



# KINGDOM PROPHETS

Forty Daily Devotions  
from Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum,  
Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi  
(Based on the NKJV)

## Introduction

The Bible contains a section of 12 books that are often referred to as “The Minor Prophets.” In order of their appearance in the Bible, they are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. They are not described as “minor” because they are less important than the writings of any of the other prophets, but because they are shorter in length (most of them can easily be read in a single sitting). Therefore, the term “Minor Prophets” has nothing to do with the “quality” of what God used these men to say, but only with the “quantity” (or length) of their messages. Together, their indictments of Israel’s drifting away from God set the stage for the New Covenant that will be ushered in through Jesus Christ.

## Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	Hosea 1:1-2:23	09/15/22
2	Hosea 3:1-5:7	09/16/22
3	Hosea 5:8-7:16	09/17/22
4	Hosea 8:1-9:17	09/18/22
5	Hosea 10:1-12:8	09/19/22
6	Hosea 12:9-14:9	09/20/22
7	Joel 1	09/21/22
8	Joel 2	09/22/22
9	Joel 3	09/23/22
10	Amos 1:1-2:5	09/24/22
11	Amos 2:6-3:15	09/25/22
12	Amos 4:1-5:9	09/26/22
13	Amos 5:10-6:8	09/27/22
14	Amos 6:9-7:17	09/28/22
15	Amos 8:1-9:15	09/29/22
16	Obadiah 1	09/30/22
17	Jonah 1 & 2	10/01/22
18	Jonah 3 & 4	10/02/22
19	Micah 1:1-2:9	10/03/22
20	Micah 2:10-4:8	10/04/22

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	Micah 4:9-6:5	10/05/22
22	Micah 6:6-7:20	10/06/22
23	Nahum 1:1-2:7	10/07/22
24	Nahum 2:8-3:19	10/08/22
25	Habakkuk 1:1-2:11	10/09/22
26	Habakkuk 2:12-3:19	10/10/22
27	Zephaniah 1:1-2:9	10/11/22
28	Zephaniah 2:10-3:20	10/12/22
29	Haggai 1	10/13/22
30	Haggai 2	10/14/22
31	Zechariah 1:1-2:5	10/15/22
32	Zechariah 2:6-4:10	10/16/22
33	Zechariah 4:11-6:13	10/17/22
34	Zechariah 6:14-8:8	10/18/22
35	Zechariah 8:9-9:10	10/19/22
36	Zechariah 9:11-11:3	10/20/22
37	Zechariah 11:4-12:14	10/21/22
38	Zechariah 13:1-14:20	10/22/22
39	Malachi 1:1-2:12	10/23/22
40	Malachi 2:13-4:6	10/24/22

## Day 1: Hosea 1:1-2:23

*“Say to your brethren, ‘My people,’ and to your sisters, ‘Mercy is shown.’” (Hosea 2:1)*

### “Mercy Is Shown”

We should always be reminded of the difference between grace and mercy. Grace is when we receive good things we do not deserve, while mercy is when we do not receive the bad things we do deserve. Hosea’s ministry began during the closing years of the reign of Judah’s King Uzziah and ended sometime in the early years of the reign of Hezekiah. With that in mind, we understand that it was somewhere around 750 BC “When the LORD began to speak by Hosea” (1:2) and that the LORD spoke through him until sometime around 710 BC. His ministry began during a time of great monetary and military success for the people of God. Hosea, like his fellow contemporary prophets (Amos, Isaiah, and Micah), was assigned the sad responsibility of announcing that God’s people violated the covenant that was explained to them in Deuteronomy, so therefore, the blessings they had been experiencing were soon to be followed by the curses and judgment that God promised to His people when they were disobedient to Him. Hosea’s message boldly exposed the people’s disrespect of their covenant with God and announced their pending judgment while it also expressed God’s desire to restore His people if they would only repent of their sins and turn to Him. Through the sad imagery of his own unfaithful wife, Hosea’s message clearly revealed that “Mercy is shown” (2:1).

**Prayer Emphasis:** Kingdom Prophets are always faithful “to declare...the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). They must give equal time to the blessings that follow obedience and the judgments that follow disobedience. **Speak** God’s Word to someone at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way today.

## Day 2: Hosea 3:1–5:7

*“So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley.” (Hosea 3:2)*

### Rejection, Restoration, and Redemption

The sad story of Hosea’s unfaithful wife portrayed Israel’s betrayal and rejection of their God. God’s chosen people violated almost every vow of their covenant with God and turned to pagan gods and idols. However, just as Israel’s rejection was pictured in the sad story of Hosea, her restoration was pictured as well. The saddest part of her restoration was that her own husband (Hosea) purchased his own wife so that she could be restored back to him. From Exodus 21:32 we learn that the indicated value of a slave was 30 shekels. Between the “fifteen shekels of silver” and the value of the “one and one-half homers of barley” (3:2) we see that Hosea paid the price equivalent to that of a slave when he bought back something that already belonged to him. A careful reading of the remainder of chapter 3 clearly indicates that Hosea paid this redemption price before his unfaithful wife repented of her sins and returned to him. As such, verse five states that “afterward” God’s people “shall return and seek the LORD their God and...shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.” We cannot read today’s verses without being reminded that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Since He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), we must realize that He paid our redemption price long before we ever repented of our sins and returned to Him.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Share** something about Hosea’s story with someone you know and then **give** a personal testimony of how Christ paid the price for your sins long before you ever even knew Him.

## Day 3: Hosea 5:8-7:16

*“They return, but not to the Most High; they are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword for the cursings of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.” (Hosea 7:16)*

### *A Treacherous Bow*

Yesterday’s closing verse (5:7) revealed that God’s people “dealt treacherously with the LORD” while today’s closing verse declares that “they are like a treacherous bow” (7:16) that failed its owner in a time of need. Such a bow would be considered unreliable and, therefore, not useful. These words were used to describe how unreliable God’s people had been to Him even after He demonstrated His love and grace to them. Since Benjamin was the last son born to Israel, the phrase, “Look behind you, O Benjamin!” (5:8) may indicate that the specter of judgment was chasing after God’s people, and it was drawing nearer every day. Hosea 5:12 states, in response to the people’s sins, God would be “like a moth” and “like rottenness” to them. Just as moths silently destroyed their clothing upon them, rot (disease) silently destroyed that which was within them. However, things would get worse before they got better. Instead of turning to God in their time of trouble, the people turned to Assyria and soon found that man could not “cure” them or “heal” them of their “wound” (5:13). As a result, the “moth” would be followed by the “lion” (5:14), and the people would experience even greater punishment for their unfaithful hearts and attitudes.

**Prayer Emphasis:** The Kingdom Prophets never left God’s people without providing them with an opportunity to repent and return to God. **Deliver** the words of Hosea 6:1 to someone who needs them today.

## Day 4: Hosea 8:1-9:17

*“Set the trumpet to your mouth! He shall come like an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law.” (Hosea 8:1)*

### *“Like an Eagle!”*

There are so many parallels between Hosea’s preaching and the teachings of Deuteronomy that it is obvious that Hosea and his contemporaries were calling God’s people to return to the covenant law that God gave them during the time of Moses. Today’s focus verse clearly reveals the influence that Moses and his teachings from Deuteronomy had on the message that Hosea was called to deliver to God’s people. Hosea told the people to “set the trumpet to (their) mouth” and thereby sound an alarm for all to hear. The alarm was followed by a sobering message. “He shall come like an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed My covenant.” In Deuteronomy 28:49 God said, “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar...as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand.” In Hosea’s prophecy, the promise of swift destruction from an outside force is being announced as a reality. Even as Israel feigned loyalty to God by crying, “My God, we know you!” (8:2), God knew their hearts had not really changed toward Him. As a result of their continued unfaithfulness, an enemy would “pursue” them (8:3). This statement provides yet another connection to Deuteronomy and its teachings about the blessings of obedience and the judgments that follow disobedience.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Notice** the messages of God’s Kingdom Prophets are always consistent and together they help form the message of the Bible. **Seek** to deliver a personal message that is consistent with God’s Word as you communicate with your friends, family members, and work associates. Get to **know** your Bible so that you can **share** its message with others.

## Day 5: Hosea 10:1-12:8

*“Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty. He will break down their altars; He will ruin their sacred pillars.” (Hosea 10:2)*

### *The Last Thing to Go*

Today’s focus verse indicates that long after God’s people had forsaken a right relationship with Him, they still held on to some kind of formal worship and religious expression. Even though their hearts were “divided,” and they were, therefore, “held guilty” before God, they still had their “altars” and their “sacred pillars.” Since God is interested in a relationship and not just religion, He stated He would “break down their altars” and “ruin their sacred pillars.” The same unfaithfulness that established Israel’s guilt was the same unfaithfulness that made her punishment necessary. The Hebrew word that is translated “divided” in the NKJV is translated “deceitful” in other translations. This word literally means “slippery” or “smooth.” It is translated “flatter” at least six times in the Bible. This same word is also found in Psalm 5:9 where God said, “There is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongues.” Although Israel was showing no true respect for God in their daily living, it appears they still had the audacity to feign respect for Him through religious observances. Sadly, the same thing can be true for those who declare themselves to be lovers and followers of God today. We can hold to our religious expressions long after we have moved away from a true and right relationship with God.

**Prayer Emphasis:** The Kingdom Prophets delivered messages that were both powerful and unpopular at the same time. **Testify** to someone about the value of a relationship over religion today.

## Day 6: Hosea 12:9-14:9

*“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon.” (Hosea 14:4-5)*

### *I Will*

Make a note of the three “I will” promises of God that are included in today’s focus verses. As Hosea was closing out his message to God’s people, he stated that God promised Israel He would “heal their backsliding” and “love them freely.” He went on to say that His anger had “turned away” from them. In verse 5, He continued to express His love and forgiveness to them by saying He would “be like dew to Israel” in order that Israel might “grow like the lily.” Verse 6 adds, “His (Israel’s) branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon.” In the day of Israel’s repentance and return to a right relationship with God, God was going to turn from His anger and demonstrate His wonderful love for His people by healing them spiritually and restoring their health and influence as a nation. As a result of the gracious love and mercy that God bestowed upon them, His people would be heard asking, “What have I to do with idols?” They would once again become productive and fruitful, and therefore, a blessing to the nations around them (14:8). Israel’s own words serve as a fitting conclusion to these devotions on Hosea: “Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them” (14:9).

**Prayer Emphasis:** The Kingdom Prophets knew well that God was a loving God who was full of grace and mercy. As a result, men like Hosea could promise God’s forgiveness to a repentant people. **Speak** of God’s grace, love, and mercy to someone you encounter today.

## Day 7: Joel 1

*“Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.” (Joel 1:14)*

### “Pest Control”

The only biographical fact provided about the author of this prophetic book is found in verse 1 where we are told that Joel was “the son of Pethuel.” There is no conclusive evidence as to when Joel ministered or when his book was written. The book opens with the recording of a severe locust plague that was said to be without comparison to anything that had ever happened to God’s people before (v. 2). Verse 4 indicates that several different types of locusts invaded Israel’s land and devoured their crops. First, there were the “chewing” locusts, followed by the “swarming” locusts, which were followed by the “crawling” locusts, which were ultimately followed by the “consuming” locusts! Verse six implies that these locusts might have actually been a “nation”, but there is no mention of what “nation” it might be. Whatever the case, the people of God were obviously in need of some pest control! In verse 14, God had Joel call His people to “consecrate a fast.” Fasting was often a sign of mourning and was always associated with prayer in the Bible. After the fasting began, the people were to call “a sacred assembly.” The assembly was for the gathering of “the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Deliver** a message that is direct and to the point, but always offers an answer to what plagues people. Always **offer** an answer to people through God’s Word. **Believe** that God has an answer for the spiritual needs of America today and take some time to **pray** specifically for our country.

## Day 8: Joel 2

*“Blow 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 is coming, for it is at hand.” (Joel 2:1)*

### The Day of the LORD

As he did earlier (1:15), Joel once again mentions “the day of the LORD” and adds that it was “coming” and “at hand.” However, in chapter 2, more details about this day are provided. One thing is for certain, Joel believed that the day of the LORD was good reason for God’s people to “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm.” He also considered the coming of this day to be good reason for God’s people to “tremble.” Verses 12-13 describe the way God’s people should respond to the day of the LORD. God told them to “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” He then commanded, “rend your heart, and not your garments.” This statement was a reference to the custom of the tearing of one’s undergarment at the neck by grabbing it with both hands and ripping it open to the point that the area of one’s heart was exposed. This action represented a breaking heart due to genuine repentance and sadness. Joel was led to tell God’s people that it was time for something more than the typical symbolic gestures and that their circumstances should lead them to be genuinely and spiritually distraught, and heartbroken. God’s promise to the people was if they would only “return to the LORD (their) God,” they would find that He was “gracious and merciful.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Share** some good news about God’s grace, mercy, and kindness with someone you encounter along life’s way today. **Realize** that a heart that is truly seeking after God will lead us to times of “fasting” that are accompanied “with weeping and with mourning” (v. 12).

## Day 9: Joel 3

*“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision...” (Joel 3:14)*

### *The Valley of Decision*

I have often heard both pastors and evangelists refer to the “valley of decision” as a place where we all stand when we must decide to either deny or accept Christ or even, as a Christian, to obey or disobey the commands of God. However, the valley referred to here is by no means metaphorical, but literal. In keeping with his references to “the day of the LORD,” Joel is here referencing the valley in which the battle of Armageddon will ultimately be fought. Verses 15-16 describe some cosmic signs in the sun, moon, and stars that are often associated with God’s divine judgment. He states that “the LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem.” This “roar” will be a battle cry that will cause “the heavens and earth” to “shake.” However, the LORD’s people will be kept safe from harm as “the LORD will be a shelter to His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” The word that is translated “strength” in the last part of verse 16 is translated “stronghold” in several translations of the Old Testament.

**Prayer Emphasis:** Although God’s Kingdom Prophets often had to deliver some strong and sobering messages to God’s people, they seldom closed their messages without offering hope in the end. **Believe** that God is your “strength” or “stronghold” and **flee** to Him in your times of trial and despair. **Recall** a time that God protected or delivered you and **share** it with someone today.

## Day 10: Amos 1:1-2:5

*“The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders 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...” (Amos 1:1)*

### *Meet Amos*

The prophet Amos is mentioned nowhere in the Bible outside of this book that bears his name. He is not to be confused with Amoz, the father of Isaiah the prophet (Isaiah 1:1) or the Amos mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Luke 3:25). His name means “burden bearer” and, since most of his message was a prediction of coming judgment against Israel and her surrounding nations, it does not take long to learn that his name well suited his message and ministry. His message was a heavy one and his burden for the people of God was obvious. Amos was a successful businessperson who God called to the ministry “in the days of Uzziah king of Judah” and “Jeroboam...king of Israel.” Much like the New Testament disciples, Amos probably had no formal training for ministry because his personal testimony was, “I was no prophet, nor was I the son of a prophet. But I was a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel’” (Amos 7:14-15). Since Tekoa was only about 10 miles from Jerusalem, Amos didn’t have to go far to find the “sheep” that God now wanted him to “shepherd” and “raise” for Him. As a “sheep breeder” or “sheep raiser,” Amos would have had much knowledge of the many dangers that might come against a flock, particularly lions. The first message Amos has for his hearers was that God, like a lion, “roars from Zion” (1:2).

**Prayer Emphasis:** Kingdom Prophets can come from all backgrounds. Amos is a perfect example that a person does not have to possess a lot of formal training to be used of God. **Believe** that God can use you to deliver His message to people in need and **speak** for Him at every opportunity He affords you. **Realize** that every believer has been called to do some form of ministry for God.

## Day 11: Amos 2:6-3:15

*“Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt...” (Amos 3:1)*

### Some Burning Questions

After first speaking against the sins of Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab (1:3-2:3), Amos brought things much closer to home by speaking a heavy message to both Judah (2:4) and Israel (2:6). And, just as God refused to “turn away” the “punishment” of the heathen nations, he also refused to “turn away” from punishing His own people when it was appropriate for Him to do so. Israel was accused of selling “the righteous for silver” and “the poor for a pair of sandals” (2:6). God’s Word to His sinning people was that He “raised up some of (their) sons as prophets” (2:11) only to see the people try to corrupt them by leading them to break their vows to Him. But men like Amos were not easily discouraged from doing what they had been called to do. Amos boldly said, “Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt” (3:1). After promising judgment from God for their sins, Amos asked the people of Israel seven burning questions to which the answer to each one was, “No” (see 3:3-6). When Amos once more referred to God and His message as “a lion (that) has roared” (3:8), he was saying that God’s judgment was coming for good reason.

**Prayer Emphasis:** Would God judge and punish His people without a good reason? Our question, just like the ones that Amos was commanded to ask Israel, must be answered with a resounding, “No!” **Ask** yourself some hard questions about your own personal walk with the Lord and carefully (and prayerfully) **review** your willingness to serve Him fully and faithfully.

## Day 12: Amos 4:1-5:9

*“Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring wine, let us drink!’” (Amos 4:1)*

### The “Cows of Bashan”

If I haven’t mentioned it before, let me say now that the Kingdom Prophets were sometimes far from being politically correct. However, the reference to “cows” in our focus verse had nothing to do with size or shape and has only to do with gender. I found 24 translations that rendered the Hebrew word used here as “cows” while six others translated it “kine,” two others “heifer,” and three as “women.” The translations that use the word “kine” here also translate this same word as “heifer” in several other places in the Scripture. Since we know a “heifer” to be a female cow, then we get a pretty good idea that Amos had been directed by God to deliver a stinging message to the women of Israel. In the days of Amos, the women of Israel were said to be guilty of oppressing “the poor,” crushing “the needy,” and then saying to their husbands, “Let’s have a drink and forget about it!” (That quote is from my own “Git-R-Done” Version!) Since the land of Bashan was a fertile one with plenty of grass for grazing and feeding cattle, the idea here is that the women of Israel were living in wealth, health, and luxury while the world around them was suffering from the heavy burdens of sin and poverty.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Note** that God did not have an issue with what the women of Israel had, but how they got it. **Refuse** to take advantage of others by using ministry for your own, personal gain. **Pray** specifically for the women of your church and **ask** God to use them for His good and glory.

## Day 13: Amos 5:10-6:8

*“Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him...” (Amos 5:11)*

### Because

We cannot read the word “because” (v. 11) without understanding that it is being used to refer to the “cause” of some action or circumstance. Speaking like a true prophet, the businessman-turned-preacher, Amos, let the people know that there were some specific causes why judgment was now coming against the people of Israel. We may not always understand what God is doing or, much less, why He is doing it, but we can rest assured that God seldom acts without revealing His divine “cause” for doing so. After having Amos reveal the cause for His actions, God then directed Amos to describe the curse that selfishness and sin were to bring upon the people. Nothing they did would prosper! They would build houses but not live in them. They would plant vineyards but never enjoy the fruit of their labors. To avoid any confusion, God clearly told them that all these problems came “because” of their own “manifold transgressions” and their “mighty sins” (v. 12). However, God’s grace would not allow Amos to end his message after just giving the people the *cause* and the *curse* “because,” in verses 14-15, his message also provided a *cure*.

**Prayer Emphasis: Remember** that God can use problems and perils to help teach us about the consequences of our selfish and sinful choices. **Pray** for God’s leadership in all you do today and remain faithful to **read** the Bible on at least a daily basis.

## Day 14: Amos 6:9-7:17

*“Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: ‘I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me, “Go, prophesy to My people Israel.” Now therefore, hear the word of the LORD: You say, “Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not spout against the house of Isaac.”’” (Amos 7:14-16)*

### An Accusation and an Answer

Any time someone speaks for God in a land or to a people who are not living for God, you can be assured there will be some conflict and persecution. We are told that Amaziah was “the priest of Bethel” (7: 10). That defining phrase indicates that he was a man of some standing in the religious world of his day because he was said to be “the” priest and not just “a” priest. During the reign of Jeroboam, who was not a godly king, Bethel became one of the centers for idolatrous worship in the land. No doubt, the preaching and ministry of men like Amos was not good for business for men like Amaziah. He brought an accusation against Amos before the king saying that Amos had “conspired against” him (7:10). In that same verse, Amaziah also accused Amos of preaching sermons that the people “were not able to bear.” After his visit with Jeroboam, Amaziah suggested to Amos that he might want to consider preaching elsewhere, specifically back in the land of Judah! It really didn’t matter to Amaziah where Amos preached just as long as he “never again” prophesied “at Bethel” (7:13). Our focus verses contain Amos’ response to Amaziah. Amos confessed that he was not a trained theologian or prophet, but merely a successful “sheepbreeder” and farmer who God moved from that business to the business of preaching God’s Word.

**Prayer Emphasis: Understand** that God often rewards those who are faithful and diligent in other businesses by calling them to become a part of His business! **Be faithful** where you are now and **listen** for God’s command to, “Go, prophesy to My people” (7:15)

## Day 15: Amos 8:1-9:15

*“Thus the LORD God showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit.” (Amos 8:1)*

### *“A Basket of Summer Fruit”*

The seventh and eighth chapters of Amos contain three visions and each one is introduced by words similar to the “Thus the LORD God showed me” of 8:1 (see 7:1 and 7:7). The Hebrew word that is translated “showed” in those verses is the same word that is first used to say, “God *saw* the light, that it was good” in Genesis 1:4. Clearly, prophets like Amos saw something that revealed to them a greater understanding of what God’s Spirit was trying to say to the people. The first vision was a swarm of locusts (7:1) while the second vision was of a wall and a plumb line (7:7). The third vision was of “a basket of summer fruit” (8:1). To understand more about this vision, we must first understand something about the “summer fruit.” Summer fruit was short-lived because the growing season was short. As a result, one might see the beautiful fruits of summer available in the marketplaces for only a very short time. The “summer fruit” was a direct message to Amos that he was to warn the people of Israel that “the end has come” (8:2). As such, their singing would soon be turned into “wailing” (8:3). Most of today’s reading describes the causes and curses of the judgments that are pronounced against Israel, but the final words God spoke through Amos were words of grace that included, as always, a cure for their sinful attitudes and actions.

**Prayer Emphasis: Remember** that the same verse that speaks of the “pleasures of sin” also states that they are only “passing” moments (Hebrews 11:25). Since the fruit of sinful behavior is only *short-lived*, we should all heed God’s warning to make sure they are also *short loved*!

## Day 16: Obadiah 1

*“For the day of the LORD upon all the nations is near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.” (Obadiah 1:15)*

### *“As You Have Done”*

The little book of Obadiah teaches a very big and powerful truth. It clearly warns that God will judge those who refuse to be a blessing to His people, Israel. In Deuteronomy, we read about God’s warning to Israel to avoid pillaging and taking the land that He assigned to Esau (Deuteronomy 2:4-6). But here in Obadiah’s story, God told the people of Edom, Esau’s “descendants”, that “violence” had come against “your brother Jacob” (Israel) and “shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever” (v. 10) because “in the day” you “stood on the other side” and did nothing to help your brothers (v. 11). Note carefully that verse 11 clearly indicates that Edom’s neutrality caused God to have Obadiah say that it was as if Edom was “as one of them.” After revealing the many wrong ways that the people of Edom reacted to Israel’s days of trouble, God delivered a very sobering message to them by saying, “As you have done, it shall be done to you” and that their “reprisal (reward) shall return upon your own head” (v. 15). Throughout the Bible there is a constant and consistent teaching about the law of sowing and reaping. In the Old Testament we are told, “Those who...sow trouble shall reap the same” (Job 4:8). In the New Testament we are told, “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

**Prayer Emphasis: Read** God’s Word daily and be careful to **heed** its warnings, one of which is that we will reap what we sow! **Review** Matthew 7:12 and see that Jesus taught that treating others as we would want to be treated is the foundational basis of the teachings of the Scriptures (“the Law and the Prophets”).

## Day 17: Jonah 1 & 2

*“But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.” (Jonah 2:9)*

### *The True Nature of Sin*

I have often said that, under better circumstances, the story of Jonah should read through Jonah 1:1-2 and then skip directly to the words found in 3:3. If you did that, Jonah’s story would read, “Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah...saying, ‘Arise, go to Ninevah, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me...So Jonah arose and went up to Ninevah, according to the word of the LORD...” (1:1-2 & 3:3). However, that is not the way the story reads because we know that Jonah did not obey the LORD at first and, in fact, went in the exact opposite direction that the LORD commanded him to go! In the story of Jonah, we see four basic instincts that can prove to be either a help or hindrance to every believer. First, we see *the true nature of sin*. Jonah’s sin was not that he went to Tarshish (1:3) but that he did *not* go to Ninevah. The true nature of sin is not found in the bad things that we do but in the good things that we leave undone. In the New Testament, James made this point very clear to us when he said, “To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). We also see *the true nature of surrender* in the story of Jonah as he prayed and cried out to God (2:1-2). You might say that surrender was a lesson learned the hard way for Jonah.

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that even Kingdom Prophets can sometimes suffer from fear and faithlessness. **Build** your own faith by being a daily reader of the Word of God and **obey** God’s commands.

## Day 18: Jonah 3 & 4

*“So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD...” (Jonah 3:3a)*

### *The True Nature of Service*

After his release from the belly of the whale, we see Jonah boldly entering the city of Ninevah and obediently delivering the message just as God had earlier commanded him. Today we finally see *the true nature of service* in Jonah. Serving God, simply defined, is doing whatever God asks or commands us to do. His commands might not match our own dreams or ambitions, and God might ask us to serve Him in a way that is entirely different than any others before us, but true service obeys God despite our lack of clarity or understanding of the how or why. It is sad to see that the story of Jonah does not end after the great revival recorded in chapter three. Chapter four teaches us a fourth great truth from the life and ministry of Jonah because in its reading we see *the true nature of self*. Since Jonah was a prophet in the truest sense of the word, and since his prophecy of Ninevah’s perishing was not fulfilled, then Jonah failed the Old Testament test of a true prophet and should have been condemned to die (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). So, Jonah got angry with God because things did not go as he had prophesied. In anger, he argued with God and “went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city” (4:5). You could say that Jonah might have staged the first “sit in” protest ever recorded in human history.

**Prayer Emphasis: Trust** God enough to **share** His Word with others and then **trust** Him enough to **do** what needs to be done in their lives. **Realize** that the Holy Spirit does not need our judgment or condemnation to bring sinners under conviction and to repentance. **Refuse** to become angry with God when things do not work out exactly as you might have envisioned.

## Day 19: Micah 1:1-2:9

*“The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth...” (Micah 1:1)*

### Meet Micah

The first verse of this powerful book pretty much tells us all that we need to know about the prophet Micah. I identify this man as “the prophet” because there are seven different men named Micah mentioned in the Bible. The easiest way to help you know when you are reading about Micah “the prophet” is to say that his name is only mentioned twice in the Bible – here in Micah 1:1 and then once more in Jeremiah 26:18. Micah ministered during the reigns of three kings of Judah – Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Because of this, you might say that Micah knew how to serve God in good times and in bad times. Jotham and Hezekiah were both considered to be “good” kings who sought to lead God’s people in godly ways while Ahaz might well be considered one of the worst of the “bad” kings of Judah. Micah’s message was primarily to Judah and most specifically to Jerusalem. However, God also gave Micah a message that He wanted delivered to the people of Samaria. As you outline the major points in this book, you might say this first section deals with the warnings of retribution. Micah 1:3 declares that “the LORD” was going to come “out of His place” and “come down and tread on the high places of the earth.” The next verse then clearly indicates that this will be a time of judgment and retribution for those who have forsaken God and turned to idols.

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that we are sometimes called to deliver difficult messages. **Avoid** the temptation to “make it all good” when people are really living ungodly lives that “make it all bad”! Always **speak** the truth but speak it, as commanded, “in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

## Day 20: Micah 2:10-4:8

*“Arise and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is defiled, it shall destroy, yes, with utter destruction.” (Micah 2:10)*

### “Arise and Depart”

One might describe Micah’s preaching as being very direct and “old fashioned.” Micah told his listeners to “arise and depart” from their sinful ways. In our day, we might say that the people needed to “get up” and “get out” of their sinful situations. Micah knew no cultural or societal barriers when he preached. In chapter 2, verses 1-13, Micah preached *to the people*. He did not exclude anyone from his message. Note the words “all of you” and “the remnant of Israel” in 2:12. Through Micah, God said that He was going to draw “them together like sheep” and deliver His message to them. However, Micah was also commanded to preach *to the princes* (3:1-4). Note the phrases “heads of Jacob” and “rulers of the house of Israel” in 3:1. Micah was also commanded to preach *to the prophets* (3:5-10). It seems that the “prophets” were causing God’s people to “stray” by not feeding the people from the Word of God because they “put nothing in their mouths” (3:5). Micah’s preaching ministry did not end with the people, the princes, and the prophets. God also commanded Micah to preach *to the priests* (3:11-12). It seems that while the princes (“heads”) were tempted to “judge for a bribe” and the prophets were tempted to “divine for money,” the “priests” were being tempted to “teach for pay” (3:11). Verse 12 states that it was because of the sins of those in leadership that “Zion shall be plowed like a field” and Jerusalem would “become heaps of ruins” (3:12).

**Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom Prophets realize** that God’s Word is for all people - whatever their rank or role in society. **Share** God’s Word faithfully and in faith believing that it can reach all people!

## Day 21: Micah 4:9-6:5

“*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel...*” (Micah 5:2)

### Waiting for Restoration

Our focus verse contains one of the Old Testament promises of the coming Messiah. God uses this little book to tell us that His Son would come to the world through a little city. In our first devotional from Micah, we saw a *warning of retribution*. In today’s reading, we see God’s people *waiting for restoration*. I say the people are waiting because God’s people were first going to have to spend some time in Babylon before they were to be delivered. When we consider all the evil that is associated with Babylon in the Bible, it is difficult to believe that “there” (in Babylon) God’s people would be “delivered” and ultimately “redeemed” (4:10). The restoration of the people is described as the “dew from the LORD” and “showers on the grass” (5:7). In those days, God’s people would rise “like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep.” As such, they would surely “tread down and tear in pieces” all their enemies (5:8). Even though God’s people seemed to be thriving and successful, God continued to plead with them to remember that He “brought (them) up from the land of Egypt” and “redeemed (them) from the house of bondage” (6:4). Here, God was reminding His people that, just as it was with their victories in the days of old, their current victories were a result of His grace and mercy.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Reflect** on God’s grace and mercy today and **praise** Him for all He has brought you from and through! **Brag** on God to someone that you meet today!

## Day 22: Micah 6:6-7:20

“*He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities.*” (Micah 7:19)

### Repentance!

Our focus verse contains one of the most beautiful promises in the Bible. In it, we are told that God will “have compassion on us” and “subdue our iniquities” and He will “cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” How wonderful it is to see this story that began with a *warning of retribution*, followed by a long period of *waiting for restoration* now ending in a time of *weeping and repentance* toward God. It is important for us to note that this time of holy cleansing for God’s people is followed by a time of honest confession. Note the “Woe is me” statement which indicates that the people considered themselves to be like “those who gather summer fruits” and those who “glean vintage grapes” and yet have “no cluster to eat” (7:1). The honest confession was that sin, as it always does, left the people impoverished. “Summer fruits” were always short-lived and soon gone. When the pleasures of sinful living have passed, God’s people often discover that they came at a great price. When our relationship with God is damaged, then all our relationships suffer. Verses two through six of chapter seven describe a time when “the faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men.” As such, people could not even “trust in a friend” or put any “confidence in a companion” (7:5). Verses five and six teach us that even the closest relationships are damaged when our relationship with God suffers, for in those verses we see that a man can no longer trust even his friends or his family.

**Prayer Emphasis:** **Ask** God to forgive your own sins and to cast them into the depths of the sea. **Avoid** “fishing” for information about the sins of others. **Allow** what God has *forgiven* to be *forgotten*.

## Day 23: Nahum 1:1-2:7

*“The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.” (Nahum 1:1)*

### *A Heavy Message*

Just 100 years after Ninevah’s great revival under Jonah, God had to send another very heavy and sorrowful message to these same people through the prophet Nahum. The word that is translated “burden” in the NKJV is translated “oracle” in some versions. It comes from a word that means “load” or “burden.” The first time this word is found in the Bible is in Exodus 23:5 where it is used to describe a “burden” too heavy for even a donkey to bear. As we continue in our reading of the books of the prophets, we will see that only Habakkuk’s and Malachi’s messages (or oracles) are also “heavy” enough for God to refer to them as a “burden.” What made Nahum’s message so burdensome? God sent Nahum to one of the strongest, most protected cities in the world to say, “With an overflowing flood He (would) make an utter end of its place” (1:8). This message came to the people of Ninevah at a time when the city was at its peak in power, prominence, and prosperity. The city itself was fortified with walls and moats that made it virtually impregnable. The walls of the city were 100 feet tall and were wide enough for three chariots to race across them side by side. Yet, because of her sin, God said to this city, “Your name shall be perpetuated no longer...I will dig your grave” (1:14).

**Prayer Emphasis:** Kingdom Prophets are sometimes given difficult assignments. **Realize** that the world needs to hear an *oracle from God* rather than an *opinion from man*. **Believe** that God’s Word is adequate for every situation and **share** it with others when opportunities arise.

## Day 24: Nahum 2:8-3:19

*“Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs.” (Nahum 3:1)*

### *“The Bloody City”*

In the first chapter of Nahum, we saw Ninevah’s destruction *declared*. Then, in chapter two, we saw Ninevah’s destruction *described*. Now in chapter three we see that Ninevah’s destruction was *deserved*. Our focus verse indicates that this city was filled with violence (“bloody”) and immorality (“lies and robbery”). We see more immorality described in 3:4 where this city’s “multitude of harlotries” is mentioned, and it is referred to as “the mistress of sorceries.” In 3:5, God said to the people of Ninevah, “I am against you!” This is the second time this phrase is found in Nahum’s message. We read it earlier in 2:13. God went on to tell the people He would “make (them) a spectacle” and that their city would be “laid waste” (3:6-7). He reminded them of other powerful strongholds that He “carried away,” sent into “captivity,” and “dashed to pieces” (3:10). God then said that the taking of their city would be as easy as picking ripened figs from a tree (3:12). A great indicator as to the kind of people the Ninevites were, is found in a few of Nahum’s closing comments where he told them that their people would be “scattered on the mountains” yet no one would come to “gather” (help) them (3:18). Perhaps the heaviest part of Nahum’s message to these people was that Ninevah’s neighboring cities would “clap their hands” when they heard the news of its destruction (3:19).

**Prayer Emphasis:** The closing verse of Nahum declares that Ninevah’s wickedness was “passed continually” to her neighboring peoples. Dare to **be different** in your own life. **Seek** to be the kind of person that is continually passing love and kindness to others. **Determine** to be a *blessing* and not a *burden* to those around you.

## Day 25: Habakkuk 1:1-2:11

*“The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw.” (Habakkuk 1:1)*

### What Habakkuk “Saw”

Like Nahum’s message, Habakkuk’s message was described as a “burden.” However, there is another similarity to their messages that is described in the first verse of each book. Nahum’s message was further described as a “vision” and here we are told Habakkuk “saw” the message that God wanted him to deliver to his hearers. However, there is also a glaring difference between the messages of these two prophets. While Nahum was sent to deliver a heavy message to the godless citizens of Ninevah, Habakkuk was sent to deliver his heavy message to God’s own people in Judah! What was going on among the people of Judah that would demand such a heavy message be delivered to them? God said, “Plundering and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises” (1:3). These same people who once trembled before the Law declared it to be “powerless” among them. They had become a people amongst whom “justice never goes forth” (3:4). Note that God did not say that justice *sometimes* went forth from His people or even that it *seldom* went forth. God clearly said that justice *never* went forth from them. How sad is that?

**Prayer Emphasis:** Ask yourself a very difficult question: “What does God ‘see’ when He observes my daily life?” **Refuse** to live in such a way that God can see striking similarities between your actions and the actions of the world.

## Day 26: Habakkuk 2:12-3:19

*“Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.” (Habakkuk 3:18-19)*

### Habakkuk’s “Closing Hymn”

Most Bible scholars describe the closing verses of Habakkuk as a “Hymn of Faith.” Since it comes at the close of his book, I guess we might also call it a “Closing Hymn.” Habakkuk believed that some difficult times were coming for God’s people. He knew that the chastening hand of God was soon going to turn their singing into sobbing. He earlier tried to teach his Jewish brethren that “the just shall live by faith” (a statement that is quoted in three places in the New Testament) only to see his people rebel against God and live like faithless heathens. There is no doubt that Habakkuk lived and ministered during some very dark days in the life of Judah. However, like the singing of Paul and Silas that arose from the darkness of their dungeon, the song of Habakkuk found its way out of the darkness of his despair. Habakkuk’s hymn declared that “Though the fig tree not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines” and even if “the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food” or “there be no herd in the stall” (3:17), “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (3:18). What could possibly have put a song in this man’s heart at such a dark and desperate time? The answer is found in the fact that “the LORD God” was his “strength” (3:19). In the opening verse of this book, Habakkuk was said to be *seeing*. In his message, we cannot help but to hear his *sighing*. In the end, we rejoice as we find Habakkuk *singing* praises to his God!

**Prayer Emphasis:** Consider the darkness of our times and **commit** to being a light in that darkness! Kingdom Prophets always know God is with them and that He, and His message, will win in the end. **Trust** God enough to be His witness by singing His praises even in the darkest times. **Recall** some of the good things that God has done for you and rejoice in them.

## Day 27: Zephaniah 1:1-2:9

“The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.” (Zephaniah 1:1)

### The Royal Prophet

Zephaniah is often referred to as the “royal prophet” because his opening words declare him to be the great-great-grandson of godly King Hezekiah. This would also make him a relative of Josiah, the king under whose reign he ministered. Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah all ministered at the same time and all preached similar messages. Although Josiah was a good king who led God’s people into a great revival, he inherited the throne after 57 years of some poor spiritual leadership from Manasseh and Amon. Since Zephaniah’s prophecy found God saying, “I will stretch out my hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (1:4), we must assume that this man’s ministry came early in Josiah’s reign and that it probably contributed to the revival that took place under Josiah’s leadership. Verses four and five of the first chapter clearly indicate that the major problem among God’s people was the violation of the first and second commandments. They had become worshipers of Baal and their priests had become “idolatrous” and “pagan.” The people resorted to worshipping the “host of heaven” (astrology) at the same time they were swearing oaths to “the LORD.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Determine** to live a life that is fully obedient to God and His commands. **Refuse** to allow things that should have been “put away” long ago to continue to haunt and plague your spiritual life. **Serve** no god but the true God that sent His only Son to die for you on the cross!

## Day 28: Zephaniah 2:10-3:20

“For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord.” (Zephaniah 3:9)

### A Promise of Deliverance

Zephaniah’s little book is one with a happy ending. The happy ending is found in the fact this story ends with *words of restoration*. Our focus verse speaks of God’s promise to “restore to the people a pure language, (lifestyle) that they all may call on the name of the LORD.” Following those words of restoration, we find some *words of repentance* (3:11-13). God’s message brought His people to a place where they would no longer “be ashamed for any of (their) deeds” in which they had once “transgressed against” Him. The story gets even better! The words of restoration and repentance are then followed by *words of rejoicing* (3:14-15). Through repentance, God’s people were restored to a place where they could once again “Sing...shout” and “be glad and rejoice with all (their) heart” (3:14) because God had “taken away” their “judgments” and “cast out” their enemy.” They were promised they would “see disaster no more” (3:15). But things got even better than that! God went on to say to His people, “Do not fear” because He was once again “in (their) midst” (3:16-17). As they rejoiced in Him, He also said He would, “Rejoice over (them) with gladness and singing” (3:17b). I cannot imagine a happier ending than one that makes God happy!

**Prayer Emphasis: Consider** the closing words of this prophecy and see that the basis for the rejoicing for God’s people was His Word. When our lives are in harmony with God’s Word, we can rest assured that they will also be in harmony with God.

## Day 29: Haggai 1

*“Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: ‘This people says, “The time has not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built.”’” (Haggai 1:2)*

### *A Matter of Priorities*

The background for the times in which Haggai prophesied are best described in Ezra five and six. God’s people had been in exile and were now back in the Promised Land. Upon their return, they were to immediately begin the work of rebuilding the temple. However, for unknown reasons, the work on the temple ceased and now the part they started to build remained “in ruins” (v. 4). The only explanation the people offered was that the “time (had) not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built” (v. 2). However, the LORD knew the people had found the time, and the materials, to build their own houses. This led God to ask the very important question found in verse four. He asked, “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?” Because of their decision to put their own needs before His, God asked them to “consider (their) ways” (v. 5). Because they made God’s house a secondary priority in their lives, God said He was going to bring their work and their crops to nothing and that, no matter what they did, or how hard they tried, they were going to live in a continual state of lack. God likened their financial situation to a person who put his money in “a bag with holes” (v. 6).

**Prayer Emphasis:** Evaluate your own priorities and be careful to make sure you are keeping your own priorities in the proper order. Avoid the temptation to give God what is left over after you have taken care of all your own needs first. Trust God enough to put Him first in every area of your life.

## Day 30: Haggai 2

*“According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!” (Haggai 2:5)*

### *God is Good!*

The last part of yesterday’s reading found God’s people reacting in a positive way to God’s reprimands by obeying “the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet” (1:12). Because of their change of heart, God spoke reassuring words to them by saying, “I am with you” (1:13). The opening verse to this prophecy stated that the LORD began to speak to His people through Haggai on the first day of the sixth month. The second chapter begins by saying that “in the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD (once again) came by Haggai” (2:1) encouraging the people to “be strong...and work” with the repeated reminder that, “I am with you” (2:4). Verse five finds God reassuring the people that He had every intention of honoring the covenant He made with them when they first came out of Egypt. He then reminded them that all the wealth of the world was His and He, therefore, had more than enough to supply them with what they needed to complete the work He commanded them to do. The remainder of the book indicates that God’s people were still not perfect, and they needed to be continually reminded of Who God was and whose they were. However, this is another prophecy with a “happy ending” because it concludes with God, once again, reminding the people that they were His own (2:23).

**Prayer Emphasis:** Allow God’s Spirit to continually remind you of Who He is and whose you are! Believe that God’s paramount and consuming desire is to bless His people. We should respond to all that God has done for us by making Him the first priority in our lives.

## Day 31: Zechariah 1:1-2:5

*“In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet...” (Zechariah 1:1)*

### Meet Zechariah

Zechariah means “the LORD Remembers.” It was a very popular name among the Jewish people in Bible times. There are at least 27 who bear this name in the Bible. The Zechariah who authored this important book lived and prophesied during the same years as Haggai. You can find their names mentioned together in Ezra 5:1 where they are both identified as “prophets” who “prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel.” Like Haggai, Zechariah’s ministry took place during the times described in Ezra and Nehemiah. (Zechariah is specifically mentioned in Ezra 5:1 & 6:14.) After 70 years of Babylonian exile, a remnant of God’s people had been allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple. While Haggai’s preaching focused on the rebuilding of the temple, Zechariah’s preaching looked to the future and the coming of the Messiah. A tribute to this man’s preaching is found in the fact that there are at least 41 New Testament references to either Zechariah or his message. Since Zechariah was the grandson of a Levite priest (Nehemiah 12:4 & 16), he was both a prophet and a priest. His message contains a series of eight visions with the first three, the vision of the horses (1:7-11), the vision of the horns (1:18-21), and the vision of the measuring line (2:1-5), being described in today’s reading.

**Prayer Emphasis:** As you read the book of Zechariah, **consider** the fact that you are reading the same words that Jesus’ other New Testament preachers studied and taught in their sermons. **Look** for the references to the coming Messiah and **realize** that we have shared this hope with many others who have served before us.

## Day 32: Zechariah 2:6-4:10

*“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.” (Zechariah 3:1)*

### Joshua the High Priest

Zechariah 3:1 is just one of the verses in this book that ties it to the book and times of Haggai. Both books reference “Joshua the high priest” (Haggai 1:1 and Zechariah 3:1). There are four men named Joshua mentioned in the Bible, but this Joshua, “the high priest,” is mentioned only in Haggai and Zechariah. This high priest is the same man that is called “Jeshua” in Nehemiah 7:7. I mentioned yesterday that both Haggai and Zechariah were called “prophets” in Ezra 5:1. Just one verse after that you find the name of “Jeshua” (Ezra 5:2) and learn that he helped “to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem.” While men like Jeshua built the temple, “the prophets of God (men like Haggai and Zechariah) were with them, helping them” (Ezra 5:2b). In Zechariah 6:11, God told the prophet Zechariah to “Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua...the high priest.” The crowning of this high priest was part of the Old Testament’s prophetic teachings regarding Christ, the coming Messiah, who would be a “High Priest” (Hebrews 6:20) and “King of the Jews” (Matthew 27:11). The crowning of Joshua the High Priest was the fourth vision God gave to Zechariah.

**Prayer Emphasis:** Note that today’s reading included two more of the eight visions that are recorded in Zechariah. **Review** the vision of the High Priest (3:1-5) and the vision of the lamp stand and olive trees (4:1-10) and **ask** yourself the same question that was asked of Zechariah: “What do you see?” (4:2).

## Day 33: Zechariah 4:11-6:13

*“Then I answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?’ And I further answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?’” (Zechariah 4:11-12)*

### **Don’t Be Afraid to Ask!**

If you had questions after reviewing the vision of the lamp stand and olive trees, you are not alone. Our focus verses reveal that Zechariah answered the Lord’s question, “What do you see?” (4:2) with a question of his own about the “two olive trees” (4:11). He then asked, “What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?” (4:12). A good question deserves a good answer. However, after Zechariah answered the LORD’s question with a question, the LORD answered Zechariah’s question with a question. (Is it getting confusing yet?) The LORD asked, “Do you not know what these are?” And then, finally, the humbled prophet replied, “No, my lord.” Then God answered Zechariah’s question about the two “olive branches” by saying, “These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth” (4:14). If you read Revelation carefully, you might remember seeing something similar to those words in Revelation 11:3-4 where God described His “two witnesses” as “the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.” However, the Bible lessons for Zechariah were not over. Immediately following this question-and-answer session, God gave His prophet his final three visions: the vision of the flying scroll (5:1-4), the vision of the woman in a basket (5:5-11), and the vision of the four chariots (6:1-8).

**Prayer Emphasis: Read** from your Bible daily. If you come to a story, verse, or even a phrase or word that you do not understand, do not be afraid to ask the Lord to explain it to you! **Believe** that Christ is the Great Teacher, and He wants to teach and disciple you on a very personal, one-on-one basis.

## Day 34: Zechariah 6:14-8:8

*“...the people sent Sherezer...to the house of God, to pray before the LORD, and to ask the priests who were in the house of the LORD of hosts... ‘Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?’” (Zechariah 7:2-3)*

### **Something Even Better than Fasting**

The fast day mentioned in the question about fasting in today’s focus verses was the one that had been established as a memorial to the burning of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon’s temple. This fast held “in the fifth month” coincided with the date of those two events (2 Kings 25:2-10). The question was, “With the rebuilding of the new temple, do we still need to fast and remember the destruction of the old?” God’s answer, through Zechariah, was quite powerful! Although fasting made a statement, its statement could not compare with the statement that could be made to the world if only God’s people lived lives that exhibited “justice...mercy and compassion...to his brother” (7:9). Two examples of this kind of godly lifestyle were specifically noted when God said they were to “not oppress the widows or the fatherless, the alien or the poor” and they were not to “plan evil” in their hearts “against (their) brother” (7:10).

**Prayer Emphasis: Remember** that the greatest evidence of the presence of Christ in our lives is our love for our fellow Christians (John 13:35). **Refuse** to be involved in conversations that become critical and contain gossip about others. **Politely** excuse yourself and move on to better things.

## Day 35: Zechariah 8:9-9:10

“Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Let your hands be strong, you who have been hearing in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets...”” (Zechariah 8:9)

### “Let Your Hands Be Strong”

In yesterday’s verses we found God saying that He would “save (His) people” and “bring them back” so they could “dwell in the midst of Jerusalem” and He would “be their God in truth and righteousness” (8:7-8). Because of that promise, God could rightfully encourage His people to “let (their) hands be strong” (8:9). His promise was that, even though they had “no wages” and “no peace from (their) enemy” (8:10), they would be honored “as in the former days” before they rebelled against Him (8:11). When they returned to God they would again be “prosperous” and soon “possess” all the blessings promised to them (8:12). Verse 13 confirms God’s promise to “save” them and to make them a “blessing” to others. Because of that, God could exhort His people to “not fear” and then repeat His command that they “let (their) hands be strong.” Perhaps the greatest source for such strength was found in the promise that the coming Messiah would be “just” and bring their “salvation” even though He would eventually come to them as one “lowly and riding on a donkey” just as our Savior did when He entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). Matthew 21:5 records the fulfillment of this divine prophecy.

**Prayer Emphasis: Believe** that all of God’s promises to His people will be eventually and ultimately realized by those who are obedient to Him. **Read** Matthew 23:39 and you will see one of the important places where Zechariah’s prophecy was fulfilled in the New Testament and in the life of Christ.

## Day 36: Zechariah 9:11-11:3

“Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope. Even today I declare that I will restore double to you.” (Zechariah 9:12)

### “Prisoners of Hope”

The word translated “prisoners” in our focus verse means exactly that. The first time this word is found in the Bible is in Genesis 39:20 where we read that, “Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s *prisoners* were confined.” However, Zechariah’s message was not given to prisoners of any earthly “king” but to a people who had willingly declared themselves to be “prisoners” of the Heavenly King! When we think of a “prisoner,” we think of someone who has come to a place where they surrender their daily lives to the power of another. Someone tells a prisoner where to go, what to do, and even when they are to do it! Our “hope” is to serve as a spiritual warden to us. When, in this life, we want to give up and/or give in, our “hope” demands something better from us. When we are spiritually exhausted, and when we are given out, our “hope” gives us the strength to carry on and fulfill the will of our divine Master. There is no circumstance or situation in life that our “hope” does not accompany us and provide guidance to us so that we are forever reminded that we do not walk alone or serve in our own strength! If a prisoner decides to run away from his earthly master, that master will come after him and return him to the place where he belongs. The same is true for the followers of God who have become “prisoners of hope.” We simply cannot escape from the hope that lives within us and motivates us to be everything that God has desired us to be.

**Prayer Emphasis: Surrender** your life to God. **Encourage** someone today that needs hope and **assure** them that they are never alone after they have placed their hope in God and His promises.

## Day 37: Zechariah 11:4-12:14

“...then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” (Zechariah 12:10)

### “Look on Me”

In Hebrews 12:2, we are exhorted to be “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” In that same sense, the people of Zechariah’s time were encouraged by God to, “look on Me” (12:10). What specifically were they commanded to see? They were commanded to see the One “whom they pierced.” While this statement might have been somewhat difficult for Zechariah’s Old Testament saints to understand, we New Testament believers know and understand exactly what Zechariah was exhorting the believers of his day to do. When the supplies seemed low and the work of rebuilding the temple seemed burdensome, the people had only to “look” to God for the strength and encouragement that was necessary to carry on and fulfill the will of God. When we remember the awful price that God paid for our sins through the suffering and death of his Son, we may very well be moved to “mourning” just as was the case with these Old Testament saints. However, their (and our) *mourning* can lead to a new *morning* in Christ and the hope that He brings to us every day we serve Him! How were the people of Zechariah’s time to “look” on God? In the same way that we “look” to Him today – through “the Spirit of grace and supplication” (12:10a).

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that God empowers His believers and encourages His followers through the Holy Spirit and prayer today just as He did in times past. **Pray** to God daily and **seek** what you need from Him. **Be assured** that He will never fail nor forsake you.

## Day 38: Zechariah 13:1-14:20

“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.” (Zechariah 13:1)

### There Is “A Fountain”

Zechariah 12 ended with Israel's return to the LORD via the One whom they once rejected and were now, through faith, embracing. “In that day” refers to the day that they turned their hearts back to the LORD. On “that day” they would enjoy “a fountain” that would provide full cleansing from “sin and...uncleanness.” There is no question that their cleansing came from the blood of the One “whom they pierced” (12:10). That “fountain” was to “be opened” to all that would turn to God, in faith, for cleansing and spiritual healing. The idea that God is like a fountain to His people is found repeatedly in the Bible, but Zechariah found a way to express that wonderful moment in a way that few others ever did. Because of what God has done for us, through His great love and merciful sacrifice, we can sing, “There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins. And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.” Notice that God’s provision of grace comes to us in a “fountain” and not a well or reservoir. A fountain is never stagnant but continues to flow unceasingly. Because of this one word, we can understand and believe that the flow of God’s great love and mercy is inexhaustible. Why was that fountain provided? The answer is, to wash away our “sin and...uncleanness!” There is only one place for the sinner to flee, and that is to God’s fountain!

**Prayer Emphasis: Thank** God for the fountain of grace and mercy He has provided us through the death of His only, begotten Son, Jesus. **Speak** of God’s grace to someone you encounter today and **be a witness** of what He can do for those who turn to Him for salvation.

## Day 39: Malachi 1:1-2:12

*“The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. ‘I have loved you,’ says the LORD. ‘Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’ Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?’ Says the LORD. ‘Yet Jacob I have loved;’” (Malachi 1:1-2)*

### “I Have Loved You”

Malachi, like others, carried a “burden” from the LORD to His people. However, one might conclude that Malachi’s burden (or message), at least at the beginning, was somewhat lighter than the “burdens” (or messages) of those that Habakkuk or Zechariah were demanded to carry and deliver. Malachi preached some 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah. The dating of his book is made most evident by the fact that the temple had been completely rebuilt and the sacrificial system had been restored by the time God called Malachi. However, it is clear from Malachi’s message that God’s people had already lapsed into a time of coldness and forgetfulness. Both things were evidenced through the attitudes of the priests and the people. They offended God by offering “defiled food” on His altar (1:7). They were no longer offering the best of their flocks and herds to God but were now offering Him “the blind” and “the lame.” They were keeping the best for themselves and offering to God the animals that they did not want. You might say they were giving God their leftovers! Because of that, God was forced to say, “I have no pleasure in you” (1:10). However, it was not merely the *actions* of the people that offended God. He was also offended by their *attitudes*. They had come to the place where they considered their sacrifices and service to God to be “a weariness” (1:13).

**Prayer Emphasis: Seek** to give God your best every day of your life. **Refuse** to give Him your leftover time, talents, or treasures. **Remember** that God gave His very best for you and **commit** to **doing** the same for Him in return.

## Day 40: Malachi 2:13-4:6

*“And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.” (Malachi 2:13)*

### “The Second Thing”

Malachi began the second section of his message to God’s people by telling them “the second thing” they were doing that offended God. When they did bring an offering to God, even though it was not their best things (they were keeping those things for themselves), they brought their offerings with “tears” and “weeping and crying” (2:13). As a result of their remorse at having to give to God, He told them that He no longer “regarded” their offerings at all! Soon, in Malachi 3:8, He asked, “Will a man rob God?” The people acted as if they were confused by God’s question, so He clarified it for them by telling them they had “robbed” Him “in tithes and offerings.” God encouraged His people to learn to trust Him by trying Him. He promised that, if they would be faithful in bringing “all the tithes” to Him, He would “open the windows of Heaven and pour out” blessings upon them and they would not have “room enough to receive it!” His blessings would be so abundant that “all nations” would call His people “blessed” (3:12).

**Prayer Emphasis: Thank** God for men like the Kingdom Prophets! **Pray** for God’s preachers and **ask** God to strengthen them in their work for Him. **Contact** us at [gary@seminolebc.com](mailto:gary@seminolebc.com) or 850-562-8069 if we can pray for or help you in any way.