

# WTF LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



## LESSON 12 – ZECHARIAH (PART 1)

### FACILITATOR'S

Note

In this lesson, we will explore the oracles of Zechariah, whose ministry to Judah occurred in the Persian Period (circa, 539-331 B.C.) during the reign of Darius the Great (circa, 521-486 B.C.). Like his contemporary Haggai, Zechariah's initial oracles were focused on encouraging Judah to complete the reconstruction of the Lord's temple, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar at the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. The Jews, finishing a 70 year sentence of exile to Babylon delivered by God as punishment for their impenitence (which began before the fall of the city), had begun their return to Jerusalem in approximately 538 B.C. and under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, had begun the reconstruction work, rebuilding the altar and laying the temple's foundation. The work had ground to a halt, though, due to opposition from Judah's adversaries, and for 16 years, the task lay dormant as spiritual apathy crept into the Jews. God, through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, stirred the hearts of the Jews to resume the work. Though Haggai's ministry was very brief, lasting about four months, Zechariah's lasted considerably longer, occurring in two distinct periods. During the first, which occupied his first few years of service, He received visions and delivered oracles that encouraged the Jews to complete the reconstruction effort and reassured them that God had not forgotten them, had returned in mercy and compassion to Jerusalem, and would certainly bring their promised Messiah. During the second period, which occurred later in his life, Zechariah delivered oracles of a very different tone, apocalyptic in nature, which spoke of the restoration of Israel, the triumph of Zion through the Messiah, days of darkness when Israel would suffer under a worthless shepherd, and the Day of the Lord, during which Jerusalem would suffer much loss in an attack by an alliance of nations, but from which they would be delivered by God Himself who would intervene, crushing Jerusalem's enemies, and ushering in the final age when He reigns as king over all the earth, with all peoples worshipping Him.

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

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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 **Zechariah**. We also encourage you to read/scan through **Jeremiah 23:1-6; 25:1-14; 29:1-14; 33:14-26, Ezra 1:1-6:18, Haggai 1:1-2:23** as background to the book. As you move through **Zechariah**, 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.*

## 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 prophecy of Zechariah.
- Understand that God will not bestow comfort and blessings on those with unrepentant hearts.
- Understand that God will never forsake His people, even though they may forsake Him.
- Recognize that work for the Lord, no matter how small it may seem, is important and will receive His blessing.
- Recognize that what God has always wanted from His people are lives characterized by truthfulness, justice, mercy, compassion and kindness toward one another.
- Understand that God’s people, though they may suffer hardships and calamities, will ultimately prevail and emerge victorious.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS (OPTIONAL)

- Why is repentance important to God?
- Do you (or others you have worked with) ever feel like God has forsaken you (them)? In what way? Does God ever leave us or forsake us? How do you know?

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## KNOWLEDGE HEAD

### From God's Word through Zechariah

- OVERVIEW

- Author

- The author is identified as Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo.
  - Iddo is likely the Levitical Iddo named as one of the exiles who returned with the company led by Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Nehemiah 12:4, 16)
  - Zechariah, listed among those who were priests in the day of Joiakim, son of Jeshua (Nehemiah 12:16), likely made the same journey while a young man, having been born in Babylon.
  - Zechariah is listed in Ezra (5:1, 6:15) as the son of Iddo, rather than Berechiah, which is almost certainly due to the looser use of the term "son" as descendant (Hebrew has no separate term for "grandfather"). Scripture abounds with examples of this generic use for son (e.g. Genesis 29:5, 31:28)
- The name Zechariah was common, shared by at least 30 biblical figures, 29 in the OT and 1 in the NT (John the Baptist's father – see Luke 1:5-25).
- Zechariah means "He whom Yahweh remembers."
- This name is significant, as Jews in Zechariah's generation, which followed the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar, may have begun to wonder if God would remember them as His covenantal people.
- Zechariah wrote/ministered during the Persian Period (circa, 539-331 B.C.) and was a contemporary and co-laborer with Haggai in motivating the returning exiles to complete the rebuilding of the Temple.
- Though he is the "son of Berechiah," many scholars believe that it is unlikely that the prophet is the one to whom Jesus refers in Matthew 23:35, and instead, that prophet is the one mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22, even though that prophet is identified as the "son of Jehoiada." The evidence is unclear; the Jewish Targum states that a Zechariah, son of Iddo, who was both prophet and priest, was slain in the sanctuary but Origen suggested that the Zechariah of Matthew 23:35 was the father of John the Baptist (killed for refusing to divulge the location of his son who was in hiding because of Herod's order to slay all males under the age of two). Other explanations exist which argue for and against the notion that the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 and the author of the book bearing his name are one and the same; no clear conclusion can be reached.

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## o **Date**

- Zechariah's ministry was contemporaneous with Haggai.
- The books of Haggai and Zechariah both contain timestamps which can be converted to our Gregorian calendar, yielding reasonably accurate dates.
- Haggai's first oracle (there were four total) occurred on Aug 29, 520 B.C., roughly two months prior to Zechariah's first oracle, but Haggai's prophetic ministry lasted only about four months (see Lesson 11 on Haggai) while Zechariah's continued for at least two years and likely much longer.
- The book of Zechariah contains timestamps in its first section, Chapters 1-8:
  - Zechariah's opening call to repentance, Nov 520 B.C. (1:1-6)
    - o The opening call occurred in the eighth month, which began October 27, 520 B.C., so it most likely occurred in November
  - The night visions (8 of them) all occurring on the same night, Feb 15, 519 B.C. (1:7- 6:8)
  - The response to questions about fasting for the delegation from Bethel, and the promise of coming peace and prosperity for Israel, Dec 7, 518 B.C. (7:1-8:23)
- The second section of the book (Chapters 9-14) is not dated.
  - It is much different in style from the first section, which motivates some scholars to posit that it was written much later in time by someone other than the prophet.
  - Many conservative scholars have addressed the arguments for the later date, demonstrating that the differences in subject matter and literary style (apocalyptic) are easily explained if the book were written by the same author but in a later period of his life (see [2]).

## o **Theme(s)**

- Judah's repentance is necessary in order to receive the LORD's blessings
- Despite their sinfulness, the LORD did not forget or forsake His people Israel
- Faithfulness in completing the rebuilding of the LORD's temple, no matter how small it may seem, is important to Him and will receive His blessing
- The Promised Branch (Messiah) will come to save Israel, remove their iniquity, and establish peace
- God wants His people to live lives characterized by truthfulness, justice, mercy, compassion and kindness toward one another
- Zion will triumph through her Messiah, a humble ruler who comes to them riding on a donkey, a king who will speak peace to all nations and whose rule will extend from sea to sea

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- God will restore Israel (all the tribes), bringing back all the exiles, and Zion will certainly triumph, but darkness also lies ahead as Israel will suffer greatly under the leadership of a worthless shepherd
- A day will come during which God will defend Jerusalem from all the nations of the earth who gathered to attack her, Israel will look upon the one whom they pierced and mourn greatly, and a fountain will be opened for Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem which cleanses them of sin
- The Day of the LORD is approaching during which
  - God will summon all the nations to Jerusalem to do battle
  - Jerusalem will again be captured and its people will suffer horribly, with half fleeing in exile
  - God will arrive to fight for them, splitting the Mount of Olives in two, forcing people to flee from the earthquake
  - He will be accompanied by “the holy ones” and the day will be marked uniquely as one with no light, cold or frost – a day known only to Him
  - He will be king over all the earth on that day and Zion shall be raised up, secure forever from that day forward, with the earth transformed and all worshipping Yahweh and dedicating all things to His service
- **ASK:**
  - Do these themes still speak/apply to us today?
- **Metadata about the Book of Zechariah**
  - Zechariah contains many Messianic prophecies, second only to Isaiah among the OT books
  - Zechariah is the longest book of the 12 “Minor Prophets”
  - Angels play a key role as God’s agents of revelation to Zechariah – a role not common in the OT prophets – and there are ranks of angels (e.g. 1:9-12)
  - Satan (“The Satan”) appears as the accuser who calls out man’s failings to God (see 3:1-5, cf. Job 1:7-2:7, Revelation 12:7-10)
  - Zechariah has heavily influenced the NT Messianic picture:
    - Extends Jeremiah’s promise of the “Branch of Jesse” (see Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15 and Zechariah 3:8, 6:12)
    - Presents the promised King of Israel as coming to them, riding on a donkey (see Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 21:4-5, John 12:14-16)
    - Mentions the betrayal of the Messiah (see Zechariah 11:12-13 and Matthew 26:15, 27:9-10). Note in particular the 30 pieces of silver and the potter’s field. See the discussion below regarding challenges/difficulties with the Matthew 27:9-10 reference.
    - Mentions Israel’s regret for their actions -- looking on him (Messiah) whom they have pierced (see Zechariah 12:10 and John 19:37, Revelation 1:7)

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- Describes the smiting of the shepherd (Messiah) of the Lord of hosts (see Zechariah 13:7 and Matthew 26:31, Mark 14:27)
- Imagery in Revelation is like that which first occurred in Zechariah:
  - The four horsemen (Revelation 6:2-8, Zechariah 6:1-8)
  - The two olive trees (Revelation 11:4, Zechariah 4:3-14)
  - The candlestick and seven eyes (Revelation 1:12f, Zechariah 4:2-10)
- A few well known challenges with Zechariah include the following:
  - Zechariah 9:13 mentions Greece, but the Greeks had not yet come on the scene. Alexander the Great did not conquer Palestine until 333 B.C. and Zechariah began his ministry in 520 B.C. The reference to Greece in 9:13 is only a challenge to those who cannot accept predictive prophecy; if you can accept it (and you should), then there is no difficulty.
  - Matthew 27:9-10 assigns a fulfilled prophecy to Jeremiah when in fact the prophecy seems to be from Zechariah 11:12-13 instead. There are several explanations for the discrepancy, with the last two being the most likely:
    - The prophecy was said, but not written, by Jeremiah, but then later said and written, though slightly differently, by Zechariah; i.e., it was an unrecorded prophecy of Jeremiah, very close in phraseology to that which was written by Zechariah.
    - Zechariah had a second name, Jeremiah, like Simon had the second name Peter
    - Matthew's quote is from an apocryphal work of Jeremiah (like Jude quoting from Enoch)
    - Because the books in the Jewish canon have a different order, with Jeremiah as the first of the prophets rather than Isaiah, Jeremiah could be given credit for quotes from any of the minor prophets
      - There was a well-established rabbinical formula of referring to a collection of books by the name of the first book in the collection. Jesus used a similar formula when He referred to the Writings section as the Psalms in Luke 24:44.
      - The Tanakh (OT) is comprised of 3 sections: the Torah or "Teaching" (aka Pentateuch or the five books of Moses); the Nevi' im or Prophets; and the Ketuvim, or Writings. (Tanakh itself is a word which originates from combining the first letters of the names of each of the three main sections.)
      - Psalms is the first book in the Ketuvim, so Psalms as a title could be used to refer to all books in the Ketuvim (which includes Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth,

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Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1&2 Chronicles)

- The Talmud states that the Jews placed Jeremiah first in the Prophets section of their canon, ahead of Isaiah. This section also included the Minor Prophets, collected into a single book.
- With Jeremiah listed first in the Prophets, the rabbinical formula allowed any quote in Zechariah to be attributed to Jeremiah so Matthew may have been following this formula.
- Matthew's quote is referring to sections from Jeremiah AND Zechariah, but only Jeremiah is mentioned.
  - Jeremiah 18 provides the well-known discourse describing God as the Potter and we (Israel in the story) as the clay
  - Jeremiah 19:1-6 discusses the potter's field in more detail, its location, and the calamity to occur there
  - The Matthew quote is similar (but not identical) to the passage in Zechariah 11:12-13 and contains allusions to the aforementioned Jeremiah passages
- **Historical Background**
  - Zechariah was one of three prophets (aka, the post-exilic prophets) to prophesy during the Persian Period, circa 539-331 B.C. (the other two were Haggai and Malachi)
  - Prior to Zechariah, Jerusalem had been conquered, 587 B.C. by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar, who had exiled many of the Jews to Babylon and destroyed much of Jerusalem, including the Temple.
  - The Jews spent 70 years in exile, as predicted by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29:1-14) to serve the sentence for their disobedience to God (see also Daniel 9:1-2 and 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 – the latter passage suggests the correct rendering of Matthew 18:22 should be 70x7, not 77)
  - Cyrus II (aka, Cyrus the Great) who had assumed the throne to Anshan in 559 B.C. and established sovereignty over the Medes, overthrew Babylon (peaceably in a very clever and quick surprise attack) on October 13, 539 B.C., thus bringing the reign of the Neo-Babylonian Empire to an end and ushering in the period of Persian supremacy.
  - The Persians, under Cyrus, were humane conquerors who allowed cultures they overtook to continue in their own traditions, religions and languages, providing a minimum of government oversight – with no forced exile to foreign lands as was practiced by the prior Assyrian and Babylonian Empires.

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- Cyrus allowed exiles he inherited from previously conquered peoples to return to their homes and rebuild; he did the same for the Jews, issuing an edict which allowed them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).
  - Cyrus' rise to power and edict to rebuild Jerusalem was prophesied 100+ years in advance by Isaiah (see Isaiah 44:28-45:13)
  - Just as the Jews were exiled in stages to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, they returned in stages during the Persian Period.
  - The first wave of returnees was a small minority of about 50,000 Jews led by Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest (see Ezra 2), and included Haggai and Zechariah.
  - Levitical sacrifices were reinstated on a rebuilt altar (Ezra 3:1-6) and in the second year of their return the foundation of the Temple was laid (Ezra 3:8-13; 5:16); however, the work then came to a halt due to external oppression and internal depression/apathy, and remained idle for 16 years until the reign of Darius the Great.
- Cambyses II succeeded his father Cyrus and reigned from 529-522 B.C., adding Egypt to the Persian domain; during his reign, the rebuilding efforts of the Jews in Jerusalem remained dormant.
- Darius I, son of Hystaspes, (aka Darius the Great) ascended to the throne in a revolt that followed the death of Cambyses, and reigned from 521-486 B.C.
  - During his reign, the Persian Empire was arguably at its apex
  - He is the Darius by which the books of Haggai and Zechariah are dated
  - He carved the famous Behistun Rock, on which he recorded his triumph over his enemies in the early part of his reign; the recording was done in trilingual form, which furnished the key to deciphering Babylonian and Assyrian cuneiform (the wedge-shaped writing of antiquity)
  - It was during the second year of Darius that:
    - Haggai began his brief 4 month ministry, August 29 to December 18, 520
    - Zechariah began his considerably longer ministry, starting in Nov 520 B.C., about two months after the start of Haggai's ministry, but spanning several years, possibly as many as 50
    - Temple reconstruction, after a 16 year suspension, was resumed, September 21, 520 (see Haggai 1:12-15; Ezra 5:2)
  - In the sixth regnal year of Darius, the Temple was completed and dedicated, March 12, 515 B.C. (see Ezra 6:15)
- Darius was followed by Xerxes 1, who reigned from 486-465 B.C., and then Artaxerxes 1 (aka, Artaxerxes Longimanus), who reigned from 465-424 B.C., after which the OT story comes to an end

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- Xerxes 1 is thought to be the King Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther
- Artaxerxes 1 was the King of Persia mentioned in the Book of Nehemiah who granted permission and support for rebuilding the city wall (see Nehemiah 2:1-9)
- The Persian Period continued until the Persians fell to Greece, under Alexander the Great, at the Battle of Guagamela in 331 B.C.
  
- **THE TEXT**
  - The text of Zechariah can be divided into the following major sections:
    - Section 1 – Oracles and Visions
      - Section 1A – The Call To Repentance (1:1-6)
      - Section 1B – The Night Visions (1:7-6:8)
      - Section 1C – A Coronation and the Advent of the Branch (6:9-15)
      - Section 1D – Questions About Fasting, What God Really Wants (7:1-14)
      - Section 1E – The Coming Peace and Prosperity of Zion (8:1-23)
    - Section 2 – The Return of the King and Zion’s Glory
      - Section 2A -- The Coming Messiah and Restoration of Israel (9:1-10:12)
      - Section 2B – The Good Shepherd and Worthless Shepherd (11:1-17)
      - Section 2C – Jerusalem’s Victory, Sorrow for the One They Pierced (12:1-13:9)
      - Section 2D – The Day of the LORD, Zion’s Glory established with the LORD as King over All the Earth (14:1-21)
  - **Section 1A (1:1-6) The Call to Repentance**
    - Zechariah issues God’s call to the people to repent. God’s call consisted of reminding them of their history, that is, that He had been angry with their fathers (v2) and had called on them via the former prophets to repent or else He would bring disaster upon them, but they had refused to listen and so He carried out His threats (vv3-4).
    - The reminder of Jerusalem’s fall, the death of so many, the destruction of their Temple, and their exile to Babylon was effective; the people knew they’d received their just desserts and repented (v6)
      - Reminders are important. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, Paul recounts various calamities that God brought on His covenantal people and says (v11) that they were recorded in Scripture as reminders for us today
    - 1:1 “... the word of the LORD came to ...” : phrase occurs 14x in the book and emphasizes the real author
    - This call to repentance establishes the prerequisite for the receipt of God’s spiritual blessings that He promises them in the oracles and visions which follow in the remainder of the book.

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- Throughout Scripture, this is always a prerequisite to receiving God's blessings – turn/return to Him and He will turn to (bless) you.
- Some examples: Isaiah 55:6-7, Joel 2:12-13, Malachi 3:7, Matthew 4:17, Acts 2:38-39, Acts 3:19-20, 2 Corinthians 7:10
- **ASK:**
  - In 1:3, God promised the Jews that if they returned to Him, He would return to them? Is it any different for Christians today?
  - Per 1 John 1:9, what is the relationship between personal repentance and fellowship with God?
- **Section 1B (1:7-6:8) The Night Visions**
  - This section includes the eight visions which Zechariah received in a single night, on February 15, 519 B.C. (the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the eleventh month in the second year of Darius)
  - The visions occurred about 3 months after Zechariah's initial call to repentance, and two months after Haggai's final oracle
  - The visions concern the future of Israel, from the current reconstruction of the Temple which they are encouraged/commanded to complete to the restoration of the kingdom under the Messiah
  - Each vision follows the same basic pattern: introductory words, a description of the things Zechariah sees, questions for the angel interacting with Zechariah during the vision -- referred to henceforth as the Angelic Guide (AG) -- and an explanation by the AG of the vision's meaning (though the explanation is not without its difficulties).
  - **Vision #1: The Horsemen (1:7-17)**
    - 8: Zechariah sees a vision of a rider on a red horse, standing astride his horse among myrtle trees in a glen, with three other riders on red, sorrel and white horses behind him. (The other three riders are implied though only their horses are mentioned.)
    - 9: The AG is distinct from the four among the trees, and it is to this angel that Zechariah directs his queries
    - 10-11: The rider astride his horse, identified as the Angel of the LORD (see v11), is apparently the leader of the patrol group as He receives reconnaissance reports from the other three and reports directly to the LORD of Hosts (v12)
      - It is clear that the three patrolmen are also angels, i.e., not ordinary men
      - Angel of the LORD (literally, the Angel of Yahweh) is a special being in Scripture, identified directly with Yahweh, but clearly distinct from Him

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- First mentioned in Genesis 16:7
  - Identified with Yahweh in Genesis 22:11-18, Genesis 31:11-13, Genesis 48:15-16, Exodus 23:20-23, Judges 2:1-4, Judges 6:11-23, Judges 13:3-23, Zechariah 3:1-7
  - In Exodus 23:21, God said of him, “my name is in him”
  - Some interpreters consider him to be a theophany of the pre-incarnate Christ
    - The Angel of the LORD identifies the three riders as patrols of the earth, thus answering Zechariah’s initial question asked in v9.
- The patrollers report that the earth is at peace, but in this case, that is not good news
  - The “shaking of the nations” which Haggai had recently reported (Haggai 2:6-7) would return Jerusalem and her Temple to glory and peace is not visible
- 12: The Angel of the LORD entreats the LORD of Hosts to bring to an end the seventy years of judgment, pronounced through Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 25:1-14, 29:10)
- 13-17: The LORD of hosts responds to the AG (and thus Zechariah) with words of comfort, assuring the prophet that God’s pity is stirred, He has returned to Jerusalem with mercy, the temple and the city will be rebuilt, the Gentile nations will be chastised for their overly harsh treatment of Israel, and prosperity will return to His people
  - This response explains the purpose for the vision – God has not forgotten His covenantal people
- Chapter 1 in the Hebrew Bible ends with 1:17
- **ASK:**
  - Zechariah’s name means “Yahweh remembers.” Why is this significant? (Consider 1:12-17)
- **Vision #2: The Four Horns and Four Craftsmen (1:18-21)**
  - This vision actually begins Chapter 2 in the Hebrew Bible
  - Zechariah saw four horns and asked the AG what they were, who informed him that the horns denoted the powers that had scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem
  - Horns in Scripture are always a symbol of strength/power and are often used figuratively to represent nations that plague Israel (e.g. Micah 4:13, Jeremiah 48:25, Daniel 7:7-8; 19-25, 8:3-9; 20-22, Amos 6:13)
    - Interpreters vary on the identity of the four horns
    - View 1:
      - Assyrians (who exiled the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C.)

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- Babylonians (who destroyed Jerusalem, its Temple and exiled most Jews to Babylon, circa 605-587 B.C.)
  - Persians (their current overlords)
  - Greece (prophetic prediction, see 9:13)
- View 2: The kingdoms mentioned in Daniel 2 and 7
  - Babylonia
  - Medo-Persia
  - Greece (prophetic prediction)
  - Rome (prophetic prediction)
- View 3: No specific kingdoms but all/any enemies from the four cardinal directions that had already scattered Israel including:
  - From the North (Assyria, Babylon, Samaria)
  - From the East (Ammon and Moab)
  - From the South (Edom, Egypt)
  - From the West (Philistia, Tyre)
- Zechariah then saw four craftsmen and asked the AG what they were coming to do, who answered that they were coming to destroy the power of the four horns, that is, the nations that had scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem
  - Zechariah does not ask for the identity of the craftsmen, only their function (which is apparently already in progress)
  - The term for “craftsmen” refers to workmen/smiths such as wood-workers, metallic-workers or masons
- The meaning of the vision is that there is no longer opposition to the building of the Lord’s house, so put aside fear and get on with the work and finish it -- the primary message of Haggai which Zechariah is now reinforcing
- **ASK:**
  - What is the significance of choosing craftsmen/smiths as the objects to terrorize the horns of opposition? Discuss.
- **Vision #3: The Man with the Measuring Line, Jerusalem Rebuilt (2:1-13)**
  - 1-2: Zechariah sees a man (an angel in human form) with a measuring line in his hand who tells Zechariah that he is about to layout the walls of Jerusalem, i.e., measure the city’s width and length to know where the surrounding wall should be placed
  - 3-5: The AG talks with yet another (third) angel who tells the AG to restrain the man from his measuring task because Jerusalem is to become a very large city inhabited without walls, and the LORD himself promises to be the wall of protection for the city and its glory

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- This message amplifies God's promise in Vision #1 (1:16-17) where He promised that He was returning to Jerusalem with mercy and that the city and its temple would be rebuilt
  - Not only are the temple and city being rebuilt, but the city will be much larger than its current unimpressive size
  - Most importantly, the glory of God will return to Jerusalem
  - Recall that the glory of God had long ago inhabited the tabernacle and temple (Exodus 40:34, 2 Chronicles 7:1), but had then departed prior to (or at) the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 10); now it is returning!
- 6-9: The LORD commands the exiles who still dwell in the land of the north and in Babylon (includes the lands of the former Assyrian and Babylonian empires that conquered and dispersed them) to flee and return to Zion, for He is about to bring judgment on those nations
- 10-12: The LORD promises that He will once again choose Jerusalem and dwell in her midst, but also that many nations (Gentiles) will also join with Him and become part of His people (this last statement seems to be a clear reference to the Messianic age).
- V12 has the only reference in Scripture to Palestine as the holy land
- Parts of vv8-11 are challenging; in particular, the speaker in v8 ("... his glory sent **me**..."), v9 ("... LORD of hosts has sent **me**."), and v11 ("... and shall be **my** people. And **I** will dwell ... has sent **me** to you) is hard to identify: some interpreters believe it is Zechariah speaking of his own commission as a prophet, others believe it is the voice of the Messiah.
- 13: Habakkuk, denouncing idolatry, had issued the warning call of respect for the one true God (Habakkuk 2:20): "But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him." Now Zechariah steps up the warning: "Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling." Watch out -- the lion is aroused and leaving his lair.
- **Vision #4: Joshua the High Priest and the Coming Branch (3:1-10)**
  - 1-5: Next, Zechariah sees a kind of courtroom scene where Joshua the high priest, as defendant, is standing before the Angel of the LORD (see notes on vv10-11 of Vision #1 above) as judge, and Satan, as prosecutor, is standing next to Joshua to accuse him.
    - Joshua is the high priest Jeshua of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the grandson of Seraiah, the last high priest to minister before the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians

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- Satan means “the accuser.” This is “the Satan” of Scripture, the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10)
- 3: Joshua is said to be clothed with filthy garments; the Hebrew for filthy means “excrement-bespattered.” These garments are not only vile and foul-smelling but render the wearer defiled per the Mosaic Law, and thus make the high priest unfit to serve as intermediary for the people before God.
- 2: In spite of Satan’s accusations, which are valid (he has a good case against Joshua -- and you and me), his charges are rendered inadmissible as the LORD twice rebukes Satan
- Only the LORD has the authority to issue this rebuke (see Jude 9, 2 Peter 2:11)
- 4-5: Joshua’s filthy garments are removed and clean clothes substituted, per order of the Angel of the LORD, who himself removes Joshua’s iniquity (the real filth) from him. Note that Zechariah, in excitement, injects himself into the vision and asks for a clean turban to be given to Joshua in addition to the clean garments, and the Angel of the LORD waits patiently while this is done.
- 6-7: The Angel of the LORD charges Joshua with a task and a solemn promise as reward.
  - The task is to walk in God’s ways (every follower of God must do so) and keep God’s charges (effect the prescribed duties) as high priest.
  - The promised reward for effecting the task is that Joshua will rule God’s house and have His ear; the Lord will be with him (and the people)
  - One purpose for this vision, then, is to show that in spite of the calamities that accompanied the 70-year sentence of exile for Judah’s sin, the LORD has returned to His people, is cleansing the priesthood, and making it acceptable again for service
- 8-10: The LORD tells Joshua that he and his friends before him (the priests) are symbolic of something else: the advent of God’s promised servant, the Branch (spoken of by Jeremiah) who takes away sin
  - (Jeremiah 23:5-6) *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell*

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securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

- The advent of the Branch (the Messiah) results in the removal of the sin of the land (not Joshua's sin but all sin) in a single day
- 9: The LORD mentions a single stone He has set before Joshua upon which are seven eyes and an engraved inscription.
  - This may have a first and literal meaning, referring to some kind of engraved stone that was part of the high priest's clothing, perhaps with seven facets and an inscription – Aaron wore an engraved ornament on his turban when bearing the iniquity of the Israelites before God (see Exodus 28:36-38)
  - There is a second and higher meaning: the Branch (Messiah) is the chief cornerstone (see Matthew 21:42), is fully God in the flesh (the seven eyes symbolize seeing everything, which only God can do – see Zechariah 4:10b), and the marks on his hands, feet, side and brow are in a sense the engraved inscription by which the LORD of hosts removed the iniquity of the land instantly and completely
- 10: The phrase "under his vine and under his fig tree" was used to describe the situation when all Israel lived in complete safety and peace during the apex of Solomon's reign (see 1 Kings 4:25). "In that day" -- the day of the Branch, when removal of iniquity is accomplished -- peace (with God) can come to all.
- **ASK:**
  - Per v2, Joshua is a "brand plucked from the fire." Why did God rescue him and take away his iniquity, clothing him with pure vestments (v4)? Was it because of something Joshua did? Discuss.
- **Vision #5: The Golden Lampstand and Two Olive Trees (4:1-14)**
  - 1: Zechariah has another vision, but only after being roused in some fashion by the AG. Zechariah may have been drifting off to sleep (the visions were at night) but it is not clear. (Perhaps the experience was similar to that of Peter, James and John at the transfiguration – see Luke 9:32).
  - 2-3: Zechariah sees what could be called a "super-menorah," a golden lampstand with a bowl suspended above it (contains oil for the lamps) and seven lamps, each of which is apparently (based on the Hebrew idiom employed in the text) fed by seven conduits (so 49 conduits in all). The structure is complex and difficult to interpret. There are also two olive

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trees, one on each side of the lampstand, and per vv12-13, each of them is tapped with a golden pipe that carries “golden oil” (whatever that is) into the bowl so that the lamps never go out.

- 4-10a: Zechariah does not understand the purpose of the vision but the AG provides it:
  - the oracle is addressed to Zerubbabel (v6), the governor who along with Joshua the High Priest led the effort to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3:1-13, Ezra 5:2, Haggai 1:1-15)
  - just as Zerubbabel had led the initial effort to lay the temple’s foundation, he would also complete the temple’s full reconstruction (v9)
  - 6-7: The LORD assures Zerubbabel that though the task may seem insurmountable -- there was opposition to the rebuilding which halted the project for 16 years (see Historical Background notes above) – he will complete it, not by his own power but by the power of God’s Spirit, and he will complete it to applause and rejoicing!
  - 10: “...despised the day of small things...” : though this rebuilding effort may seem an insignificant task done in times inferior to the glory days of Solomon’s temple, do not look down on it or underestimate its importance. (God can bring a glorious conclusion to the most trivial of efforts. Your time and your efforts are important in God’s story.)
- 10b-13: The AG clarifies a few more details about the vision, bringing it to an end
  - The seven lamps represent the all-seeing eyes of God in His constant rule of the earth
  - The two olive trees are the two-anointed ones who stand by the Lord, the identities of which are not provided, but for which the following views have been proposed:
    - Zerubbabel and Joshua (the High Priest)
    - Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets during this time who delivered God’s word to Zerubbabel, Joshua and all the Jews in Jerusalem
    - The two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-12 (a view held by some dispensational premillennialists who believe these two figures are yet to emerge)
- **ASK:**
  - How is God’s message to Zerubbabel, “Not by might, nor by

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power, but by my Spirit” relevant to Christians today? Discuss (and identify any NT passages which echo this message).

## ▪ Vision #6: The Flying Scroll (5:1-4)

- Zechariah next sees a flying scroll, twenty cubits long by 10 cubits wide (about 30ft x 15ft, the size of a billboard), with writing on both sides, typical of covenant documents like the two tablets on which God inscribed the 10 commandments (Exodus 32:15-16) or the seven-sealed scroll that only the lamb could open (Revelation 5:1-5). The scroll is clearly open so that it may be read/known by all.
- 3-4: The AG tells Zechariah that each side of the scroll contains a curse meant to destroy covenant breakers; one side pronounces a curse on thieves while the other curses false witnesses. The LORD of hosts is the one who sends out this scroll, over the whole land, thus, He is dealing with sin amongst the Jews.
  - The scroll is flying about; God’s word is active and at work (Hebrews 4:12)
  - (1 Peter 4:17) *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*
  - Another possible interpretation is that the curses go out over the whole earth, not just the land where the Jews reside, but this vision is closely tied to the next which certainly seems focused on the removal of sin from Judah/Israel.
- The meaning of the vision seems to be that crime, represented by theft and false testimony, is being driven from the land by the LORD of hosts; He is cutting off problems that formerly plagued His people and led to their harsh punishment and exile into Babylon.

## ▪ Vision #7: The Woman in a Basket (5:5-10)

- 5: The AG leads Zechariah into the next vision, very much linked to the previous, in which Zechariah sees a basket (ephah), a large dry measure equivalent to about 1.05 American bushels, that is “going out,” meaning it is about to be removed from the land.
- 6-8: Zechariah learns from the AG that the basket carries the iniquity of the land, represented by a woman called Wickedness, who is seen briefly when the leaden cover of the basket is lifted to give Zechariah a glance inside. It seems the woman tries to escape the basket, but to no avail as she is thrust back inside by the AG who puts the heavy lid back in place.

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- The heavy leaden cover and the strength of the AG keeping Wickedness contained within demonstrate God's sovereignty over everything, including evil. The LORD is in control.
- 9-10: As the vision continues, Zechariah sees two women with the wings of a stork (an unclean bird, Leviticus 11:19) arrive and then fly off with the basket, and upon querying the AG, learns that they are taking the basket to the Land of Shinar, i.e., Babylon, where a house is being built for it.
- Shinar (Babylon) always represents the natural home for sin in Scripture, from its first mention in Genesis 10:10 to its last in Revelation 18:21
- The meaning of the vision is like that of the previous vision: though wickedness is present, it is being contained and driven out by the Lord of Hosts who has returned in mercy to Jerusalem (1:16-17). The temple is being rebuilt, the priesthood cleansed/restored, and evil will be removed from the land and returned to its natural home.
- **ASK:**
  - Do you believe there is some significance to the use of a woman to represent the Wickedness that is being transported to Shinar (Babylon)? Is it cultural? Is it related to the sins that had plagued Israel and led to their downfall? Is it just random? Discuss. (A woman is also used in Revelation 17-18 to represent Mystery Babylon, the great prostitute.)
  - Why is a house being built in Shinar for Wickedness (v11)? Why not destroy her? Must she have a home? Does she have some purpose to serve later? Discuss.
- **Vision #8: The Four Chariots (6:1-8)**
  - The night visions conclude with a final vision in which Zechariah sees emerging from between two mountains of bronze, four chariots (the "tank" of that time) each pulled by strong horses -- the first with red horses, the second with black, the third with white and the fourth with dappled.
  - 5: The AG informs Zechariah that the chariot teams serve the LORD of all the earth and their job is to go out to the four winds of heaven, i.e., to go everywhere; nowhere is beyond their reach.
  - 6-7: Per the AG, the black team goes out first, followed by the white, both teams going to the north, while the dappled team goes to the south; the red team is not dispatched and not mentioned further.
  - The primary (most troublesome) enemies of Israel/Judah always came from the north (Assyria, Babylonia, Persia) and the south (Egypt), as natural barriers occupied the west (Mediterranean Sea) and east (Arabian desert).

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At the time of this vision, the Jews were under the rule of the Persians and had only recently returned to Judah/Jerusalem after years of exile in Babylon.

- 8: The AG informs Zechariah that the patrol teams who went north had set God's Spirit at rest in the north country, meaning victory over enemies to the north (from God's perspective) was accomplished; they are no longer a threat to Israel/Judah.
  - The vision emphasizes the same basic message as prior visions: God is in control, He is sovereign over the earth and is protecting His people from their enemies, especially those from the north who have caused them so much harm in recent times (e.g. Babylon). His people need not fear. Get on with rebuilding the temple and the city.
- **Section 1C (6:9-15) A Coronation and the Advent of the Branch**
- 9-11: Zechariah is commanded by the LORD (this is not a vision) to take gold and silver from exiles who have just arrived from Babylon, -- the gold and silver is probably part of a donation for the construction of the temple -- and make crowns (the Greek OT uses the singular, "crown") which are then to be placed on the head of Joshua, the High Priest as a sign of the coming of the Branch
    - God names the exiles from whom to take the gold and silver: Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah
    - God commands Zechariah to go to the house of Josiah, probably the place where Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah were being entertained, or perhaps because Josiah was a smith that could fashion the crown(s)
    - The high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, was of the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe; he would not be allowed to serve as a king (which belonged to the house of David), and no one outside of the tribe of Levi could serve as a priest (King Uzziah's intrusion into the priestly office was a warning of God's separation between the two functions of priest and king under the Law of Moses -- see 2 Chronicles 26:16-21). The Jews would have known this clearly and thus, recognized this act of crowning as symbolic only.
  - 12-13: Zechariah is instructed to deliver the following message after crowning Joshua: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.' "
  - This act is a reminder to the people of the Advent of the Branch (Messiah) whom God promised through Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15)

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- God has not forgotten His promise; this is the second time He has spoken through Zechariah about the Branch (see Vision #4, 3: 8-10)
- It is the Branch/Messiah who will build the true temple of the LORD.
- The mention of both a priest and a king on the Branch's throne, and a counsel of peace between the two can be confusing in the context of the Mosaic covenant, but it seems clearly to point to the harmony that will exist between priest and king at the Advent of the Branch – made possible of course because both roles are effected perfectly by Messiah.
- 14: God instructs Zechariah to place the crown in the temple to serve as a reminder of this symbolic act and the promise which God will certainly fulfill.
- 15: Zechariah tells his fellow Jews that those who are far off will come and help build the temple – proof, when it occurs, that God has sent Zechariah to them.
  - Interpreters vary on the identity of “those who are far off;” some believe they are the Jews still in exile who haven't yet made the trek to Jerusalem, while others believe they are Gentiles who will come and help with the rebuilding. (It should be noted that Gentiles played a big role in supplying the materials and paying for the reconstruction of the temple and the city.)
  - Some may propose that this is a prophetic statement of the Gentiles becoming part of the church, on the Advent of the Branch, though that event was too far future to serve as proof to Zechariah's immediate audience that God sent him.
- Zechariah concludes his message with a warning that all these wonderful things will certainly come to pass but only if they diligently obey the voice of the LORD. This warning is common to all promises in Scripture: receipt of covenant blessings requires obedience to the covenant (Deuteronomy 28:1-68)
- **ASK:**
  - Does the warning in 6:15 that receipt of God's promises requires diligent obedience to His word apply in the Christian age, or is that only applicable to a Law covenant? Are we under a Law covenant today? Discuss.
- **Section 1D (7:1-14) Questions About Fasting, What God Really Wants**
  - 1: The word of the LORD came to Zechariah on December 7, 518 B.C., about 2 years after the Night Visions (of Chapters 1-6) and about halfway through the period of temple reconstruction (520-516 B.C.)
  - 2-3: God's message was in response to questions from a delegation from Bethel who wanted to know if mourning and fasting should be continued now that the exile was over and temple reconstruction was progressing.
    - The delegates from Bethel, which lies to the north of Jerusalem, posed their questions to the priests and prophets
    - God responded through Zechariah

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- The Law of Moses required one day of fasting – the day of atonement, aka, Yom Kippur (see Leviticus 23:26-32) – but fasts in different months had sprung up to commemorate the calamities: the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (in the tenth month), the breaching of the city walls (in the fourth month), the burning and destruction of the temple and the city (in the fifth month), and the murder of Gedaliah, the governor whom the Babylonians had appointed over the land after the fall of Jerusalem (in the seventh month)
- The delegation asks specifically about the fast in the fifth month, lamenting the destruction of the temple – is the fast relevant any longer now that the temple reconstruction was well underway?
- 4-7: God’s message to Zechariah, though motivated by the questions from Bethel, is directed to ALL the people of the land (v4), and note that He does not answer their inquiry directly, because their question reveals a deeper problem that must be dealt with: a problem of attitude rather than ritual observance.
  - When they fasted, they weren’t really doing it for Him, to honor Him and acknowledge His glory and their own shortcomings
  - If they fasted because they were concerned about their disobedience and loss of favor with Him, will they lose that concern if they stop fasting?
  - God had handed His people over to the Babylonians because the Jews refused to repent of their wickedness despite His repeated warnings through the prophets
  - There is nothing wrong with the ritual fasts. The real issue is this: had they really learned the lessons the calamities were meant to teach? If so, great, but if not, the fasts are a waste of time and won’t help them.
- 8-14: God then follows up with another message for Zechariah to deliver to the people of the land. What He really wants from them is this: justice, truthfulness, kindness and mercy (compare with Micah 6:8). Their forefathers had hardened their hearts and refused to practice these things, and as a result of their willful disobedience, God scattered them (Israel and Judah) among the nations.
- **ASK:**
  - Note that in 7:9, the traits or practices that God wants to see in His people stress man’s duties to his fellow man. Why is this significant? (Consider James 2:14-26, 1 Corinthians 13, 1 John 4:20-21)
- **Section 1D (8:1-23) The Coming Peace and Prosperity of Zion**
  - Section 1 concludes with Chapter 8, which consists of 10 short oracles, all introduced by the phrase, “Thus says the LORD of hosts” (1 of the 10 omits “of hosts” though the title then appears in the oracle itself). The oracles are all

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messages of encouragement and hope which promise a bright future for Israel in which God will bless them greatly.

- 1-2: Oracle 1 of 10 – the LORD is very jealous for Jerusalem, to the point of wrath.
  - Jealousy is the feeling you have when you want to protect something special that someone else is trying to take away, while envy is the feeling you have when you want something that you don't have. (For example, a husband is jealous to protect the relationship with his wife that an envious man is trying to take away.)
  - Only in recent times in our language have the words jealousy and envy become synonyms; biblically, they are quite different. God is a jealous god, jealous to protect His relationship with His people (Deuteronomy 6:14-15). Envy is always wrong; jealousy can be a godly reaction, though sinful man can take it to ungodly extremes.
- 3: Oracle 2 of 10 -- The LORD says He has returned to Jerusalem. The glory of God had long ago inhabited the tabernacle and temple (Exodus 40:34, 2 Chronicles 7:1), but had departed prior to (or at) the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (see Ezekiel 10). Now, He has returned.
- 4-5: Oracle 3 of 10 – Idyllic times will return to Jerusalem with children playing in the streets while the old, who live long full lives, watch peacefully.
- 6: Oracle 4 of 10 – the LORD says that though these statements/promises may seem marvelous, perhaps miraculous, they are not to Him; is anything too hard for the LORD? (Jeremiah 32:26-27)
- 7-8: Oracle 5 of 10 – The LORD promises to save His people from east to west (from all directions, sunrise to sunset) and to bring them to Jerusalem where they will be His people and He their God (the fulfillment of Jeremiah 32:36-38)
- 9-13: Oracle 6 of 10 – the people are encouraged to continue the work of rebuilding the temple, seeing it to its completion. Unlike their forefathers with whom God had to deal severely because of their unrepentant hearts, God will deal gently with them, the remnant He has preserved. He promises them peace/security with the nations, plentiful rain and abundant crops.
- 14-17: Oracle 7 of 10 – God promises to bring good to Jerusalem and Judah. His people are to focus on being truthful with one another, pursuing justice and peace, not being dishonest or plotting harm (which He hates) -- compare with Zechariah 7:8-10
- 18-19: Oracle 8 of 10 – The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months (see notes on 7:2-3 above) are to be turned into feasts, occasions for rejoicing!
- 20-22: Oracle 9 of 10 – Jerusalem will be blessed so greatly that people from other cities and nations, recognizing its greatness, will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD of hosts and entreat His favor.

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- 23: Oracle 10 of 10 – Extending the previous oracle, people from other nations will recognize the Jews (favorably) as God’s people, and come to Jerusalem to seek His favor.
- **ASK:**
  - Should these oracles promising peace and prosperity to Zion be taken literally or allegorically? Discuss.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Jack P. Lewis, *The Minor Prophets*, Baker Book House, 1988. ISBN: 0-8010-5509-1
- [2] Chuck Missler, *The Prophets to the Southern Kingdom, A Commentary*, Koinonia House, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-57821-501-0

## UNDERSTANDING ♥ HEART

- What do the times of Zachariah have in common with our own times?
- What are some of the modern-day messages that we have heard through Zechariah today?

## 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 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 God to help you in sharing His Gospel message of Love, Grace, and Hope to a lost world. Ask Him to open the eyes of our hearts through this study so that we may know Him more and develop an intimate relationship with Him.

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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)