

# WTF LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



## LESSON 6 (PART 1) – OBADIAH

### FACILITATOR'S

Note

In this lesson we will explore the prophecy or 'vision' of Obadiah. We know nothing about the prophet Obadiah beyond what is written in his book. With only 21 verses, the book of Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. Its message is focused entirely on a single pronouncement: the judgment and doom of the nation of Edom. Edom traces its roots to Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, with whom Esau struggled all of his adolescent years, beginning while still in the womb of their mother Rebekah. Their conflict reached its apex when Jacob duped their father Isaac into giving him the double blessing of the firstborn, something to which Esau was entitled because he was the oldest. Esau lost this privilege, however, not only because of Jacob's trickery but because he had earlier sold his birthright to Jacob for a single meal, thus demonstrating his own foolishness and godlessness. The seed of bitterness and rivalry which was planted in the twins found its way into their descendants, as Edom and Israel were in constant conflict throughout the Old Testament. Edom's continual rage against Israel, manifested by her violent and deceitful actions, evoked warnings/judgments from the Lord, delivered through many of His prophets. And Obadiah is arguably the harshest of these oracles against Edom.

Through this lesson we hope to provide material that will provide knowledge (HEAD); then ask questions that will bring us understanding (HEART); and then motivate participants to go and live the Word in the world and demonstrate Godly wisdom (HANDS).

**HEAD**  **HEART**  **HANDS** 

We hope that by this study your class participants will not only hear, know, and understand the Word, but that they will also be driven to become the "Living Word" to the world around us. Your role in this process as a class facilitator is very important. Go beyond these lessons to demonstrate how what the Minor Prophets teach us can and should be lived daily. Use your life and the lives of others as examples of this "Living Word" concept.

*As always, we would encourage you to begin preparing for this lesson by digging into the Word and reading through the book of **Obadiah**. We also encourage you to read/scan through **Genesis 25:19-34, 27:1-45, Numbers 20:14-21, 24:15-19, Jeremiah 25:15-38, Ezekiel 25:12-14, 35:1-15, Amos 1:11-12** as background to the book. As you move through **Obadiah**, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is then that you should approach this lesson plan and use it (and others) only as a guide for the weeks to come. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.*

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## PRAYER



Begin your time with a prayer asking God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit as you and your class seek to encounter Him through His Holy Word.

## FOCUS

- Presentation of introductory material on the vision of Obadiah.
- Understand that the following principles for the individual also apply to nations:
  1. Pride brings destruction (vv. 3-4; Proverbs 16:18)
  2. A nation reaps what it sows (v.15; Galatians 6:7)
  3. A nation who sees others in need whom it can help, and refuses to do so, will be held accountable to God (v.11; Matthew 12:30; Proverbs 3:27-28)
- God's people, in spite of difficulties and suffering, will finally triumph.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS (OPTIONAL)

- "Pride goes before the fall." Ever heard this statement? What does it mean? Is it true? Explain.

## KNOWLEDGE HEAD

### From God's Word through Obadiah

- OVERVIEW
  - Author
    - The author is identified as Obadiah, or at least, the vision/prophecy recounted in the book is said to have originated with someone named Obadiah
    - Obadiah means "servant of Yahweh" ("servant of the Lord")
    - Nothing else, beyond what is written in this book, is known of Obadiah
    - Other Obadias mentioned in the Old Testament, none of whom can be definitively linked to the prophet, include:
      - Servant of King Ahab and ally of Elijah (1 Kings 18:3-7,9,16)
      - Son of Hananiah, a descendant of King David through Solomon (1 Chronicles 3:21)
      - Son of Uzzi, a descendant of the Hebrew patriarch Issachar (1 Chronicles 7:3)

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- Son of Azel, a descendant of King Saul through Jonathan (1 Chronicles 8:38)
  - Son of Shemaiah, a descendant of the Hebrew patriarch Levi (1 Chronicles 9:16)
  - Warrior of the tribe of Gad who served King David (1 Chronicles 12:9)
  - Father of Ishmaiah, governor of the tribe of Zebulun during the reign of King David (1 Chronicles 27:19)
  - Prince of the southern kingdom (Judah) during the reign of King Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:7)
  - A Levite, overseer of the reconstruction efforts during the reforms of King Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:12)
  - Son of Joab, one who returned from the Babylonian captivity with the priestly scribe Ezra (Ezra 8:9)
- **Date**
- Unknown. Conjectures range from 925 B.C. – the campaign of Shishak, King of Egypt, against Judah under King Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 12:1-12) – down to 312 B.C. when Antigonus ordered an expedition against the Arabs holding Edom.
  - Attempts to date the book focus on dating the calamity that befell Jerusalem which is related in the book (vv10-14), but this is very difficult because Jerusalem suffered at least four times:
    - #1, Shishak's campaign (1 Kings 14:25-26, 2 Chronicles 12:1-12), circa 925 B.C.
    - #2, The Arabian and Philistine campaign, during the reign of King Jehoram (2 Chronicles 21:16-17), circa 850-843 B.C.
    - #3, The defeat of Amaziah, King of Judah, by Jehoash, King of Israel (2 Kings 14:8-14; 2 Chron. 25:17-24) – yes, civil war, circa 792-767 B.C.
    - #4, Nebuchadnezzar's campaign against, and destruction of, Jerusalem and the Temple (Jeremiah 39:1-10), circa 586 B.C.
  - The generally accepted dates are near calamity #2 or #4, with #4 seeming to be a more likely choice
    - Support for the later date, (calamity #4), circa 586 B.C.
      - Ezekiel's prophecy against the Edomites (Ezekiel 25:12-14), given during Ezekiel's ministry (during the Babylonian exile), is similar to Obadiah's
      - The calamity described in vv10-14 best matches the destruction brought by Nebuchadnezzar
      - There are references to exiles from Jerusalem (v20)
    - Support for the earlier date, (calamity #2), circa 845 B.C.

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- There are no explicit references to the burning of the temple and royal palace, or of carrying off Jews to Babylon – major catastrophic events for which some reference would be expected
- The vision alludes to Ephraim, part of the so-called Northern Kingdom, as still existing (v19)
  - **NOTE:** This point is weak, given that the Lord might still speak of the land of Ephraim even if it weren't populated by Jews, and the time of events in vv15-21 is unclear as the Day of the Lord is under discussion
- **Key Theme(s)**
  - Pride brings about destruction.
  - As with individuals, a nation reaps what it sows
  - A person or nation that remains aloof when they see others in need to whom they can render aid will be held accountable by God
  - **ASK:**
    - Do these themes still speak/apply to us today?
- **Metadata about the Book of Obadiah**
  - Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament (21 verses)
  - As with the book of Nahum, Obadiah is said to be a 'vision' (v1)
  - Obadiah is one of the seven Old Testament books (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Nahum and Obadiah) that are not quoted/echoed in the New Testament
  - There is no condemnation of sinful behavior on the part of Israel, no call to righteousness. What can be said of the vision is that:
    - it is not a warning to the Edomites as it makes clear that there is no hope for mercy but only the promise of eradication.
    - it offers comfort to the Israelites, as God promises to avenge them for the Edomites' acts of betrayal
  - There are several phrases in Obadiah that appear in Joel:
    - "because of violence" – Joel 3:19; Obadiah 10
    - "your deeds shall return on your own head" – Joel 3:4-7; Obadiah 15
    - "the day of the Lord is near" – Joel 1:15, 2:1, 3:14; Obadiah 15
    - "in Mt. Zion there shall be those what escape" – Joel 2:32; Obadiah 17
    - "Zion shall be holy" – Joel 3:17; Obadiah 17
- **Background on the Roots of the Perpetual Conflict Between Edom and Israel**
  - Conflict between the nations of Israel and Edom dates back to the prenatal struggle between their originating ancestors, Jacob (Israel) and Esau (Edom)
    - (Genesis 25:22-26) *The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of*

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the Lord. And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob.

- Esau
  - Per some sources, the meaning of the name Esau is unknown, while others say Esau (Hebrew, 'esaw) is similar to "hairy" (Hebrew, se'ar), which itself is similar to the word "Seir" (Hebrew, Se'iyar), the early name for the land southeast of the Dead Sea where Esau later lived (see Genesis 32:3; 36:8).
  - The Hebrew word for "red" ('admoni) is related to (sounds like) the word "Edom" ('edom), another name by which Esau came to be known (see Genesis 25:30; 36:8)
- Jacob
  - The name Jacob (Hebrew, ya 'aqob) is similar in sound to the noun, "heel" (Hebrew, 'aqeb), and 'aqob ("deceitful, sly"), so his name is said to mean "He takes by the heel" or "He deceives (cheats)".
  - He was later given the name "Israel" by God (see Genesis 32:28)
- It was God's sovereign election/choice to fulfill His promise to Abraham through Jacob (Israel) rather than Esau
  - (Romans 9:11-13) *though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad – in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls – <sup>12</sup>she was told, "The older will serve the younger." <sup>13</sup>As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*
- Jacob's receipt of Esau's birthright/blessing fueled bitterness between them
  - (Genesis 25:29-34) *Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."*
    - Esau was foolish and godless, showing disdain for the privileges of being the firstborn. He acted wrongly.

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- Jacob knew of his brother's foolishness, and worked it to his own advantage. His actions were not exactly commendable but certainly cunning.
- Later, when it was time for Esau (the firstborn) to receive his father's (Isaac's) blessing, Jacob, with help from his mother Rebekah, duped Isaac into giving the blessing of the firstborn to Jacob rather than Esau (see Genesis 27:1-29)
- Having lost the blessing of the firstborn, Esau hated Jacob
  - (Genesis 27:41) *Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob."*
- Jacob fled for his life and he and Esau continued their lives separately
- While time helped heal wounds (see Genesis 33:1-20), fulfilling Isaac's pronouncement (Genesis 27:39-40), a seed bitterness/resentment against Israel (Jacob) and his family was planted in the descendants of Esau, who occupied the land known as Edom (also, Seir – see Genesis 32:3; 36:8-9)
- Edom's Anger Against Israel Raged Perpetually
  - (Amos 1:11-12) *This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not relent. Because he pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked, I will send fire on Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah."*
  - **Judgment against Edom is mentioned more often in OT books than it is against any other foreign nation** (Isaiah 11:14; 34:5ff; 63:1-6; Jeremiah 9:25-26; 25:17-26; 49:7-22; Lamentations 4:21-22; Ezekiel 25:12-14; 35:1ff; Joel 3:19; Malachi 1:2-5; Obadiah 1:1-21)
  - Note: Obadiah is the apex of hatred among all the oracles against Edom
- **Summary of Historical Interactions Between Edom and Israel**
  - Edom refused Israel passage through their land during the time of the Wilderness Wandering (Numbers 20:14ff; 21:4; Judges 11:17-18)
  - The Edomites were recognized as "brothers" by Israel (God):
    - Israel was not to despise any Edomite (Deuteronomy 23:7)
    - The Edomite was permitted to enter the assembly of the Lord after three generations (Deuteronomy 23:8)
    - Israel was forbidden from taking any of Edom's territory (Deuteronomy 2:2-6)
  - Balaam predicted the conquest of Edom by Israel (Numbers 24:17-19)

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- Joshua was allotted territory for Judah up to the borders of Edom, but did not encroach on its lands (Joshua 15:1,21)
- A few centuries later, King Saul battled Edom (1 Samuel 14:47)
- David conquered the Edomites and placed garrisons throughout their land (2 Samuel 8:13-14)
- Solomon built the port of Ezion-Geber (with ships) on the coast of Edom (1 Kings 9:26; 2 Chronicles 8:17)
- During Jehoshaphat's reign (circa 871-849 B.C.), Edomites joined with Moabites and Ammonites to raid Judah, but God intervened, turning the allies against one another (2 Chronicles 20:1-28)
- During Jehoram's reign (circa 849-842 B.C.), Edom rebelled and established their own king and Jehoram (Judah/Israel) was not able to subjugate them (2 Chronicles 21:8-10; 2 Kings 8:20-22)
- In King Amaziah's reign (circa 796-767 B.C.), he invaded Edom (aka, Seir), slew thousands, captured Sela, their capital, renaming it Joktheel (2 Chronicles 25:11-12; 2 Kings 14:7)
- Amaziah's successor, King Uzziah (reign, circa 792-740 B.C.), rebuilt/restored the port at Elath, in Edom (2 Kings 14:22)
- Under King Ahaz (reign, circa 735-715 B.C.), Edom invaded Judah, while Judah was under attack by Syria (King Rezin) and Israel (King Pekah), and carried away prisoners (2 Kings 16:5-6, 2 Chronicles 28:17)
- From this point, Judah was never able to regain Edom
- In 586 B.C., when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar, Edomites were there, cheering/aiding the Babylonians
  - (Psalm 137:7-9) Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!" O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!
  - See Ezekiel 35:1-15 for God's oracle against Edom (Mount Seir) because of their opposition to Judah during the calamity
- By the time of Malachi (circa, 440 B.C., Edom had suffered a serious defeat (Malachi 1:2-5)
- At an undetermined time following the fall of Jerusalem, nomadic Nabatean Arabs had taken over Edom, driving the Edomites westward into a region between the Arabah and Mediterranean Sea
  - By 312 B.C. the area had come to be known as Idumea
  - Idumea included Hebron, a major Edomite city about 19 miles south of Jerusalem

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- During the Maccabean period (circa 126 B.C.), the Idumeans (included the Edomite exiles) were conquered by the Jews under prince and high priest, John Hyrcanus, and were forced to become Jewish proselytes or flee the region (Josephus, Antiquities, 13.9.1)
- Out of the Idumeans came procurators and Kings over the Jews, during the Roman domination of Israel, including Herod the Great and his sons Herod Archelaus (Matthew 2:13-23), Herod Antipas (Luke 3:1, Matthew 14:1-10; Mark 6:14-27) and Philip the Tetrarch (Luke 3:1)
- **THE TEXT**
  - The text of Obadiah can be divided into two sections:
    - Section 1 – God’s Vengeance on Esau/Edom (1 – 14)
    - Section 2 – God’s Victory for Jacob at the Day of the Lord (15-21)
  - **Verses 1-14 (Section 1)**
    - Summary: In spite of the fact that Edom was well known for its wise men and its virtually impenetrable mountainous stronghold in which the Edomites dwelled, Edom would fall to disloyal invaders and its people driven out. God Himself would direct the calamity as punishment for Edom’s cruelties toward Israel.
    - 1 – the announcement of doom
      - Read v1
      - Obadiah’s vision begins with an announcement of Edom’s doom delivered by a messenger
        - This announcement may refer to the prophecy God had delivered through Jeremiah against Edom (Jeremiah 49:7-22)
        - Note the similarity of Obadiah 1 to Jeremiah 49:14: *I have heard a message from the Lord; an envoy was sent to the nations to say, “Assemble yourselves to attack it! Rise up for battle!”*
    - 2-9 – Reason #1: Edom condemned for its pride
      - Edom’s haughtiness is seen by its false trust in the vantage point of her high mountainous stronghold (vv3-4)
        - 3: “... in the clefts of Sela” or “... in the clefts of the rocks”
        - Some associate Sela (rock, in Hebrew) with Petra (rock, in Greek)
        - The city Petra -- its temples and shelters -- were carved out of the sides of the mountains
        - The people literally “nested” (lived) in the carved-out shelters
        - Petra was entered by the Siq (also, Sik), a vary narrow canyon over 1 mile in length and as narrow as 30 feet in places, so small groups of soldiers could hold off an entire army with conventional weapons



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- Edom considered itself an impregnable fortress – “...you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’ ” (v3)
- God hates pride
  - (Proverbs 6:16-19) *There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, ...”*
- 4: Per Obadiah, God Himself will bring Edom down: “*Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,*” declares the Lord.
- 5-6: the imagery of thieves and harvesters is used to emphasize that Edom will be completely ransacked
  - Thieves would only steal what they needed to satisfy themselves, leaving something behind
  - Similarly, grape pickers would leave behind some gleanings (Leviticus 19:9-10)
  - Not so with Edom, nothing will be left (v6)
- 7-9: God will bring down Edom through the betrayal of her allies
  - Edom was known for its wise men (Jeremiah 49:7)
  - Job’s friend Eliaphaz was a Temanite (Teman was a chief tribe of Edom, Genesis 36:11,15,42)
  - Ironically, Edom will never detect the duplicity of her allies; her wise men fail her
  - Edom’s wise men, her warriors and all those in the mountain shelters will be slaughtered
- 10-14 – Reason #2: Edom condemned for its lack of brotherliness toward Israel
  - 10-11: Edom charged with violence against Jacob, primarily for doing nothing to aid Judah when Judah was being destroyed
    - *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.* (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23)
    - *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.* (James 4:17)
  - 12: Edom actually rejoiced over Judah’s calamity and cheered her attackers on – an ungodly behavior denounced in Scripture
    - *“he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished”* (Proverbs 17:5)
    - *“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the Lord see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him.”* (Proverbs 24:17-18)
  - 13: Edom took advantage of Judah’s calamity and actually joined in with the attackers to loot

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- 14: Edom engaged in violent acts against Judah, cutting down some fugitives who were trying to escape the calamity, and turning others back over to their attackers
- **ASK:**
  - For what actions/behavior did God condemn Edom?
- **Verses 15-21 (Section 2)**
  - Summary: The Day of the Lord is near, the time when Edom's destruction will be complete, and Israel will be restored in triumph.
  - The time for judgment on all nations, the so-called Day of the Lord, is near and in particular, brings with it the complete destruction of Edom
  - Edom will be treated in the same way she treated others; she shall reap what she sowed (Gal 6:7).
    - Edom plundered and looted Judah (v13), so she too will be pillaged (vv5-6)
    - Edom carried out violent acts against Judah (v10) so she too will be dealt with violently (v9)
    - Edom betrayed their Jewish brothers (v14), so she too will be betrayed by her allies (v7)
  - *"Just as you drank on my holy hill ..."* – presumably, the Edomites, in their looting of Judah, got into the Jews wine supply to enhance the celebration of the Jews calamity (vv12-13)
  - *"... so all the nations will drink continually ..."* – Edom will be forced to drink the cup of God's wrath, a figure of doom seen in Jeremiah 25:15ff, especially v21 where Edom is called out. (See also Psalm 75:8, John 18:11, Revelation 14:10)
  - 17: *"... and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions"* suggests a restoration of Israel (the northern and southern kingdoms) where they come to regain their original possessions, that is, the Promised Land
    - The house of Jacob (=Israel) is all of Israel, not just Judah
    - much of the Promised Land had been lost in the years since God originally bestowed it upon them
    - The geographic regions listed in vv19-20 clearly cover more than Judah (the southern kingdom) and seems to describe the original lands granted to Israel by God
  - 18-21: The fates of the houses of Jacob and Esau are contrasted
    - The house of Jacob is a fire that will burn up Esau as stubble
    - Esau has no future – *"There will be no survivors from Esau"*
    - In contrast, Israel will triumph with a promised return of exiles
      - Exiles from Judah/Jerusalem are certainly mentioned (v20)
      - Exiles from the northern kingdom seem to be mentioned

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- v.20 – “The exiles of this host of the people of Israel...”
- v.18 – “... and the house of Joseph a flame” (the house of Joseph is usually associated with Ephraim and Manasseh, part of the northern kingdom)
- Israel’s triumph is certain, with the prophet’s final sentence: “and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s”
- **ASK:**
  - Consider the following passage in Malachi (and also cited by Paul in Romans 9:13):
    - Malachi 1:2-3 – “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.”
    - Does God love everyone? Did He really hate Esau? Explain.
- **REFERENCES**
  - Jack P. Lewis, *The Minor Prophets*, Baker Book House, 1988. ISBN: 0-8010-5509-1
  - Chuck Missler, *The Minor Prophets,, A Commentary Set*, Koinonia House, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-57821-501-0

## UNDERSTANDING ♥ HEART

- What are some of the modern-day messages that we have heard through Obadiah today?
- Does Obadiah have anything to say to a person who, though seeing calamity, does not want to get involved?

## WISDOM ✋ HANDS

- What messages did you hear in this lesson that need to be shared with people you know?
- Who in your group of friends or family do you need to share the message with TODAY? Think specifically.
- Commit to each other that you will all have the courage to share the message. Pray NOW and then pray for each other through the week to have the boldness to share.

## PRAYER



End your time together with a prayer. Ask Him to help us recognize our pride and to look to help those in need around us. Ask Him to help us in sharing His message of Love and Grace to a lost world.

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## SEMESTER OUTLINE (SPRING 2016)

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS – Why Study This? (January 3)
2. HOSEA – PART 1 (January 10)
3. HOSEA – PART 2 (January 17)
4. JOEL (January 24)
5. AMOS (January 31)
6. OBADIAH & NAHUM (February 7)
7. JONAH (February 14)
8. MICAH (February 21)
9. HABAKKUK (February 28)
10. ZEPHANIAH (March 6)
11. HAGGAI (March 13)
12. ZECHARIAH – PART 1 (April 3)
13. ZECHARIAH – PART 2 (April 10)
14. MALACHI (April 17)
15. CONCLUSION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS (April 24)