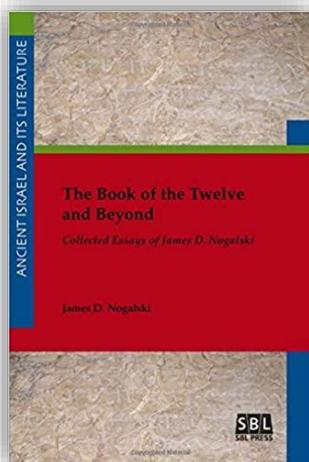
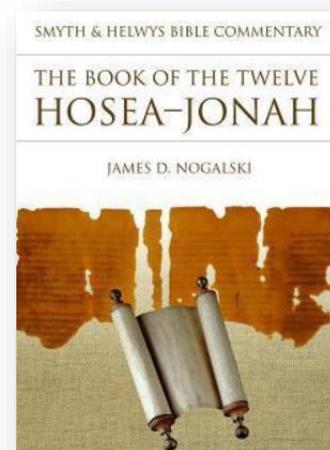


Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

April 14, 2020

Jim Nogalski and I had offices across the hall from each other during the years that we both taught at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Jim taught Old Testament and I taught the Psychology of Religion and Pastoral Care.

I eventually left academe and returned to congregational ministry (which you know, of course). As darkness fell on SBTS, Jim also left, continuing to teach, and is now a Full Professor at Baylor University. Beyond this, Jim has become probably the pre-eminent non-Jewish scholar on what is sometimes called "The Book of the Twelve," or the "minor prophets."



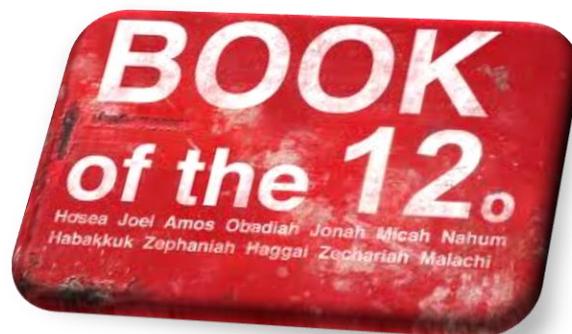
Now that we've passed Holy Week, we will return to our Journey through the Bible, with a sermon based on something interesting from each book. What comes next would be a study of The Book of the Twelve, but since this series must necessarily be completed before the beginning of Advent, there aren't enough Sunday's to give attention to each of these short books. That's probably okay, since we gave focused attention to them during our January Bible Study last year, and since their themes are somewhat redundant.

Not wishing to short-change you, though, this week's *Laptop* offers an overview of the Twelve, and if you want more . . . I have more 😊. What follows are two charts to give an overview of the timeline of the Twelve, and then a sermon you heard several years ago attempting to zoom through the Twelve in 30 minutes.¹

You needed something to do on this COVID afternoon, anyway.

Blessings!

Dave



¹ The subtitle of the sermon might be "Drinking the Twelve through a Fire Hose." 😊

CBF: transforming Oakland Mills into a community others wish to replicate.

Archived Laptops are available at http://www.dcstancil.com/daves_laptop

1 | Page

The Book of the Twelve

c. 760-460 BCE

The Book of Four

Hosea (northern kingdom)
Amos (northern kingdom)
Micah (southern kingdom)
Zephaniah (southern kingdom)

The Book of Two (added to the Book of Four; reconstruction of the Temple)

Haggai
Zechariah 1-8

60-80 year gap between Micah and Zephaniah

Nahum
Habakkuk

Jonah (must come between Amos and Micah)

Malachi (latest; from the Persian period)

Joel and *Obadiah* appear to have been edited from other source material to conform to their position within the Twelve.

PROPHETS to ISRAEL (the Northern Kingdom)	PROPHETS to JUDAH (the Southern Kingdom)
Amos (c. 760 B.C.)	
Jonah (c. 760 B.C.)	
Hosea (c. 755 B.C.)	
<i>Israel destroyed, 722 B.C.</i>	
	Micah (c. 742 B.C.)
	Isaiah (c. 740 B.C.)
	Nahum (c. 660-630 B.C.)
	Zephaniah (c. 640-609 B.C.)
	Habakkuk (c. 640-609 B.C.)
	Jeremiah (c. 627 B.C.)
	Daniel (c. 605 B.C.)
	Ezekiel (c. 597 B.C.)
	<i>Judah goes into Exile, 587 B.C.</i>
	Obadiah (c. 586 B.C.)
	Lamentations (c. 586 B.C.)
	Haggai (c. 520 B.C.)
	Zechariah (c. 520 B.C.)
	Malachi (c. 460 B.C.)
	Joel (c. 350 B.C.?)

Timeline	King of Judah / Event	Prophet to Judah	Prophet to Israel	King of Israel / Event
792 BCE				
780	Uzziah (Azariah) (792-740)			Jeroboam II (781-753)
770				
760			Amos (c. 760) Jonah (c. 760)	
	Jotham acted as regent for his father toward the end.		Hosea (c. 755)	
				Zechariah (753-752)
				Shallum (752)
750	Jotham (750-735)			Menahem (752-742)
		Micah (c. 742)		Pekahiah (742-740)
740		Isaiah (c. 740)		Pekah (740-732)
	Ahaz (735-715)			Hoshea (732-722)
730				
720				
710	Hezekiah (715-686)			Fall of Samaria (722)
700				
680	Manasseh (686-642)	Nahum (c. 660-630)		
660	Amon (642-640)			
640	Josiah (640-609)	Zephaniah (c. 640-609)		
		Habakkuk (c. 640-609)		
620		Jeremiah (c. 627)		
600	Jehoahaz (609)			
	Jehoiakim (609-597)	Daniel (c. 605)		
	Jehoiachin (597)			
	Zedekiah (597-586)	Ezekiel (c. 597)		
	Fall of Jerusalem (586)	Obadiah (some time after 586)		
580				
520	1st return of exiles (538)	Haggai (c. 520)		
	Temple rebuilt (516/515)	Zechariah (c. 520)		
460	2nd return of exiles (458)	Malachi (c. 460)		
440	3rd return of exiles (445)			
350		Joel?		

Timeline of the Prophets

“The Minor Prophets”

Hosea - Malachi; Zechariah 12:10-13:1 ¹

Well, today we complete our quick tour of the Old Testament, which is also the Jewish Bible. You'll remember from last week that the fourth and fifth sections of the Old Testament are known as “the Major Prophets” and “the Minor Prophets,” with the Major Prophets being so designated primarily because their writings are generally longer than those of the Minor Prophets.

I'm still rather amazed that nearly a third of the Hebrew Scriptures and nearly a quarter of the Bible as a whole represents God's repeated, concerted, passionate, and persistent call to Israel to repent, thus averting the destruction that could finally be forestalled no longer. Bear in mind that while there is indeed a future component to the prophetic books, the prophets were actually far more concerned with calling their contemporaries back to their faithful covenant relationship with God than they were with predicting the future.

As I mentioned last week, the general movement in most of the prophetic books is from judgment to redemption, from bad news to good news. Here once again are five things to remember that capture the central thrust of these prophetic works:

1. The prophets firmly **asserted** that God was speaking through them.
2. The prophets repeatedly **affirmed** that God had chosen Israel for covenant relationship.
3. The prophets sadly **reported** that the majority of Israel had sinned against God and that special covenant relationship.
4. The prophets passionately **warned** of God's purifying judgment.
5. The prophets consistently **promised** that God would bring renewal and Hope on the other side of judgment.²

With this brief introduction, then, let's look quickly at the twelve Minor Prophets. I'm going to talk about them in the order in which they actually appeared rather than in the typical order in our Bibles.

JOEL

Scholars vary between thinking that Joel was the first of all the writing prophets, long before the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C., and thinking that he was the last of the writing prophets, after the fall of the southern kingdom in 587 B.C. While it could certainly be argued either way, I'm opting for the earlier date.

The major theme of Joel is “the Day of the Lord,” a day of God's cataclysmic judgment that appears often in the prophetic books.³ Although the Jews tended to look forward to the Day of the Lord as God's vindication of Israel vis-à-vis her neighbors, the prophets warned that judgment would begin with God's own household.

Joel's prophecies were directed to the southern kingdom of Judah, through which God's covenant of salvation would eventually be fulfilled. Joel begins with repeated calls to repentance so that judgment may be averted.

¹ A sermon by David C. Stancil, Ph.D., delivered at the Columbia Baptist Fellowship in Columbia, Maryland on July 21, 2013.

² *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), pp. 1230-1231.

³ Joel mentions it more than anyone else (1:15, 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). See also Isaiah 13:6, 9; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Malachi 4:5.

Joel 1:14

¹⁴ *Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.*

Joel 2:13

¹³ *Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.*

God knows that the people will not repent and that judgment will be required; yet at the same time God offers this memorable promise of restoration after exile.

Joel 2:25

²⁵ ***“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm— my great army that I sent among you.***

In this very first of the prophetic writings, God foretells the Day of Pentecost far into the future, a “Day of the Lord” of a very different sort. Peter quoted this passage in his great Pentecost Sermon (Acts 2:17-21).

Joel 2:28-32

²⁸ *“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. ³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ³² **And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.***

AMOS

Amos was the first of the prophets God sent to the northern kingdom of Israel. Echoing the words of Joel, Amos warns that the Day of the Lord is going to be a day of judgment, not of hope, and he, too, warns that external forms of worship without true inner repentance are repulsive to God, who will not be manipulated.

The years leading up to the destruction of Israel were economically prosperous and relatively peaceful. The people wrongly associated their prosperity with God’s favor, and became caught up in materialism, luxurious living, and oppression of the poor. That description should sound familiar to us in 21st-century America

Amos 5:18

¹⁸ *Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light.*

Amos 5:21-24

²¹ *“I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. ²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. ²³ Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. ²⁴ **But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!***

Amos 8:9-12

⁹ *“In that day,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. ¹⁰ I will turn your religious festivals into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like*

mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day. ¹¹ “The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, **but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.** ¹² People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.

JONAH

Appearing during the same period as Joel, Amos, and Hosea, Jonah was not sent to Israel but rather to Nineveh, the capital of the proud Assyrian Empire. Although the drama of Jonah’s experience with the great fish tends to overshadow it, the message of the book is really God’s compassion toward people of all nations, not just toward Israel.

Jonah 3:1-5

¹ Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ² “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” ³ Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, ‘**Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.**’ The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

Jonah 3:10

¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

Jonah 4:10-11

¹⁰ But the LORD said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹ **And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?”**

HOSEA

Hosea was the last of the prophets to the northern kingdom before its destruction. As frequently happened with the prophets, God told Hosea to live out a parable that graphically portrayed God’s message. While the Bible often uses images of marital love to illustrate the kind of intimate love God desires with us, the Bible also uses the converse images of prostitution and marital unfaithfulness to portray the unfaithfulness of our love for God.

In order to portray Israel’s unfaithfulness, God told Hosea to marry Gomer, a prostitute, and to have children by her. Later, when Gomer ran away to return to her former occupation, God told Hosea to go to the brothel and buy her back as a symbol of God’s faithful efforts to reclaim the love of Israel . . . but, like Gomer, Israel’s heart was never truly changed.

Hosea 1:2

² When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD.”

Hosea 3:1-2

¹ The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” ² So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.

Hosea 4:1-3

¹ Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: “There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. ² There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. ³ Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away.

MICAH (followed by Isaiah)

Prophecy in the same general time period as Amos and Hosea, Micah spoke to both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah as they experienced a season of economic prosperity that was having very negative spiritual results. The sins against which Micah warned included idolatry (1:7, 5:12-14), the unjust seizure of property (2:2,9), the failure of civil leadership (3:1-3, 9-10, 7:3), poor spiritual leadership (3:5-7, 11), corrupt business practices (6:10-12), and the belief that religious observances such as animal sacrifices covered over all those things with God (6:6-7).

Micah’s analysis resulted in a pronouncement that many regard as the moral high-water mark of the Old Testament. You already know what it is, though you may not know that you know:

Micah 6:6-8

⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. **And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

Like the other prophets, Micah’s message was both for the people to whom he was speaking as well as for times yet to be. Those future times beyond God’s judgment would bring the fulfillment of all that God had promised:

Micah 7:18-20

¹⁸ Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. ¹⁹ You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. ²⁰ You will be faithful to Jacob, and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago.

Micah 5:2

² **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,** though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

This was the verse to which Herod’s counselors referred when they told him that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

Micah 4:1-4

¹ In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. ² Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ³ He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes

for strong nations far and wide. **They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.** ⁴ **Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid,** for the LORD Almighty has spoken.

NAHUM

Nahum's prophecy is a sequel to, and a dramatic contrast with, the book of Jonah. Jonah's mission to Nineveh was probably sometime in the first half of the eighth century B.C., warning that large and powerful city of God's impending judgment. To Jonah's dismay, the city heeded his message, repented, and was spared God's judgment.

This repentance didn't last long, though. After about 745 B.C., Assyria became the dominant power in the Near East through bloodshed and massacre, cruelty and torture, destruction, plundering, and exiling such as has seldom been seen in human history.⁴ Nineveh was the capital of this empire, and Nahum's prophecy is given entirely to the foretelling of its destruction, which came in 612 B.C. Shortly after that, the Assyrians disappeared forever from the earth.

Nahum 1:3

³ *The LORD is slow to anger but great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.*

Nahum 2:6

⁶ *The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses.*

Nahum did include a little bit of good news, at least for Israel:

Nahum 1:7

⁷ *The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him,*

Nahum 1:15

¹⁵ *Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.*

ZEPHANIAH

Prophesying several generations after the fall of the northern kingdom, Zephaniah joined Joel in "proclaiming the Day of the Lord," a day of judgment for all who forsake their covenantal relationship with and responsibilities toward the Lord, while at the same time being a day of blessing for the faithful.

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, one of the few good kings in Judah who tried to turn the nation back to God, but Josiah's efforts proved to be "too little, too late." In spite of having seen God's judgment upon the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom continued headlong in spiritual rebellion against God.

Zephaniah 1:18

¹⁸ *Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath." In the fire of his jealousy the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth.*

⁴ *ESV Study Bible*, p. 1709.

As was usually the case, Zephaniah's warning of judgment also included promises of God's future blessing. In 3:17, Zephaniah wrote what has become my favorite verse in all of Scripture:

Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV1977)

17 The LORD your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will comfort you with his love. He will rejoice over you with singing.

HABAKKUK (followed by Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel)

Habakkuk was probably a contemporary of Zephaniah and Jeremiah in Judah and of Daniel and Ezekiel in Babylon. Habakkuk's prophecy is unusual in that it never addresses the people of Judah directly but rather records a dialogue between the prophet and God, a dialogue that has moments both humorous and sublime.

We begin with humor, as Habakkuk challenges God to answer his complaint against Judah, and then he essentially says, "Okay. Now I'm going to stand right here until you give me an acceptable answer":

Habakkuk 1:2

2 How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?

Habakkuk 2:1

1 I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

God does answer, with a reply reminiscent of God's answer to Job (Job 38-41):

Habakkuk 1:5

5 "Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.

Habakkuk 2:14

14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk 2:20

20 The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.

Finally, as Micah gave us the "moral high-water mark" of the Old Testament, Habakkuk ends with what might be called the Old Testament's "high-water mark of faith":

Habakkuk 3:17-19

17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. ¹⁹ The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.

OBADIAH (followed by Lamentations)

The first of the Minor Prophets to write after the destruction of Jerusalem (about the same time that Jeremiah probably wrote Lamentations), Obadiah expands on what Lamentations 4:22 announces—restoration for God’s people but doom for the neighboring nation of Edom.

You may remember that the Edomites were the descendants of Jacob’s brother, Esau, and that they were one of Israel’s neighbors directly to the east. Also known as Idumea, the area from which Herod the Great would later come, the great city of Edom was Petra, a city carved out of living rock, which some of you have probably visited.

As with many of the conflicts that continue to this day in that part of the world, the conflict between Israel and Edom had its origin in the divisions between Isaac and Ishmael, and between Jacob and Esau. During Israel’s desperate crisis of the Babylonian conquest and captivity, the Edomites should have assisted their kinsmen, but they did not, siding instead with the foreign invaders and taking economic advantage of Israel’s misfortune.

Once again, Obadiah’s message included both judgment and hope:

Obadiah 1:4

4 Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD.

Obadiah 1:21

21 Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD’s.

HAGGAI

Haggai and Zechariah both spoke for God to the discouraged exiles who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. The book of Haggai records five prophetic oracles during the period August 29-December 18, 520 B.C., all calculated to get the people moving on rebuilding the Temple. The repatriates have now been back for nearly twenty years, and they have yet to begin rebuilding the house of the Lord.

You may remember from our overview of Ezra that although the people did rebuild the Temple, it was not much compared with Solomon’s temple (Ezra 3:12; Haggai 2:3). Although the Second Temple began modestly, God promised through Haggai that better days were ahead. This passage is one of those Handel used in *Messiah*⁵:

Haggai 2:6-9

6 “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty. . . . 9 ‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,’ says the LORD Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the LORD Almighty.”

ZECHARIAH

Zechariah’s ministry began at the same time as Haggai’s, and he began with the same message: “Rebuild the Temple!” But while Haggai’s prophetic ministry lasted only a few months,

⁵ George Frideric Handel, *Messiah*, 1741.

Zechariah's ministry continued for some forty years. While chapters 1-8 of Zechariah are similar in tone and message to Haggai, Zechariah 9-14 is much more similar to Malachi, who came a generation or two later.

In those later chapters, Zechariah used spectacular imagery to foretell the coming of the Messiah, the "Branch" whom God would send to rescue his people and to reign over all the earth (3:8). Zechariah is one of our most important prophetic books, giving detailed messianic references that were clearly fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.⁶ We'll look at several verses from Zechariah in a moment.⁷

MALACHI

Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament, both in order and in chronology, and probably comes from the same general time period as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther in the mid-fifth century B.C. It's been a long time, now, since Haggai and Zechariah urged the people to rebuild the Temple, and, while the people don't seem to be blatantly idolatrous, there are significant problems nonetheless. The people seem to be relatively orthodox in their beliefs, but theirs has become a dead orthodoxy, form without faith.

Beyond this, the former prophecies of a renewed golden age have not yet materialized. In contrast to those glowing promises, the harsh reality of the people's lives was characterized by economic privation, prolonged drought, crop failure, and pestilence (3:10 ff.).⁸ In contrast to the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon, Judah was now an insignificant territory of about 20 by 30 miles, with a population of perhaps 150,000 people.

In such a situation, God's blessings seemed "long, long ago and far, far away," and the people's religious expression was halfhearted at best. Malachi's goal was to call the people back to heart-felt faith, using the rhetorical method of question and answer: "*I have loved you,*" says the LORD. "*But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'*" (Malachi 1:2).

It is in Malachi that we find God's most-quoted exhortation to tithing:

Malachi 3:10

¹⁰ ***Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,*** says the LORD Almighty, ***and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.***

Malachi also spoke of "the Day of the Lord," in ways immortalized by Handel's *Messiah*:

Malachi 3:1-2

¹ *"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,"* says the LORD Almighty. ² *But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.*

⁶ *Life Application Bible*, p. 1501.

⁷ "The book of Zechariah is densely mined for quotations by the NT, whose authors discerned in it several prophecies concerning the Messiah's coming. The clearest instances come from [Zechariah 8:16](#) (in [Ephesians 4:25](#)), [Zechariah 9:9](#) (in [Matthew 21:5](#) and [John 12:15](#)), [Zechariah 11:12-13](#) (in [Matthew 27:9-10](#)), [Zechariah 12:10](#) (in [John 19:37](#)), and [Zechariah 13:7](#) (in [Matthew 26:31](#) and [Mark 14:27](#)). In addition to these are numerous allusions, which are sometimes difficult to assess; one estimate, however, finds about 54 passages from Zechariah echoed in about 67 different places in the NT, with the lion's share of these found in the book of Revelation" (*ESV Study Bible* introduction to Zechariah, Crossway, 2008).

⁸ *ESV Study Bible*, p. 1771.

Malachi ends with the Old Testament's final sign of the coming Messiah, which Jesus would later declare fulfilled through John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11).

Malachi 4:5

⁵ *"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.*

HOMILY

One of the most frequent and most popular activities on planet earth is the attempt to know the future. In fact, I suspect that nearly every one of us engages in some sort of effort to know the future every single day. We check our computers, phones, and papers for news of the stock market, and we'd love to know which stocks are going to go up . . . or down. We do a lot of checking on forecasts of upcoming weather; and interspersed with these more routine daily efforts at discerning the future are periodic announcements by self-proclaimed prophets of the impending end of the world.

We've seen that the Bible is no stranger to prophecy and prediction. J. Barton Payne's *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* catalogs literally thousands of biblical predictions and their fulfillment,⁹ and Alfred Edersheim's *Life & Times of Jesus the Messiah* points out that the rabbis recognized 456 predictions related to the Messiah alone.¹⁰

Of the Bible's 31,124 verses, 8,352 (27%) contain predictive material of some sort. Some prophecies are unconditional, meaning that they will be fulfilled no matter what, while others are based on fulfillment of divinely-prescribed conditions. Examples of God-inspired prediction are not restricted to those books written by specifically-named prophets, and appear throughout the Bible.

The Bible's prophecies are frequently first given in very general terms, becoming more specific in the course of God's progressive revelation. For example, Genesis 3:15, the first hint of the coming Messiah, is a tiny bud that eventually becomes an extraordinary bouquet, and several of its most familiar flowers are found in Zechariah's prophetic "garden." I expect that you'll recognize them:

- **Zechariah 9:9**

⁹ *Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

- **Zechariah 11:12-13**

¹² *I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. ¹³ And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the LORD.*

- **Zechariah 12:10**

¹⁰ *"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.*

⁹ J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980).

¹⁰ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* in two volumes, eighth edition, revised (New York: Longman, Green & Co., 1912), vol. 2, p. 710.

- **Zechariah 13:6-7**

⁶ *If someone asks, ‘What are these wounds on your body?’ they will answer, ‘The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.’* ⁷ *“Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!” declares the LORD Almighty. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones.*

- **Zechariah 13:1**

¹ *“On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.*

Those prophecies were spoken more than 500 years before their fulfillment, and they were given as signs *so that the Messiah might be recognized when He came*. Because the Messiah would be very different from what the people were expecting, God gave many indicators ahead of time that would be keys to the Messiah’s identity.¹¹ The online version of this sermon will have a table that catalogues sixty-seven messianic prophecies with their fulfillments—fulfillments so statistically improbable that divine action was required for their completion. You may want to check that out this afternoon.¹²

Zechariah 9:9

⁹ *Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

Zechariah 13:1

¹ *“On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.”*¹³

That part of Zechariah’s prophecy became the inspiration for the hymn of promise that we now sing as testimony to God’s faithfulness, forgiveness, and Hope:

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

¹¹ The traditional date for the completion of what we call the Old Testament is 450 B.C. We know that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, was completed c. 250 B.C., so the Hebrew text has to be at least that old, and parts of it are hundreds and hundreds of years older. This means that the minimum distance between these Messianic prophecies and their fulfillment was 250 years, with that distance being more commonly nearly 600 years, and in some cases 1,500 years or more.

The ancient Synagogue found references to the Messiah in many more passages of the Old Testament than those to which we generally appeal. Ancient Rabbinic writings unquestionably held that the Messiah would be pre-existent, would be elevated above Moses, and even above the angels, would represent the nation, would suffer and die a violent death for his people, would restore Israel and establish his Kingdom. But they had no real conception of sin as being so serious as to require blood redemption.

The Rabbis taught that religion was a matter of pleasing God by external works, overlooking the inner dimension of the motives of the heart. Judaism required only study of the Law and good works, and desired only national restoration and glory. Everything else was but means to these ends; the Messiah Himself only the grand instrument in attaining them. Thus viewed, the picture presented would be of Israel’s exaltation rather than of the salvation of the world. In such a picture there was neither room nor occasion for a Messiah-Savior.

¹² You might also want to check out the film, *The Star of Bethlehem*, which unlocks the mystery of the world’s most famous star. Acclaimed by NASA’s former Chief of Planetary Astronomy and the Technical Editor for *Sky & Telescope* as “well-researched and reasonable,” and described as “a compelling explanation” by NASA’s Chief Engineer for the Space Shuttle and the International Space Station, this hour-long film uses the best of faith-full scholarship to illumine the spine-tingling wonder of the star that announced our Savior’s birth. The film shows how the star not only fulfilled nine specific prophecies, but also how it had been engineered into the very fabric of creation. Neither Jesus’ birth nor His death and resurrection were happenstance events! www.bethlehemstar.net, www.bethlehemstarmovie.com

¹³ See also Matthew 5:3-12; John 10:27-28; Ephesians 1:16-23; Philippians 4:13.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day; and there, may I, though vile as he,
wash all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its pow'r till all the ransomed
church of God be saved, to sin no more.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, redeeming love has been
my theme, and shall be till I die.¹⁴

¹⁴ William Cowper (1731-1800), *There Is a Fountain*, tune is an early American melody.