitude toward their actions.) FOR JUDAH HATH PROFANED THE HOLINESS OF THE LORD WHICH HE LOVED, AND HATH MARRIED THE DAUGHTER OF A STRANGE GOD. (It was God's desire that Israel be His own people; Exo. 19:5; Deut. 14:2; 26:18. They were to be set apart to God. Throughout the days of the Old Covenant, Jehovah was to be their only God, and they were to be His only people. This holiness was being profaned by the Israelites' actions in marrying those who were worshippers of other gods and at the same time mixing foreign blood into the people of God.)

12. THE LORD WILL CUT OFF THE MAN THAT DOETH THIS, (God dealt with Solomon for this very thing, I Kings 11:1-11. A half century or so before Malachi's time, the godly Ezra had dealt with the same problem, Ezra 9 and 10.) THE SAME GOD TODAY INSTRUCTS HIS PEOPLE TO MARRY "ONLY IN THE LORD", I Cor. 7:39. THE MASTER AND THE SCHOLAR, OUT OF THE TABERNACLES OF JACOB, (The great and the small, the leader and those led. There was no respect of persons with God. The expression, "cut off", is used many times in the Old Testament. God cut off some people with death; others were cut off by being put out of the congregation; others were cut off by having all their descendants wiped out.) AND HIM THAT OFFERETH AN OFFERING UNTO THE LORD OF HOSTS. (Probably even the priests were guilty of this sin of marriage with foreigners. At least, they were in Ezra's day, Ezra 9:1,2; 10:18. Some advance the thought upon this statement that God would even cut off the priest who would try to make an

offering for this sin.)

13. AND THIS HAVE YE DONE AGAIN, COVERING THE ALTAR OF THE LORD WITH TEARS, WITH WEEPING, AND WITH CRYING OUT, INSOMUCH THAT HE REGARDETH NOT THE OFFERING ANY MORE, OR RECEIVETH IT WITH GOOD WILL AT YOUR HAND. (Often those with little true piety can make a big show of their religious practices, as in Isa. 1:15. God could not be fooled by this religious put-on.)

14. YET YE SAY, WHEREFORE? (And Malachi is quick to supply them with the information in that which follows.) BECAUSE THE LORD HATH BEEN WITNESS BETWEEN THEE AND THE WIFE OF THY YOUTH, AGAINST WHOM THOU HAST DEALT TREACHEROUSLY: (It is evident that the men had been putting away their Hebrew wives in order to marry the heathen wives. God had heard them give themselves to each other in marriage many years before, and He had never forgotten. He was now beholding their violation of their marital promises, and He was testifying against them through the prophet Malachi. His eyes are everywhere beholding the conduct of men, Prov. 15:3. He knows our works, Rev. 2:2,9,13,19; 3:3,8,15, for He walks in our midst, Rev. 1:13. When one establishes an interest in and later a marriage with a strange woman, he has certainly "dealt treacherously" with his former mate. He leaves her life a wreck; he brings doubts into people's minds concerning her; he leaves her to shift for herself; and he leaves her children half orphaned.) YET IS SHE THY COMPANION, AND THE WIFE OF THY COVENANT. (God attempted in various ways to strike both a convicted and a sentimental chord in their hearts.)

15. AND DID NOT HE MAKE ONE? (Evidently referring to God's having created but one woman for Adam to have.) YET HAD HE THE RESIDUE OF THE SPIRIT. (He could have made more, proving that He purposely made but one woman.) THAT HE MIGHT SEEK A GODLY SEED. (What evils result when men put away their original wives in order to marry others! This God sought to avoid.) THEREFORE TAKE HEED TO YOUR SPIRIT, AND LET NONE DEAL TREACHEROUSLY AGAINST THE WIFE OF HIS YOUTH.

16. FOR THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, SAITH THAT HE HATETH PUTTING AWAY: (In marriage, God

has joined the man and the woman together, and "what God hath joined together, let not man put assunder," Matt. 19:6. Inspiration uses no lesser word than "hateth" to represent God's feelings concerning such divorcing.) FOR ONE COVERETH VIOLENCE WITH HIS GARMENT, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS; (Man tries to cover up a lot of things so they will look better than they really are, but they were not fooling God with their actions.) THEREFORE TAKE HEED TO YOUR SPIRIT, THAT YE DEAL NOT TREACHEROUSLY. (The instruction of verse 15 is here repeated for an emphatic conclusion.)

17. YE HAVE WEARIED THE LORD WITH YOUR WORDS. (It is noteworthy that God is not a numb God. He has feelings: He loves, John 3:16; and He abhors, Lev. 26:30; He can be grieved, Gen. 6:6, and He can be delighted, Prov. 15:8; He can be pleased, Matt. 3:17, and He can be displeased, Gen. 38:10. Those of Malachi's day had "wearied" Him.) YET YE SAY, WHEREIN HAVE WE WEARIED HIM? (They were still blind to their faults.) WHEN YE SAY, EVERY ONE THAT DOETH EVIL IS GOOD IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD, AND HE DELIGHTETH IN THEM; OR, WHERE IS THE GOD OF JUDGMENT? (How mixed up can people get in their thinking? The Bible teaches that God blesses the good people and punishes the evil people, but they had it all backwards. They thought that God was blessing those whom Malachi condemned, and by asking, "Where is the God of judgment?" they were implying that He was punishing those whom Malachi labeled wicked even though they were being punished at the very time, verse 2. Their mixed up thinking recalls what the people said to Jeremiah in Jer. 44:15-19. Malachi returned to this subject in his next chapter.)

CHAPTER 3

1. BEHOLD, I WILL SEND MY MESSENGER, (John the Baptist), AND HE SHALL PREPARE THE WAY BEFORE ME; (John prepared the way by preparing the minds of as many as would repent of their sins by his preaching. God predicted the comings of both John the Baptist and Jesus in this verse, and Luke 1 records the angelic announcements of both of their births, John's to his father and Jesus' to His mother.) AND THE LORD, WHOM YE SEEK, (their long awaited Messiah) SHALL SUDDENLY COME TO THE

TEMPLE, (When He came, many did not believe upon Him. To them, His coming was too sudden! But, let us not suppose that God had sent Him sooner than He had planned to do. In Daniel's Seventy-Week prophecy, Dan. 9:20-27, God foretold the exact time when the Messiah would come,) EVEN THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT, (He would be the fulfiller of their covenant, Matt. 5:17, and the mediator of a new covenant, Heb. 9:15, whose inauguration had been foretold by Jeremiah even before the captivity, Jer. 31:31-34.) WHOM YE DELIGHT IN: (They had long dreamed of and hoped for the coming of the Messiah.) BEHOLD, HE SHALL COME, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS.

2. BUT WHO MAY ABIDE THE DAY OF THE COMING? AND WHO SHALL STAND WHEN HE APPEARETH? (What a startling thought to his readers! To them, the coming of the Messiah had been thought of as something to look forward to, but these questions suggested something else. The prophet Simeon told the Christ child's mother that He was set for not only the rising of, but for the falling of many in Israel, Luke 2:34, and time demonstrated that fact. The Jews as a people did not abide His coming, Rom. 11:18-21. The religious leaders of Jesus' day did not abide His coming. Those who should have been the builders stubbed their toes on Him and fell, Acts 4:11; I Pet. 2:7,8.) FOR HE IS LIKE A REFINER'S FIRE, (to destroy that which is not real gold or silver) AND LIKE FULLERS' SOAP; (Originally a fuller was a person who carded wool; later a fuller also laundered clothes, Mark 9:3.)

3. AND HE SHALL SIT AS A REFINER AND PURIFIER OF SILVER; AND HE SHALL PURIFY THE SONS OF LEVI, AND PURGE THEM AS GOLD AND SILVER, THAT THEY MAY OFFER UNTO THE LORD AN OFFERING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. (This would not sound good to the priests of Malachi's day! They needed purging. But, the actual fulfillment is in the priesthood of all Christians under Christ. We are a royal priesthood, I Pet. 2:9. He has made us kings and priests unto God, Rev. 1:6. Notice the similarity between this passage and I Pet. 2:5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." With all the polluted sacrifices being offered by the corrupt priesthood of Malachi's day, how God must have longed for the arrival of this dispensation when He would have a holy priesthood that would offer up spiritual sacrifices! Do you believe in purity? in refinement? Notice that

Christ is a purifier and a refiner.)

4. THEN SHALL THE OFFERING OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM BE PLEASANT UNTO THE LORD, AS IN THE DAYS OF OLD, AND AS IN FORMER YEARS. (Things religious have the tendency to become corrupted with age. The priesthood began holy, but degenerated. The "royal priesthood" would be like the original priesthood in meeting God's pleasure. It is our task to see that that priesthood is not corrupt in our day though we live so many, many years this side of its institution.)

5. AND I WILL COME NEAR TO YOU TO JUDGMENT: (Men cannot get away with sin for long. Every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompense. God will bring every work into judgment.) AND I WILL BE SWIFT WITNESS AGAINST THE SORCERERS, (In the strongest language, God forbid all types of sorcery to the Jews, Deut. 18:9-12. They were not to permit a witch to live, Exo. 22:18. During the reign of Saul, he had sought to rid the land of all such, I Sam. 28:3, although in his final distress, when God would not answer him, he resorted to a witch at Endor, I Sam. 28:5-7. Babylon has been called "the Mother Country of Diviners", and the influence of the Jews' seventy years there is evident by Malachi's mention of its prevalence here.) AND AGAINST THE ADULTERERS, (Is there any sin list in the Scriptures that does not include this shameful sin?) AND AGAINST THE FALSE SWEARERS, (The purpose of oaths among the Jews was to give assurance that the one taking the oath would surely keep his word. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" specifically condemned using God's name in an oath that was not carried out. Thus to swear and not keep it amounted to anarchy against the truth itself, for which God said He would not hold the person guiltless, Exo. 20:7.) AND AGAINST THOSE THAT OPPRESS THE HIRELING IN HIS WAGES, (Then as now, the rich hired the poor to do their work. God does not condemn that, but He does condemn the rich's abusing the poor, such as withholding their wages, Jas. 5:1-4.) THE WIDOW, AND THE FATHERLESS, AND TURN ASIDE THE STRANGER FROM HIS RIGHT, (They took advantage of the woman and the children whom death had robbed of their provider. They also turned cold shoulders to the strangers. God made special laws out of consideration for the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger, Exo. 22:22-24; Deut. 10:17-19; 14:28,29; 24:19-22. We are to

remember the affliction of the widows and the orphans, Jas. 1:27, and we are taught to be mindful of the stranger, Heb. 13:2; Matt. 25:41-43.) AND FEAR NOT ME, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, (The sin from which all the others stemmed, When men fear God, they depart from evil, Prov. 3:7, and when they fear God, they keep His commandments, Eccl. 12:13. Their lack of godly fear has been evident all through the book of Malachi.)

6. FOR I AM THE LORD, (Where the King James prints LORD in all capital letters, the American Standard translates it "Jehovah". This verse contains one such instance. "Jehovah" to the Jew meant the covenant-keeping God. This name receives a significant use in this passage.) I CHANGE NOT; (He is unvarying in His person, Jas. 1:17. When He swears, He will not repent or change, Psa. 110:4. In this passage, however, He is not looking so much at the overall as He is His covenant that He had made with the Israelites as a people. Through them, He had promised to bring the Messiah into the world. He still had that plan in mind in Malachi's day.) THEREFORE YE SONS OF JACOB ARE NOT CONSUMED. (It was not their particular holiness that had saved them as a people as much as it was God's covenant with their fathers and His unchanging faithfulness to that covenant. Had God not made and kept that covenant, they would have been consumed a long time before—just like the northern portion of Israel had whose existence was not necessary for the fulfillment of the covenant promises.)

7. EVEN FROM THE DAYS OF YOUR FATHERS YE ARE GONE AWAY FROM MINE ORDINANCES, AND HAVE NOT KEPT THEM, (Malachi did not fear telling them that their forefathers had been disobedient. They could read it in the earlier books of their Scripture: Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Judges, Isaiah, and Jeremiah—just to name a few. Their many national sorrows had come upon them simply because of disobedience. God had blessed every godly king they had ever had, and He cursed every disobedient one. He had exalted the nation when He was worshipped and served, and He had brought reproach upon it when it became sinful. These facts were matters of record. The truth was far from complimentary as is so often the case.)

7. RETURN UNTO ME, (God's constant appeal to the backslidden, Jer. 3:12,22; 18:11; Eze. 18:23. The prodigal

son of Luke 15 returned to his father's house. This word implies that sin separates.) AND I WILL RETURN UNTO YOU, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS. (The God whom they left was willing to receive them back. Like the father of the prodigal, He still rejoices over the penitent. Man can be sure that if he draws nigh to God, He will draw nigh to him, Jas. 4:8.) BUT YE SAID, WHEREIN SHALL WE RETURN? (No book emphasizes the blindness of sinners more than Malachi. Other passages declare the blinding nature of sin, Eph. 4:18; Rom. 11:25; II Pet. 1:9; II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 3:17; Acts 26:18. The people of Malachi's day demonstrated that blindness.)

8. WILL A MAN ROB GOD? (The obvious answer that people would give would be, "Of course, not.") YET YE HAVE ROBBED ME. (He startles them with a statement of their guilt before specifying exactly the way in which they had robbed Him.) BUT YE SAY, WHEREIN HAVE WE ROBBED THEE? (He was very abrupt in answering.) IN TITHES AND OFFERINGS. (The word "tithe" means "tenth". God claimed the tenth as His, Lev. 27:30,32. Even before the law of Moses, men of God recognized the sacredness of the tenth, Heb. 7:1,2; Gen. 14:17-20; 28:20-22. It is hard to imagine how people today can suppose that they can bring less to God! But, their obligation involved "offerings" besides the tenth.)

9. YE ARE CURSED WITH A CURSE; FOR YE HAVE ROBBED ME, EVEN THIS WHOLE NATION. (Disobedience brings its just punishment. They had robbed God of material things; succeeding verses show that their punishment consisted of material blessings being withheld. Some sins are practiced by individuals, some by families, some by groups, and some by whole countries. The "whole nation" was guilty of robbing God of tithes and offerings. In finances, people tend to be affected by the delinquency of others. Where you find one shirker, you find many. But, in doing so, people need to realize that they are ROBBING GOD when they withhold from Him their tithes and offerings. We have every reason to believe that in so doing, they are actually causing God to withhold His blessings from them. We need His blessings more than He needs our money. Who, then, is the actual loser? Who is getting hurt the more?)

10. BRING YE ALL THE TITHES (They had several different tithes. He wanted them to be faithful in all of them.)

INTO THE STOREHOUSE, (The temple, II Chron. 31:11,12; Neh. 10:38,39) THAT THERE MAY BE MEAT IN MINE HOUSE, (For the priests, who lived of the things of the temple, I Cor. 9:13) AND PROVE ME NOW HEREWITH, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, IF I WILL NOT OPEN YOU THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN, AND POUR YOU OUT A BLESSING, THAT THERE SHALL NOT BE ROOM ENOUGH TO RECEIVE IT. (God had made wonderful promises for obedience. He here showed a willingness to be put to the test. "The windows of heaven" were said to have been opened at the time of the flood, Gen. 7:11. God now promised to open those windows and deluge them with blessings. What a difference between those who serve God and those who don't!)

11. AND I WILL REBUKE THE DEVOURER (Probably the locust, the worst menace that their crops had besides drouth; often one accompanied the other) FOR YOUR SAKES, AND HE SHALL NOT DESTROY THE FRUITS OF YOUR GROUND; (This implies that that which they would not give to God, He had been seeing that they didn't get to have it for themselves.) NEITHER SHALL YOUR VINE CAST HER FRUIT BEFORE THE TIME IN THE FIELD, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS. (Apparently He had been letting their crops grow to a certain stage and the fruit to set on only to send locusts to devour the crops and to cause by other means the fruit to drop off the vine before it was ripe. In their blindness, they had probably cursed the locusts and other causes instead of thinking that God had sent them upon them because of their sins. Men today do the same thing.)

12. AND ALL NATIONS SHALL CALL YOU BLESSED; (When God blesses, others are able to see it, Matt. 6:4,6.) FOR YE SHALL BE A DELIGHTSOME LAND, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS. (A happy people living in a happy land—a condition envisioned by the Psalmist in Psa. 144:12-15.)

13. YOUR WORDS HAVE BEEN STOUT AGAINST ME, SAITH THE LORD. (In 2:17, He had dealt with them concerning their words. Here He brings the matter up again. We shall be justified or condemned by our words as well as by our deeds, Matt. 12:37.) YET YE SAY, WHAT HAVE WE SPOKEN SO MUCH AGAINST THEE? (Still blind! This book gives ample proof that speakers must do more than speak in generalities if people are to get the point. Like Malachi, they must specify.)

14. YE HAVE SAID, (He had the proof to back up his charge against them. How tragic when a speaker doesn't!) IT IS VAIN TO SERVE GOD; WHAT PROFIT IS IT THAT WE HAVE KEPT HIS ORDINANCE, AND THAT WE HAVE WALKED MOURNFULLY BEFORE THE LORD OF HOSTS? (Theirs was not a case of rendering acceptable service to God and He not blessing them; it was His having to chasten them because of their unacceptable service. We have just studied how He withheld nature's blessings from them because they had not been bringing tithes and offerings. Instead of questioning whether God blesses the faithful, they should have been questioning whether they were right before God! They sound like backsliders; "We have kept His ordinance.....We have walked mournfully before the Lord." Those who do little magnify that which they have done until it comes to seem great in their minds whereas those who do much realize it is so very little compared with what they would like to do for God.)

15. AND HOW WE CALL THE PROUD HAPPY: (More stout words.) YEA, THEY THAT WORK WICKEDNESS ARE SET UP; (Sometimes God lets the tree grow bigger before He cuts it down that it might make a bigger crashing when it falls.) YEA, THEY THAT TEMPT GOD ARE EVEN DELIVERED. (Just as they said in verse 14 that God did not actually bless those who did His will, in this verse they are saying that He does not punish those who violate it. He does punish all evildoers, but not always as soon as some people suppose that He should. All who think as those of Malachi's day should immediately read Psa. 73:1-19. God will have more to say upon this in the last verses of this chapter.)

16. THEN THEY THAT FEARED THE LORD (Though prevailing conditions get bad, there are usually those few who are striving to be faithful to God.) SPAKE OFTEN ONE TO ANOTHER: (Such times of evil draw good people closer together. That remnant in Malachi's day, the same as in our day, enjoyed getting together often for strengthening and encouragement.) AND THE LORD HEARKENED, AND HEARD IT, (He knows where the honest hearts and souls are, what they are doing, and what they are enduring. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," II Tim. 2:19.) AND A BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE WAS WRITTEN BEFORE HIM FOR THEM THAT FEARED THE LORD, AND THAT THOUGHT UPON HIS NAME. (He does not forget what people have done in His service, Heb. 6:10. Oh the

mindfulness of the Lord concerning them who are mindful of Him! If we do what He tells us to do, He will care for us here, Matt. 6:33, and will reward us in even greater ways at the resurrection of the just, Luke 14:13,14. He will not forget. Though Cornelius was not yet one of His, He had been noting His desire to do what was right, and the angel told him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God," Acts 9:4. God blessed him with the greatest blessing that He could; namely, having the gospel brought to him.)

17. AND THEY SHALL BE MINE, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, IN THAT DAY WHEN I MAKE UP MY JEWELS; AND I WILL SPARE THEM, AS A MAN SPARETH HIS OWN SON THAT SERVETH HIM. (When the bad fish are cast away, the good fish will be gathered into vessels, Matt. 13:47-50. The angels will do the sorting, assuring us that there will be no mistakes made—none saved that ought to be discarded, and none discarded that ought to be saved—and assuring us also that human thoughts about and human prejudices against God's people will in no way affect the angelic sorters.)

18. THEN SHALL YE RETURN (When He rewards the righteous and repays the wicked,) AND DISCERN BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED, BETWEEN HIM THAT SERVETH GOD AND HIM THAT SERVETH HIM NOT. (They would no longer say, "God does not bless the righteous;" or, "God does not punish the wicked." By God's treatment of men, they would be able to discern between the faithful and the wicked. The righteous have always been willing to rest their cases with God, knowing that all will end well for them when it will not for the others. The rightness of the righteous will be even more apparent in that day than now. It will be universally recognized then while only partly so now.)

CHAPTER 4

1. FOR BEHOLD, THE DAY COMETH, THAT SHALL BURN AS AN OVEN; (Coming judgment! Probably the final judgment yet to come, although many aspects of the prophecy might suggest its fulfillment in 70 A.D., when God poured out His wrath against the Jewish nation for their many generations of sinning. "Shall burn as an oven" is a reminder that every picture of judgment in the Bible

is calculated to excite the greatest fear over that coming day for those who are unprepared.) AND ALL THE PROUD, YEA, AND ALL THAT DO WICKEDLY, SHALL BE STUBBLE; AND THE DAY THAT COMETH SHALL BURN THEM UP, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, (This is God's reply to their smart remark in chapter 3, verse 15: "We call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up." He says that the proud will not be happy nor the wicked set up, for the day of judgment will cast them into God's oven. Yes, all will be able to discern then between those who are righteous and those who are wicked, those who serve God and those who do not.) THAT IT SHALL LEAVE THEM NEITHER ROOT NOR BRANCH. (They shall be utterly cut off with no hope of recovery. That which is above the ground will be cut off, and that which is below the ground will be pulled up. Psa. 1 and 37, as well as other passages, present valuable material contrasting the ultimate states of the godly and the wicked.)

2. BUT UNTO YOU THAT FEAR MY NAME SHALL THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARISE WITH HEALING IN HIS WINGS; AND YE SHALL GO FORTH, AND GROW UP AS CALVES OF THE STALL. (Christ, the light of the world, is here predicted in a similar title, "the Sun of righteousness." Those whose deeds are wrought in God come to the light, John 3:21, but the wicked hated the light of Christ, John 3:19,20, and they expressed that hatred visibly, Luke 2:34,35. In the day of judgment, to which this passage is likely looking, Christ will indeed come as a great blessing to the godly. What appears healthier and happier than calves of the stall that frisk and play with life and energy to spare! The righteous will be like them.)

3. AND YE SHALL TREAD DOWN THE WICKED; FOR THEY SHALL BE ASHES UNDER THE SOLES OF YOUR FEET IN THE DAY THAT I SHALL DO THIS, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS. (The righteous, who have suffered here because of the ungodly, are to rule and reign with Christ, II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21; 2:26,27; 22:5. Like Moses, we do well to suffer affliction with the people of God for the short season of earthly life than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for that brief span, Heb. 11:25,26.)

4. REMEMBER YE THE LAW OF MOSES MY SERVANT, WHICH I COMMANDED UNTO HIM IN HOREB FOR ALL ISRAEL, WITH THE STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS. (As God nears the end of His Old Testament revelation, He

looks backward to the time when He gave the law to Moses. Following this book's close, Heaven would remain silent for nearly four centuries. Echoing in the ears of all Israel were to be these words, "Remember ye the law of Moses!" for they were to live under that law until the messenger of the new covenant would come and replace it with the new.)

5. BEHOLD, I WILL SEND YOU ELIJAH THE PROPHET BEFORE THE COMING OF THE GREAT AND DREADFUL DAY OF THE LORD:

6. AND HE SHALL TURN THE HEART OF THE FATHERS TO THE CHILDREN, AND THE HEART OF THE CHILDREN TO THEIR FATHERS, LEST I COME AND SMITE THE EARTH WITH A CURSE. (Having looked back to the time of the giving of the law, God next looked forward to the coming of John the Baptist, here spoken of as Elijah. That John was the fulfillment of this "Elijah" prophecy, see Matt. 17:10-13. Gabriel quoted this very passage to Zacharias when announcing the birth of John, Luke 1:17. Some in Jesus' day were more prone to think of Him as "Elijah" than as the Messiah, Matt. 16:13,14.

In bringing these studies in the book of Malachi to a close, it is evident that Malachi was not born in a time of encouragement religiously speaking. There was much sin on every hand, and the priestly leaders were just as guilty as the people. To his own generation, Malachi was raised up of God to lift up his voice against their sins in the name of the Lord of hosts. That he did a faithful job is apparent from a study of the book. Though a needed man and a faithful man, the probability is that he was not an appreciated man. But, like all true saints of God, he realized that his life on earth was to be but a span, and that he was to live a life of obedience to the God who created him. Long ago, he passed from the scenes of this life, but his person still lives with God, and for his faithfulness, we are bound to suppose that he will be among that number who will inhabit God's New Jerusalem.