

# The Minor Prophets

## Habakkuk

### Structure:

1. H's question – re sin in Judah
2. God's reply – He is bringing the Chaldeans
3. H's second Q. How can you use the Chaldeans
4. God's reply. The vision is Faith in God. And God will also judge the Chaldeans in the long term.
5. H prays and praises God with new understanding.

Habakkuk means The embracer, either of love or to understand God's ways.

H. prophesied during the last days of the kingdom of Judah. The best days were now in the past. Israel had been scattered 150 years earlier, during the days of the great king Hezekiah. Josiah had led the nation in repentance and a shallow revival, but had died in battle. It was probably given in the days of Jehoiakim. Nineveh, the Aysirian kingdom had been overthrown some years earlier, and the kingdom of Babylon had now arisen. Hezekiah had shown the Babylonian envoys around Jerusalem and they had seen the wealth of the nation. He had done it to make an ally against Nineveh, not dreaming that soon the real threat would be Babylon. He should have trusted the Lord and not in the arm of the flesh. Isaiah prophesied to him that the riches of the kingdom would be carried to Babylon. That prophesy is being now fulfilled in H.'s day. Other prophets of this period were Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

1. H sees violence in the nation and unrighteousness. The Law seems powerless to stem the tide. Wicked men rule in the political, priestly, legal systems of the day. H cries to God in a crisis of faith. Where is God? H wails to God in a complaint about the total breakdown of law and order in his nation, despite his prayers.

2. God answers him:

I will work a work which you will not believe: Quoted by Paul Acts 13:41 in respect of the preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus to the Jews. But here it refers to God's raising up of the Chaldeans to punish Judah.

3. H replies:

But they are not pure, and your eyes are purer than to behold evil! How can God use a godless nation? They worship idols! I will wait on God to see and understand.

4. God replies:

There is a vision. Make it to be visible to all, write it on tablets, signboards, to make people RUN. Eager faith, but also perhaps to flee and not hope for intervention.

The vision is for a later day, not for now, a day that will soon come. The gospel day? Yes but also the day of disaster in Judah. God's word can be irrelevant to many until the day of great need comes. Cf the nazis who gathered in Cologne to the only building not destroyed – a Jewish synagogue!

### **What is the vision?**

“Behold the proud. His soul is not upright in him, But the just shall live by his faith.”

This is the shortest and most powerful reduction of God's will for man. It is the basis of the new

testament, quoted Rom 1:17, Heb 10:38, Gal 3:11. It was also Abraham's way of life. Other translations say "faithfulness" bringing out the quality of active life not just mental assent. There are 2 ways of life, pride/conceit or humility/faith. These refer to the basic irreducible foundations of life. A man is righteous not because he does a righteous deed but because in the deepest part of his being there is faith, and faith-fulness. If there is not faith then there is pride. The choice is stark. If there is not faith, then there is not uprightness, there is crookedness in the soul. The result is no life. Goodness is simple, sin is complex. Faith simplifies our thinking and our living. Pride makes us seek all kinds of excuses, resulting in craftiness and "cleverness". Campbell Morgan gives the example: which is easiest to imagine? A straight stick or a crooked one? The answer is that there are so many permutations of crookedness that it is impossible to imagine the crooked stick.

Pride is always destructive and keeps God out. Repentance and faith, in a man who may be poor and oppressed, but the result is life. This life is manifest in the psalm of praise at the end of the book, when H describes his triumph, and that God has made his feet like hinds' feet. The process is from conflict, fear and dismay to peace, and faith. God reveals:

The Chaldeans shall be used to punish Judah but shall themselves be judged in their turn.. God denounces five sinful practices that shall be judged in either Jew or Chaldean:

- a. Pride v 4
- b. Greed v.5 - 7
- c. Covetousness 9 – 13
- d. Drunkenness 15 – 16
- e. Idolatry 18 – 19

Finally H prays, not for revival, but for life. The Hebrew word revive means "give life". This is the only petition of the prayer. (Shigioneth is totally obscure and is probably a musical instruction.)

Reminding God of his dealings with the nations over many years. Teman and Paran mentioned in v3 refer to the capital of Edom (Teman) and the wilderness area (Paran) where God tried and purified the children of Israel.

The description of God is one of His exalted being dealing in judgement and exaltation over the affairs of men that they may fear.

The final praise of H. He describes the failing crops due to the invasion of the land. But H will continue to keep his eyes on God and rejoice. He will climb high in the mountains and thus keep perspective above the immediate to the eternal and the promises that shall be fulfilled in their season.

**There are five abiding lessons:**

1. Always talk to God honestly about your conflicts. Don't just complain to yourself, or worst of all to friends and neighbours.
2. Always listen for the answer. Taxing but with great rewards.
3. Always learn to wait for the outworking in its season. Hard discipline.
4. Let faith be affirmed though there be little outward confirmation.
5. Pray boldly and expect great things from God. The result of these things in the heart will be right perspective, the most essential part of walking with God.

The greater vision 2:14. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Note that glory is already filling all the earth, but that men do not have that knowledge.

# Haggai

The prophet Haggai along with Zechariah and Malachi were post exilic prophets and thus do belong in their position at the end of the OT. Though strictly they belong alongside Ezra and Nehemiah and Esther. Haggai and Zechariah aided the building of the temple with their prophetic ministry, while Malachi is thought to have helped with the building of the walls 100 years after the rebuilding of the temple.

**Chapter 1.** The building of the temple was stopped by force of arms and threats from the occupying Persian forces. 15 years of delay and the people had begun to accept this state of decline and impossibility. Haggai reproves the people for settling down to enjoy this present age for selfish reasons, and exhorts them to consider and take heart to rebuild the temple.

1. People were saying that the time had not come.
2. People were building their own homes.
3. The result is that God's blessing has been withdrawn.

**Chapter 2.** a vision of the future glory of God's house in a still coming age. This is doubtless referring to the church and the Messiah, and to all the glory of the gospel age.

1. Zerubabel – Christ – I am with you.
2. I will shake the earth and the heavens! God will shake all things in earth and heaven, in all realms, angels and men. That men not hold to anything anywhere except God Himself.
3. The greater glory of the coming house.
4. The uncleanness of the people.
5. Promise of blessing.
6. Zerubabel the Messiah.

## Jonah (Hebrew – Dove)

The book of Jonah concerns the sending of a prophet from Israel to Nineveh the capital of the Assyrian Empire. Nineveh was situated on the Tigris river. Nimrod the infamous hunter mentioned in Genesis 10: 8-10 founded Nineveh and also Babylon. Several Hebrew prophets warned the city of impending doom. Under Jonah judgment was deferred due to the wholesale repentance of the city. But about one hundred years later in 612 BC the city was so completely destroyed that all trace of it was lost. It was assumed to have been a biblical myth until it was discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by an archaeologist named Sir Austen Layard. The discovery made clear what a tremendous capital it had once been with huge palaces of great luxury, a huge library, and massive fortifications. It was overthrown by an alliance of Medes, Babylonians and Scythians, but only after a siege lasting 2 months.

Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (782 – 753 BC), and according to II Kgs 14:25 aided the recovery of part of Israel's territory.

However, the book of Jonah is not typical of the other minor prophets in that it does not contain the prophecies he delivered, rather it is an account of one major event in his life. The prophecy thus prefigures the death and resurrection of Christ and His subsequent commission to minister salvation to the Gentile nations.

Jonah's difficulties with preaching to the Assyrians was because of the national prejudice against their chief foe of the period. Jonah disobeys God through lack of compassion with his enemies. He takes ship to Tarshish ( a port in the western Mediterranean near Gibraltar.) He falls asleep in the state of rebellion and is sleeping as the judgment of God sweeps over the ship in the form of a storm. Jonah is woken up by the other sailors. Jonah sees that he must be thrown overboard if the ship is to be saved. This is an interesting commentary on the new testament instruction to expel unrepentant sinners from the church. Jonah himself realized that if this were not done, then the whole ship would perish. If the picture is applied to the unrepentant, then it gives light to the whole purpose of the discipline since it is when expelled that Jonah is brought to see his great need, and then to call on God from the depths. It can also be seen here that God deals with men on the basis of death and resurrection. He brings Jonah down into death and from there into resurrection. Often God has to allow things to get worse in our lives so that we may call on God and be brought to an experience of God's almighty power in the resurrection from the dead.

When Jonah was spit out of the mouth of the whale, it is likely that his physical form was different, one thing is clear that he would have been through an acid bath in the stomach of the whale. He might even have had a bleached appearance. This is not of importance, because the vital thing is that he would have been humbled by the experience, and also brought to an understanding of God's power to save the worst of sinners. His preaching would have been with power and authority, in assurance both of God's severity but also His power to save from the depths of sin. This brings the saying of Jesus into living relevance when He says that no sign will be given to an unbelieving generation except the sign of the prophet Jonah (Mat 16:1 ff.)

There is a further lesson in this book of the true meaning of repentance. Jesus said that the people of Nineveh repented Mat 12 :41. In Jonah 3:6 it is recorded that the king of Nineveh arose from his throne, and humbled himself in sackcloth and ashes. They then cried mightily to God, as Jonah himself had done from the whale. (cf. Psalm 18.)

The final lesson of the book concerns the hardness of the preacher. He fulfilled his mission and led a great revival but his heart was not in it. Jonah was a hard man and needed a deeper work of God

himself. God dealt with him by both providing for him and then drying up his provision. God sent a worm to spoil Jonah's comfort. God's sovereign intervention is revealed by one of the key phrases of the book :

- 1:4 The Lord sent a great storm
- 1:17 The Lord had prepared a great fish
- 4:6 The Lord had prepared a plant
- 4:7 The Lord prepared a worm
- 4:8 God prepared a vehement east wind

God was both in the great and little things that happened to Jonah, the miraculous storms, winds, plants and living creatures that God used to cause His servant to know and do his will. We can so easily feel that we are superior to others, but God is able to humble us and speak to us, and so make and change the message that the preachers preach. The great message of God is bound up with his love, his forbearance, His appeal to men to repent, His mercy on those that repent, and His power of death and resurrection to deal with the hearts of men.

**Lessons:**

1. God loves the heathen, and wants them to know His love and mercy.
2. God's people are often reluctant to follow through in this work.
3. God forgives and receives all who repent.
4. God uses all means to speak and deal with His servants.

# Malachi

Approx 100 years after Zechariah and Haggai, i.e after the rebuilding of the temple. He is associated traditionally with the rebuilding of the walls in the time of Nehemiah during the reforms of Ezra at that period. (450 –400 BC).

A remnant had returned from captivity

606 BC	Judah conquered
586 BC	Destruction of Jerusalem
536 BC	Return from captivity
520 BC	Temple built
478 BC	Esther becomes queen of Persia
457 BC	Ezra goes to Jerusalem
444 BC	Nehemiah rebuilds walls of Jerusalem

The Jews had been back in the land for 100 years, in God's plan and in answer to the intercessions of men like Daniel. The captivity had purged the land of idolatry, but the priests had become lazy, sacrifices were offered that were inferior, tithes and offerings were neglected, and intermarriage with idolatrous neighbors was a common practice. Malachi preaches the hope and certainty of coming Messiah, but also warns that this will be a day of searching, and judgment.

**CH. 1.** Malachi begins with a review of the fact that Jacob/Israel is the chosen people of God, loved and precious. But they had doubted this love and this led them not to love Him. The question of His love revolves around the brotherly conflict between Jacob and Esau, which itself symbolises the conflict between the Flesh and the Spirit. God loves His son Jesus but hates the carnal man Adam. The Old Man He has crucified that we might be made new on One New man. Esau shall not be blessed of God. He then rebukes the standard of sacrifices offered, they would not be acceptable to an earthly ruler, let alone God Himself. He then foresees the day when God will be loved over all the earth. God is calling the people to a deeper experience and realization of the love of God. He declares He had loved them, which covers all their past to that point. Their answer is "In what way has God loved us?"

The final prophecy concerns the Gentiles. This has always been God's heart, that His name be great among the nations.

**CH. 2.** The word priest had become synonymous with corruption, love of money and low morals. He reminds them that they were called to partake of a great covenant of peace in and through Levi. The law of truth was in his mouth. He walked with God in peace. But instead they have caused many to stumble at the law.

Jews were divorcing their wives and marrying foreign wives. This was a double sin. Envious eyeing of surrounding nations produced the feeling that it was not worth serving God. V. 17 declares that the people were wearying God with their words. There was corruption everywhere in priesthood and subsequently in morals. Malachi reproves the nation for the standards of behavior in marriage.

**CH. 3. V 1 – 6.** The coming day of the Lord will answer such doubts. The day of His coming will be like a refiner's fire. God will purge and cleanse. This is His way. When Christ came, there were few who could bear to be with Him for long. His words and His ways were so challenging and searching to His own followers. But to His enemies He was a total rebuke to their lifestyle, especially to the religious leaders.

v. 6 I the Lord change not. The great declaration! This is why they were not all consumed. Here is the hope of the human race, namely that God does not change.

v7 – 12 A rebuke re the neglect of tithes and offerings and the resultant loss of blessing that this produced. If we give, then God will receive our giving and reward us. This is confirmed in the new testament. Tithing itself is the scriptural means given to man to acknowledge God as the giver of all things.

v13 – 18. The nation did not believe God's promises re tithes. Money given to God was wasted they believed. "That day" would reveal the truth.

**CH. 4.** The coming day of the Lord. In this chapter Malachi foresees the day of the Lord. This prophecy covers the whole period, incl the Christian era, right up to the time of the end.

He exhorts to remember the law of Moses, and also predicts that Elijah will come before the Lord appears. He last appeals to the nation to keep loving family values.

The last word of the book is curse, which indicates the hopeless condition of the human race without the coming of the Messiah. But it is not an indication that the curse is the last word of the old testament, for the clause begins with the word "lest" which indicates that God has always provided a means of escape from the curse, both in the old and then more fully and perfectly in the new. It is never His desire to curse but rather to bless.

The rabbis reading this passage publicly always close the reading with v 5, not verse 6 as if they fear the last word should be curse. This shows their superstitious way of reading the Bible. God is greater in all His pronouncements.

# Micah

Jotham 751 – 736 BC

Ahaz 743 – 728 BC (Overlapping his father in the rule of the kingdom with co-regency)

Hezekiah 728 – 696 BC

Destruction of Samaria 722 BC

Destruction of Jerusalem July 19 586 BC

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea, and began his ministry shortly after Isaiah had begun his ministry. He doubtless knew of the visitation of God to Isaiah in the temple following the death of Uzziah.

**Ch 1:** Micah begins with prophecies announcing the impending judgment of God on the northern kingdom Israel. Judgment must come because her wounds are incurable (v. 9). Cities are mentioned by name, thus making the prophecy specific and unmistakable. As if God were to mention Epsom and Guildford and expose the sins being committed in them. The sins mentioned are idolatry (v.7) and the worship of false Gods in Samaria, instituted from the beginning of Israel as a separate kingdom under the rule of Jeroboam.

**Ch 2:** Here the sins of Israel are recounted. Their sin is covetousness, and the violent seizing of houses and lands. Ahab was the most famous to do this taking away Naboth's vineyard. However this took place several generations before the ministry of Micah. It was during the reign of Ahaz that the northern kingdom was finally overthrown by the Assyrians. Micah also denounces the false prophets who prophesy of wine and drink, speaking a lie. The mark of the false prophet is ever to pander to the flesh and to speak to people what they want to hear.

**Ch 2: 12 – 13:** God announces that despite the coming judgment, yet there will be a further act of ingathering later on, with God Himself be at their head.

**Ch 3:** The northern kingdom is rebuked for the attitude of the rulers. God promises that in this condition, prayer will not be answered: v. 4. This state of affairs will be compounded with the prophets and seers having no vision.

However Micah does have a word from God, but only the word of rebuke, to declare the sin of Israel, but also the sin of Jerusalem. There he denounces in v. 11 the fact that the priests teach the word for money, and prophets even prophesy for money. In Cameroon there is a ministry set up that will pray a certain amount in return for money! Therefore, the destruction of Zion and Jerusalem is foretold. This prophecy was fulfilled several times, but brought repentance in Hezekiah's day, see Jeremiah 26: 18 – 19.

**Ch 4:** Prophecy of the latter days, fulfilled in the church. God exalts His house, the church, and many nations, the Gentiles flow into it, the word of power and of the gospel goes out into the world, leading to transformed lives and the end of bitter racist feuds and wars. This has then an even greater fulfillment in the millennial reign. This blessed state was the hope of all Israel at the mouth of the prophets and was to keep them faithful and holy till it was fulfilled. It was given them to make them know how deeply they had fallen from their hope.

**Ch 4: 9 – 5:** Jerusalem is in grave danger because there is no king in the midst of the nation. Therefore they would be delivered to Babylon. This was quite unusual in the day in which was given, because it was not Babylon that threatened the nations but Nineveh, the capital of Assyria

that threatened the nations.

**Ch 5: 2 – 5:** Prophecy of the coming Christ. His place of birth. Note that this prophecy was quoted by Herod's advisors and then used by Herod, who believing the prophecy nevertheless tried to kill the promised Messiah. Cf Julian the apostate of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. His ministry, feeding the flock of God. His wider ministry to the Gentiles. Notice the arresting statement in v 5a that Messiah will be peace, foreseeing Ephesians 2: He is our peace.

**Ch 5: 5 – 15:** God's judgment on Assyria because of their sorceries and worship of false gods.

**Ch 6:** God's contention with Israel: for what reason have they been so rebellious against God. God reminds Israel of His mighty acts to establish the nation, sending Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Notice God's unashamed use of a woman to help in the deliverance of the nation. Compare with Esther, Deborah, Mary and Elizabeth, Sarah, Huldah, Hannah.

Micah responds to his own prophecy! When God speaks, it challenges all, including the vessels that he uses to speak! He realizes that his sin is too great to be atoned by human means. He realizes that God requires repentance leading to a change of conduct, which can be summed up in the memorable phrase: To do justly (one's own character), to love mercy (not as a pharisee, but compassionate to sinners,) and walk humbly with God (the centre of all the God requires – relationship with God and love for God.)

But the rich and mighty men of Israel are scornful of God's ways and therefore God will take away prosperity. V. 15 – sowing and not reaping.

Final prophecy: that God will deal with man's deepest and most persistent enemy, in born sin. God will remove it, and give man a life out of sin's dominion.

# Nahum

Prophesied approx 100 years after Jonah who first spoke of God's displeasure to the Ninevites. The date is a little uncertain, but can be dated within 50 years, because the fall of No (an Egyptian city mentioned in 3:8) took place in 663 BC. Nineveh fell in 612 BC and so the prophecy doubtless was given between these dates. Nahum's home town cannot be identified with certainty. Capernaum means village of Nahum. Elkosh could be a town in Judah. He was a contemporary of Zephaniah who also predicted the downfall of Nineveh Zeph 2:13-15. Nineveh's population and size can be deduced from Jonah who says that there were 120,000 infants(?) and that the whole complex was over 3 days walk, about 30 miles perhaps. This along with the excavations suggests a pop of over half a million.

Historically it is interesting that 1 v 8 and 2:6 declare the city will be overthrown with an overflowing flood. Ctesias, a Gk historian of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC recounts that a sudden inundation of the Tigris river swept away the city gates, permitting the Babylonian army to breach the defences. Other historical refs are that Sennacherib may be the one referred to in 1:11. He was killed by his sons after besieging Judah. His name was cut off 1:14 and ended with the suicide of his great grandson in the last days of the Empire.

The subject of the book is preeminently the wrath of God. This book more than any other in the Bible is exclusively devoted to this theme. In the first passage of the book the writer uses 7 words to describe the anger of God:

1. Jealous. V 2 This word "menhin" speaks of the intensity of the wrath of God. It implies the love of God, and is a word of feeling.
2. Avenges. V 2. This is the word of retribution, not retaliation. This is objective and quite deliberate.
3. Wrath. V 2. The Heb word comes from a word meaning to cross over as when the people crossed over the Jordan. It implies that a line has been crossed and a conclusion reached by God.
4. Anger. V 3. Pictorial word implying hard breathing.
5. Indignation. V 6. Here another pictorial word suggesting foaming at the mouth, suggesting the essence of strong negative feelings.
6. Fierceness. V 6. Means burning.
7. Fury. V 6. Means heat white hot in intensity.

Nahum had a vision of God having crossed over from mercy into the release of His wrath on man. Nahum saw God angry. He declares first of all the state of God's being before he declares what God will do. God feels passionate, but acts deliberately and is never capricious or whimsical. His actions are worked out with utmost care and accuracy, and not with sudden lashing out, but with deliberate foretelling to the objects of His wrath so that they may change their ways. Wrath becomes the master of man, but it is never the master of God. From this we can see:

Yahwe's wrath is:

1. born of love v 2
2. slow to cross the line of activity v 2
3. it always is the servant of Him who is love v 7
4. irresistible when once He begins to move in vengeance V 6
5. is able to discriminate in the midst of sweeping actions, saving His own from the flood. V 7 - 8
6. Provides a refuge for His own. V. 7.

Note too that this is good news to the people oppressed by the wicked Assyrian empire. V. 15. The

proclamation of judgment is peace to the troubled nations. It is terror to evil doers, but comfort to the righteous.

Yahwe's action is:

1. To bring an invading army, 2:1-4
2. To send the nation into captivity 2:7
3. To spoil the nation of her treasures 2:9
4. To cause the nobles to be treated as they treated others 2:11-13
5. To make Nineveh a spectacle: 3:6
6. To kill her children 3:10
7. To kill the armies of Nineveh 3:3

There is no defence against God's judgment, at least not militarily. The only defence is to have watchful shepherds who warn the nation. But Nineveh's shepherds are all asleep, 3:18 and so there is no remedy.

# Zechariah

The appeal of the Lord through the prophet is that the nation of the Jews returned from exile would learn a lesson from their recent past and turn back to the Lord. Fathers (previous generations) and prophets pass away, but God's word abides for ever.

## **PART I: CHS 1 – 6**

The prophet sees 9 visions in the first part of the book from chs 1 – 6. These were for the encouragement of Joshua and Zerubabel in the building of the temple. (Note this temple was later destroyed again, and the temple that was standing in Jesus' was built by Herod in the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.)

### **Vision 1. The Horsemen under the myrtle trees.**

(Hadassah means myrtle, though she would not have been famous at the time of writing.) They report that the whole world is at peace. This is due to the Pax imposed by the one world empire, one superpower of Darius the Mede. He also sees a "The Angel of the Lord" a phrase which many have interpreted as referring to Christ the Son of God. Once this step has been taken, it is possible on several occasions to identify Christ in a story, as in the story of Samson and the announcement of his birth.

This angel intercedes for Jerusalem with great longing. This is either the angels or Christ interceding on our behalf. Both are possible. (Matt 18:10, and Luke 22:32.) Then the Angel turns and speaks good words to Zechariah. God is displeased with the nations that have punished Jerusalem. God is returning and will cause the house to be rebuilt. The seventy years are mentioned and this is again the repeated number of years of exile. 70 years of sabbath years, refers to 490 years in which the land never rested.

### **Vision 2. Four horns and four carpenters.**

The four horns are the enemies of Israel (Babylong, Nineveh, Egypt, Greece, Syria, Rome etc...) that have attacked her over the generations from the 4 points of the compass. God raised up 4 carpenters to deal with the horns. Whatever the enemy, God is able to raise up a perfect solution in due season. Luther for the RC church. Wesley and Whitefield for the religious indifference of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Vision 3. The measuring line.**

The plumb line is the word of the Lord and the determined will and power of the most high. We can measure God's church and work through the eyes of unbelief or depression, but we must look at God and His work through the eyes of faith. God declares here what he will do. Jerusalem will be rebuilt! The villages will be repopulated!

### **Vision 4. Joshua the High Priest.**

The priesthood in the return was in a greatly defiled state as typified by the dirty ragged state of Joshua. Note that his unworthy and unclean state did not disqualify him, but he was cleansed by the grace of God and made able to stand and minister in holiness. Joshua is defended from all the attacks and accusations of the wicked one by the angel of the Lord, who is at least like Christ at this moment. Joshua is a brand plucked from the fire like Wesley literally, so we spiritually.

**Vision 5. The candlesticks.**

The church, or Israel in that day, is the candlestick, and is invisibly sustained by a supply of oil and grace that is invisible. The grace rises up through the wick and is inexhaustible though the day be of apparent small things, yet the spiritual house shall be built by the Spirit of the Lord and by grace. Every obstacle shall be cast down. To identify the 2 olive trees is not easy, but the obvious meaning is the Holy Spirit. The channel for the Oil to flow would then be the priestly ministry which would correspond to the anointed ones who stand before the Lord. The relationship between the lamp and the oil is one of constant connection. There is no store in the wick, and there can be no storing up of grace. We must receive hourly, daily supply.

**Vision 6. The flying scroll.**

30' x 15' in dimension and hovering over the nation, condemning the sins of STEALING, and LYING or FALSE SWEARING. If God is to bless the nation then there must be repentance and holiness or there will be cursing.

**Vision 7. The Ephah (a measure such as a gallon drum.)**

The vision is written to expose the wickedness of the traders in Jerusalem, The wicked would be removed from the midst of Jerusalem and carried to Babylon where they belong. To judge the wicked and to save the chosen race from cursing.

**Vision 8. The chariots.**

Chariots of the Lord sent forth to do His will among the nations to bring nations up or down as He decrees.

**Vision 9. Joshua, the Messiah.**

This is a vision of Joshua who was a builder of the temple, but it stretches beyond him to someone far greater, that should be priest and king, thus referring to Melchisedek and the greater priestly ministry of Christ.

**PART II CHS 7 - 8**

These prophecies are provoked by a question to the prophet re fasting and ritual weeping and affliction. The answer is in 7:5. The people did not minister to the Lord but to their own sense of religious guilt. God requires righteousness not religion 7: 8 – 14. The result of this will be great blessing upon Jerusalem:

1. God will dwell in her midst 8:3
2. People will live to a great age 8:4
3. Happy children shall fill her streets 8:5
4. The nation gathered back in 8: 8
5. Blessed fields 8:12
6. Joy and gladness in their service of God 8:19
7. The Jews shall provoke many to seek the Lord 8:21-23

**PART III CHS 9 – 14**

In this section the temple is apparently rebuilt and the prophet looks further afield to more distant events.

9 1-8. The invasion and destruction of the lands around Israel. This is seen as fulfilled by Alexander the Great.

9 9-17. Messiah shall come riding on a colt. He shall come and deliver the prisoners of hope, by the blood of the covenant. Beautiful specific prophecies re the new covenant. The prophecies swing between the new testament and also the victory of the Maccabees against the power of the Greek empire under Antiochus Epiphanes. (v 13.)

10 1- 12. In answer to prayer God will gather again and save his people.

11 1 – 17 and 13:5-9 The Shepherd – Messiah.

3 Shepherds cut off 11:8, Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians (Matt. 21 – 23)

The price of the Shepherd: 30 pieces of silver. 11:12 Matt 26 :15.

Thrown in the temple 11:13 Mat 27:5

Bought the potters field 11:13 and mat 27:6

Breaking of covenant relationship with Israel 11.10.

Shepherd smitten 13:7 Matt 26:31

Wounded in hands 13:6

The will of God in the cross 13:7

12 & 13. The people are returned to the land in unbelief. Jerusalem is the centre stage for political upheaval. A burdensome stone for all nations 12:3.

Israel's leaders like fire: 12:6

12:9 Israel shall mourn for Jesus, longing for Him and shall see Him whom they have pierced.

12:10 the spirit shall be poured out upon them

13: 1 a fountain opened for cleansing

13:2 false prophecy and the unclean spirit pass out of the land. Idolatry destroyed.

14:2 Armageddon – all nations against Jerusalem.

14:4 Christ's return to the mount of Olives

14:4 A mighty earthquake

14:5 all the saints with Christ

14:8 Living waters shall go out of Jerusalem (c.f. Ezekiel 48) to heal the dead sea.

14:9 Millennial reign. Christ king over all the earth.

14:12 A plague of God's great power to overthrow all resisting armies

14:16 the feast of tabernacles in perfect fulfilment (pentecostal).

14:20 The bells of the horses tinkle with the constant reminder of the nature of God: Holiness unto the Lord.

# Zephaniah

Three main phases to this prophecy that was given in the days of Jeremiah, and most importantly in the days of King Josiah. They were days of revival but of shallow revival. Thus the warning is more poignant.

## **I. Wrath for Judah. 1:1 – 2:3**

The Scythian invasion and then the Babylonian. Because of Judah's idolatry. The Great Day of God's wrath.

## **II. Wrath for the nations. 2:4 – 3:8**

Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, (Cities of the Philistines, or Cherethites). Ethiopia and Nineveh.

## **III. The Refreshing of God's people with a pure language. 3:9 – 20.**

The refreshing of the tongue as referring to a renewal of Spirit among God's people giving them a new tongue.