

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. We will study the Minor Prophets in chronological order. Today we will study the three Minor Prophets: Zechariah, Joel and Malachi. They prophesied during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

POINT 1. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

Zechariah is the eleventh of the twelve Minor Prophets. The name "Zechariah" means "*the Lord has remembered*". He was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai and also prophesied in 520 B.C. and thereafter (7:1).

POINT 2. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

First. A call to repentance (1:1-6).

In spite of Israel's return from exile, God's wrath had not departed from Israel. God proclaimed his message through the prophet Zechariah, "Return to me, and I will return to you."

Second. Eight visions (1:7 to 6:8).

One. The men on horses reporting to the Angel of the Lord.

These men on horses were scouts who had gone throughout the earth and reported that all the nations were continuing to live without God and without fear. This is a disappointment for God's people, who expected God's judgement of the nations to take place immediately. The Angel of the Lord here represents the Mediator between God and man, that is, he represents the second person of the Triune God. He is the Intercessor of God's people, asking God how long it would be before the time of salvation would come. God answered that the time was close. He would act to save his people and to punish the nations. The message is that God's people have an Intercessor.

Two. The four horns thrown down by the four blacksmiths.

The message is that the oppressors of God's people will be destroyed.

Three. The man with a measuring line and the interpreting angel.

The message is that God's people with God Himself in their midst, will expand among the nations.

This vision is followed by a prophecy concerning Babylon's ruin and Israel's exaltation. Chapter 2:10-13 is an exhortation of the prophet directed at the Jews living in Jerusalem, to rejoice because the glory of the Lord, which had departed from the temple in Ezekiel's vision, was going to return (Ez 9:3; 10:4,18; 11:22). Many people of the nations of the world would join God's people Israel. This is a clear prophecy that the Gentile nations would also share in the salvation of the Lord, as in Isaiah 2:1-4; 45:23, even though this prophecy is still represented in the Old Testament way as bound to the nation of Israel. Thus, God would attain his plan to have as his inheritance a chosen people living in the holy land.

Four. Joshua, the high priest is cleansed as a sign for Israel.

The message is that the sin of God's people will be taken away in a single day in the future.

Five. The golden lampstand and the olive trees.

The lampstand represent God's people. The oil represent the Holy Spirit. And the two olive tree-containers represent heaven from where every enablement must come. The Holy Spirit will be with God's people and his power will level every mountain of opposition. The message is that God's people will derive their ability to build the church and their strength to accomplish great things from the illumining and never-failing Spirit of God.

Six. The flying scroll.

The message is that the sin of God's people will be completely destroyed and the land will be sanctified.

Seven. The woman in the corn measure.

The message is that the sin of God's people will be completely banished and the land will be sanctified.

Eight. The four horse-drawn chariots.

They were symbolic of God's Spirit (6:8) who descended upon all places in the world, to judge (1:20; 2:6-7; Isa 4:4) and to save (4:6). In contrast to the first vision, where the world was at rest and in peace (1:11), this vision teaches that

wherever the Spirit of God descends, this complacent rest will come to an end, and both Jews and Gentiles will turn to the living God (8:8,22). The message is that God's Spirit will go to all places in the world to judge and to save.

Third. A symbolic act (6:9-15).

Exiles from Babylon brought gifts of silver and gold for building the temple (Ez 8:25-30; Neh 7:70-72). The prophet had a crown made and put it on the high priest Joshua. This announced the coming Messiah (3:8). The coming Messiah would be *the Branch* who branches out from a small beginning. While Zerubbabel built the second temple, which was temporary, the coming Messiah would build the future temple. He would be both Priest and King and unite these two tasks harmoniously into one task (6:13; Ps 110:4). To this coming Messiah belonged the majesty. The crown was hung in the temple as a prophecy of a time when people who lived far away, both Jews and Gentiles (2:11), would come and help build the future temple. The Old Testament could only describe this future temple in terms of the Old Testament revelation and its illustrations. However, in the light of the New Testament revelation we know that this future temple would be a spiritual temple, namely, the Christian Church (Hag 2:9; Eph 2:18-22; 1 Pet 2:4-10; Heb 3:6).

Fourth. Predictions and promises regarding the future of Zion, and the rejection and subsequent glory of its Shepherd-King (ch. 9-14).

Chapter 9-10 contains prophecies of the continuing return of people who were still living in exile and concerning the coming Messiah.

Chapter 11 contains prophecies concerning Israel's judgement in the light of world judgement. The Lord himself was the Shepherd of Israel. But Israel's failure to appreciate the Lord's shepherding function, which would climax in Israel's rejection of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, would result in God laying down his shepherding function of Israel! When God would finally lay down his shepherding function of the whole world, that is, when God would break his staffs called 'Favour' and 'Union', which represent his general goodwill to people and the harmony between people, then the end of the world would arrive!

Chapter 12-13 contains prophecies concerning Israel's salvation, which would be possible only through the coming Messiah. The coming Messiah would be pierced on the cross.

Chapter 14 contains prophecies concerning the survivors of the nations who would share in the salvation of the remnant of Israel, the last great oppression, the Final Judgement Day on which God's people would escape, but God's enemies would be struck with the plague, and some aspects of the renewal of the earth.

POINT 3. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

The book of Zechariah may be given the title, "**The future glory of Zion and its Shepherd-King.**"

It has five parts:

Part one: chapter 1:1-6. A call to repentance.

Part two: chapter 1:7 to 6:8. Eight visions.

Part three: chapter 6:9-15. A symbolic act.

Part four: chapter 7:1 to 8:23. An answer to a question concerning the fasting days.

Part five: chapter 9-14. Predictions and promises regarding the future of Zion, and the rejection and subsequent glory of its Shepherd-King.

THE BOOK OF JOEL.

POINT 1. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF JOEL.

Joel is the second of the twelve Minor Prophets. The name "Joel" means "*the Lord is God*". Joel was most probably a citizen of the southern kingdom of Judah. He worked in the southern kingdom of Judah, but because he called Judah *Israel* (3:1-2) he directed his prophecies against all the tribes of Israel. The majority of scholars think he prophesied after the exile, between 500-400 B.C. The main elements of the end-time (eschatological) expectation of Israel *shortly before, during and after the exile* were: the Day of the Lord" (1:15; 2:1; 3:14), the return from exile (2:32; 3:1-2), the restoration of the city and land (3:1), the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:28-29), the genuine salvation of the survivors (remnant)(2:32), the judgement of the nations (3:2,12), the great changes in nature (2:30-31; 3:15-16), and finally the new heaven and new earth described in terms of the glorious fruitfulness of the land (3:18), the eternal inhabitation of the new Jerusalem and new Israel (3:20) and the Lord dwelling in Zion forever (3:17). The book of Joel is therefore regarded as the forerunner of the Jewish end-time revelation (apocalyptic) literature of the last centuries before Christ.

POINT 2. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF JOEL.

First. The plague points to the Day of the Lord and motivates to repentance.

Chapter 1 describes a plague of locusts that had already come over the land. Chapter 2 describes the plague of locusts as a threat to the city of Jerusalem, which was happening or about to happen and which eventually coincides with the Day of the Lord. Thus, while the plague of locusts was a real plague, *the description took on end-time (eschatological)*

elements in chapter 2:10-11 and became a warning concerning the Day of the Lord (1:15; 2:1). The prophet Joel threatens Israel with the Day of the Lord, because he wants to shake them awake.

Second. Repentance will result in the termination of the plague.

Chapter 2:18-27 is not a historical description, but a prophetic message. The prophet Joel predicts what would happen if Israel repented. The prophesied termination of the plague was intended to motivate Israel even more to repent. If Israel repented, God would be zealous for the land and take pity on his people (2:18).

Third. The Day of the Lord begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Joel motivates Israel to repent by prophesying the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord would begin with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. According to Acts 2:1-33, this was literally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. From then onwards, the gospel of salvation was preached and is still preached. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will certainly be saved (2:32; Rom 10:12-13).

Fourth. The Day of the Lord ends with the Final Judgement.

Joel motivates Israel to repent by prophesying the Final Judgement. Only in Jerusalem and only for those who called on the name of the Lord there would be salvation, because all the nations would be destroyed in God's Final Judgement.

Fifth. The Old Testament prophecies in the light of the New Testament teachings.

One. The nation of Israel and the other nations.

Because Old Testament prophecy did not know God's *plan concerning the Gentiles* (Eph 3:2-6), the prophets could only describe the future glory of God's kingdom as happening *in and through Israel* and its institutions. They described the coming Messiah in terms of his coming for the nation of Israel. They described the future salvation in terms of the restoration of the nation of Israel (3:1,20). They described the future kingdom of God in terms of Israel, Zion or Jerusalem. They described the future worship of God in terms of the Old Testament temple and its ceremonies. They described the future judgement in terms of the judgement of the Gentile nations (3:2,12,14). And they described the future new earth in terms of the renewed land of Israel (3:17-18). *The Old Testament revelation was therefore limited by the national character of the nation of Israel*, which regarded Israel as the people of God and the other nations as not the people of God. The other nations were regarded as enemies, because they promoted idolatry and tried to destroy Israel. The prophet Joel prophesied that Israel would be restored, but the nations would be judged in the valley of Jehoshaphat (3:2,12,14). In the light of the New Testament revelation, the Old Testament 'nations' are a type of the New Testament 'evil world' as described in John 15:18-25. And the Old Testament 'Israel' is a type of the New Testament 'people of God', who are gathered from every nation in the world, as taught in Revelation 5:9.

Two. The Day of the Lord.

Old Testament prophecy saw all the end-time events together as one great event on "the Day of the Lord". They saw the restoration of Israel as immediately connected to the Day of the Lord. *The Day of the Lord teaches the biblical view of history*. Because for the Lord a thousand years is like one day, therefore what happens in many centuries in human history is like one day in divine biblical history. The Day of the Lord began with the first coming of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and will end with the second coming of Jesus Christ and the final judgement, as Joel clearly shows. Thus, in a sense we are now living *in the last days!* And all the centuries of human history must be viewed from the point of view of God's judgements and salvation. Or as Joel said, the locust plague is a present judgement of God and warns that the final judgement of God is at hand!

POINT 3. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF JOEL.

The book of Joel may be given the title, "**The plague, repentance and promise of God.**"

It has two parts:

Part 1: chapter 1:1 to 2:17. Preaching of repentance.

The plague which has already happened in the land of Israel (1:2-20). The plague, which still threatens Jerusalem, motivates people to repent (2:1-17).

Part 2: chapter 2:18 to 3:21. Promise of salvation.

Prophecy concerning the termination of the plague (2:18-27). Prophecy concerning the Day of the Lord unto salvation (2:28-32). Prophecy concerning the Day of the Lord unto judgement (3:1-21).

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

POINT 1. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI.

Malachi is the last of the twelve Minor Prophets. The name "Malachi" means "*my messenger*". He prophesied to Israel (1:1). Because he called *the governor* by its Persian name, just as Ezra did, he prophesied after the exile during the Persian Empire (1:8; Ezra 5:14). The second temple functioned and the people had already lost their initial fervour for the worship of the Lord at Jerusalem, as their sins show (1:7; 2:1; 3:1,10). Thus Malachi must have prophesied quite

some time after Haggai and Zechariah. His preaching resembles that of the governor Nehemiah (2:11; Neh 13:23; 3:8-10; Neh 13:10-13). He probably prophesied around 432-420 B.C.

POINT 2. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI.

First. The people of God may not dishonour God by giving to him unworthy gifts.

The people of Israel should have brought their best sacrifices and gifts to God. However, they brought sacrifices to God, which they would not even dare to bring to the governor. They sacrificed the injured, crippled or diseased animals. Therefore, their sacrifices were useless, because God will not accept such sacrifices (1:10)!

Second. The priests of God may not cause the people to stumble.

The priests of Israel should have stood in awe of God's name, should have given true instruction, should have walked with God in righteousness and peace and should have turned many people from sin (2:5-7). However, they themselves had turned away from following God's ways, had violated the covenant, had shown partiality in matters of God's law and had caused many people to stumble by their wrong teachings (2:8-9). Therefore, God would send a curse on the priests and would turn their blessings into curses (2:2).

Third. The people of God may not divorce or marry unbelievers.

Marriage is a solemn event, because God regards it as *a covenant* between a man and a woman who both believe in God (2:14). Therefore, God's people may not marry unbelievers. In marriage, God makes these two people one in flesh and in spirit. And through marriage, God seeks godly offspring, that is, children who would trust and obey him (2:15). God's people, who are married, may not break faith with their marriage partner.

Fourth. The Day of the Lord.

In general the pious in Israel questioned God's rule on earth and asked, "Where is the God of justice?" (2:17). They did this because they saw that the wicked people prospered and were apparently tolerated by God (3:14-15). Therefore the prophet announced that the Day of the Lord would come unexpectedly (3:1). The Day of the Lord would begin with the coming of "the Angel of the covenant". Elsewhere he is called "the Angel of the Lord" (Zech 1:12), which is the second person of the Triune God in his function as Mediator of the Old Covenant. The "Angel of the Lord" is therefore the manifestation of Jesus Christ during the Old Testament period. He would be like a refiner's fire and separate the wicked from the righteous (3:2,18). As a response to the prophet Malachi's prophecy, a scroll of remembrance" was written in Israel, containing the names of the righteous, that is, the names of those who feared the Lord and honoured his name (3:16). Thus already during the Old Testament days, the nation of Israel itself made a very clear distinction between those who are wicked and those who are righteous, as Romans 9:6 teaches, "Not all who are descended from the nation of Israel are *the true Israel*." The righteous were able to bring offerings of righteousness (3:3; cf. Rom 12:1). While chapter 3:4 described these righteous people as people belonging to Jerusalem and Judah, chapter 1:11 described them as people coming from all the nations in the world! This shows that *what the Old Testament says concerning the righteous people in Israel must be applied to the righteous people of all the nations in the New Testament! Old Testament prophecy finds its fulfilment in the New Testament and therefore must always be interpreted in the light of the New Testament!* On the Day of the Lord, it would become very clear who are the righteous and who are the wicked. The Day of the Lord will burn like a furnace. All the wicked will be stubble, set on fire by the Day of the Lord, and they will be completely destroyed (4:1). But for all the righteous, their righteousness or salvation will rise like the sun, driving all wickedness away and bringing healing of every wound and every sickness and rescuing from every suffering (4:2). The Old Testament prophecy is veiled and cannot make a distinction between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ. In the light of the New Testament, at the first coming of Jesus Christ, faith in Jesus Christ would separate the righteous from the wicked. And at the second coming of Jesus Christ, everyone will finally see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not (3:18).

POINT 3. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI.

The book of Malachi may be given the title, "**Condemnation of sin and announcement of the Day of the Lord.**"

Two parts:

Part one: chapter 1:1 to 2:16. Condemnation of sin.

Part two: chapter 2:17 to 4:6. Announcement of the Day of the Lord.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK.

First. Special note: This ends the introduction to the Old Testament books. During the next two weeks we will introduce the book of Revelation. Therefore, read through the book of Revelation once.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom and www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".