
Listen Over Sacrifice
{“Their Own
Righteousness...”}

It is stated often in the Old Testament that it is better to listen to the commands of God than it is to sacrifice; but like in all Bible teachings it comes to us in far more clarity in the New Testament, the book of Romans, where Paul had to say of His own formerly people of God, **“they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God by faith.”** (Romans 10:3) This characteristic of human nature persists today, especially among church members who think their little sacrifices of attendance, work for the denomination, and nominal commitments can establish themselves in the sight of God like they know they are established in the community and an established church. Yet the people of God today, Jews or Gentiles, apart from both an initial righteousness by faith and a continued righteousness by faith, once again tend to sacrifice as a substitute for listening and heeding the clear teachings of God through the Lord Jesus Christ and recorded long ago in the Bible. There just is no substitute for “listening” and heeding. This “own righteousness” substitution was the downfall of the original people of God, the nation of Israel; and at least from Isaiah on, and especially in Jeremiah, do you see the completion of that downfall. The wording in Jeremiah is a little different--“you have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out for yourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water”--but the trend is the same, don’t listen to God and Christ and the Bible, but make up your own mind on what is right and wrong, then establish that life style.

Right or wrong, we have chosen to place at least in our outline, Obadiah, Jonah, Joel, Amos, and Hosea as Pre-Isaiah Prophets. The messages of these prophets as derived from their OT quotes and explanations of such quotes in the NT fit best there in the total subject outline. We will see as we go along with these where the internal evidence other than the quotes would put them. We know that Jeremiah of the last chapter-message quoted from Obadiah. These are the Pre-Isaiah Prophets of Table 9 in Appendix A. If you actually look at our subject outline below based on a sequencing of these historical books and the Prophets, you will find the sequence of Old Testament books as I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, and some of Isaiah included, Isaiah 1-39, which was more dictated by the commonality of subject more than historical sequencing. **{Remember our desire to look at the Bible as a "gradual revelation of God coming to a climax in Christ" and with a gradual revelation of the doctrines of God based on His character.}** If you look at the NT books where those quotes are found in the OT sequence, you have Mark, Luke, Matthew, John, Romans, Acts, I Corinthians, and II Thessalonians.

8-1: Listen to God.

1. Love of God and neighbor is and always was in the Old Testament more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices: I Samuel 15:22 and Mark 12:33.

2. To listen to Christ as Lord is more important than the legal requirements of the sabbath day: I Samuel 21:1,6, Luke 6:3,4, Mark 2:25, and \matthew 12:2,3.

3. When you listen to God in the predictions of the Bible you have to listen twice as hard as the predictions often have double meaning--that is, a wider spectrum of meaning than immediately obvious as here where it applies to King Solomon and King Jesus: II Samuel 7:12,14 and John 7:42.

4. Listen to God talk about His own remnant of Israel when He tells Elijah that He has reserved 7,000 for Himself that have not bowed the knee to Baal: I Kings 19:10-18 and Romans 11:4.

8-2: Listening Signs from the Early Prophets and Jesus.

1. The Listening Signs for This Generation is Both Solomon, Jonah and Jesus as recorded in the Bible while in Nineveh's generation it was the Prophet Jonah and in Jesus time it was Him the Prophet Messiah: Jonah 3:1-4 and Luke 11:29.

2. Listen to the Apostle Peter on the first day of Pentecost after Christ's Ascension as he quotes from the Prophet Joel to explain both what happened on that day, and what would happen from this the beginning of the last days until the end of time: Joel 2:28-31 and Acts 2:16-21.

3. Listen to the Prophet Joel start the ball rolling on the prime them of the Bible about eschatology, the One Day of the LORD: Joel 3:13, Mark 4:29, and Mark 13:24.

8-3: To What Extent Israel Was and Was Not God's Chosen People.

Listen to God Himself tell in the Bible to what extent the nation of Israel was and was not His chosen people.

1. Immediately after rescue from Egyptian bondage God turned away from most of Israel, giving them up to worship the host of heaven; Amos 5:25-27 and Acts 7:42.

2. God takes a people for His name from among the Gentiles:

{Please read Amos 9:11,12 and Acts 15:15-17.}

3. These same Gentiles shall be called sons of the living God: Hosea 2:23 and Romans 9:25,26.

Isaiah 1-39

4. If God had not chosen a small remnant out of Israel they would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah: Isaiah 1:9 and Romans 9:29.

8-4: Listen to God Himself in His book on matters or eschatology, or last things.

1. You must first of all see the double nature of predictions as related to eschatology as when the Old Testament said,

"I will call my Son out of Egypt." (Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15)

NOTE: The Son has a double meaning:

- (1). First it is the nation of Israel as the Son; and**
- (2). Then it is Christ as the Son.**

2. Immortality and the sting of death: { [Read Hosea 13:14 and Isaiah 29:8.](#) }

3. Day of the LORD: {[Please read references of Isaiah 2:3,12,18, and 19, and I Corinthians 14:36, II Thessalonians 2:2, and II Thessalonians 1:10.](#) }

4. Read Isaiah 35:51; 61:1 and Matthew 11:5.

8-5: Jonah and What's Happening in the City?

Rather than now considering the Prophet Jonah, since like Jonah we find that many of the OT Prophets delivered **Messages to Cities, Nations, and the Temple**, we will consider those prophets under the headings of these institutions. I think this helps us to see more of the relevance of the Prophets in our time. They had a message for the civil institutions as well as the religious, a message and message from God Himself, and I believe we can easily relate them to our cities and other institutions today, especially our nation. Jonah had a message for the city of Nineveh, also Nahum and Zephaniah wrote of the city of Nineveh. {[Genesis 10:8-11](#) tells us the building of the city in Assyria by Nimrod the "mighty hunter".} Also the Prophet Micah speaks of in Assyria, a city which is the entrance of the city of Nimrod.

What's Happening in the City?

The complete title of this chapter would be: "What's Happening in the City That is Most Important to God?" Recently I traveled from Tucson to LAX and Port Hueneme, California and later to the high desert in the city of Lancaster, California. While waiting to visit a friend that I worked with years ago at Edwards AFB, the thought came to me, "I wonder what is happening in this city that is most important to God." Of course, God does not have the same value-system as this world so that entertainment would, no doubt, not even be a factor. God is always interested in His own people so we know that He would be keeping an eye on them. Also we know that even a sparrow in the city can not fall to the ground without God's knowledge. That still does not answer the question as to what to God is the most important in thing happening in the city? We know that God is more interested in poor people than the well-to-do as the gospel is primarily given to the poor, and that may give us a clue; and of course we know especially from the Prophets that God is also interested in national and city leadership as often we are told that He puts leadership in those positions for His own purpose. As I thought these thought, a vagrant with his cart, bedroll, etc passed by, and I thought because of the uniqueness of God to

always seek and save the lost, this could be what was happening in the city of Lancaster that was most important to God. Recall the lesson Jesus gave us on the value-system of God when He told His disciples of the fame and place in the kingdom of the woman that gave the penny.

“Then He (Jesus) looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, ‘Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty has put in all the livelihood that she had.’” (Luke 21:1-4 NJKV)

Then I naturally thought of the Prophet Jonah who was sent to one particular city, the city of Nineveh, because God saw what was happening in the city and wanted Jonah to preach to it! How Much Do We Know About the City of Nineveh? Nineveh, of course, like Babylon and Bagdad are all cities of Iraq; and we know of the recent fighting nature of that nation. Apparently it has always been so. Layard in his book on NINEVEH AND BABYLON writes of the warlike nature of the nation.

“The annals of Assyria (same as Iraq) are nothing but a register of military campaigns, spoliations, and cruelties. Their monuments display men of calm and unmoved ferocity, whose moral and mental qualities are overborne by the faculties of the lower, brutal nature.”

We think of Sudan Hussein and his recent unprovoked attack on Kuwait and the ensuing Persian Gulf War, and we can see the conclusion of this book written over 50 years ago. Well, three books in the Old Testament Prophets tell us something about Nineveh. First, there was the book of Jonah which tells us that God noticed the moral corruption in the city of Nineveh and sent Jonah to preach repentance to the city. Maybe this alone gives us a clue to “What Is Happening in a City that is most Important to God?” In this case, and perhaps in the case of many cities in our nation, it was the moral corruption that attracted the special attention of God. “For their wickedness is come up before me...” (Jonah 1:1) Besides knowing all that goes on the earth to the extent of the sparrow falling, there seems to be a stench from “wickedness” that floats up to God from earth to heaven thus attracting His attention. It irritates God. He is tempted to wipe out a city whose stench becomes overwhelming; and long before God acts on any city or nation, or the whole world, in judgment, He sends Prophets to warn the city or nation. Also the Prophet Nahum writes about Nineveh. “Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs. The noise

of a whip and the noise of rattling wheels, of galloping horses, of clattering chariots! Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of slain, a great number of bodies, countless corpses--they stumble over the corpses--because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries." (Nahum 3:1-4) Very figurative language here to describe the city: the "seductive harlot" refers to a spiritual unfaithfulness of the city, and "mistress of sorceries" refers to a goodly charm that is bad. Since Assyria had plundered other countries she had captured unlike Greece and Rome who came later, the city of Nineveh was full of the loot. Assyria literally lived by the plundering of other nations. The Prophet Zephaniah also writes about the city of Nineveh. "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt securely, that said in here heart, 'I am it, and there is none beside me.'" (Zephaniah 2:15 NJKV)

There could, no doubt, be said of many cities in our world today. The people say and think, "We are it. All other cities are nothing compared to us." Perhaps Paris, Bagdad, New York, or even Tucson. We never thought 50 years ago that we come to the point of seeing the growth of gambling establishments in our cities and nation; and we would never have conceived that gambling on the state lottery level would flourish under the excuse of providing for education. It has been an education alright: it has taught us that our own cities of the United States come under the same indictment of the nations of the Prophets where the people "want to get something for nothing"! From your Bible history background, you will recall that Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth that were born to him after the Great Flood that destroyed the whole earth with water. Well, Ham had a grandson that was called Nimrod. It was Nimrod, the great famous hunter, that was the founder of Nineveh. We read in Genesis 10:8-11. "Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.' And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh..." (Genesis 10:8-11 NJKV) Also the Prophet Micah speaks of the "sword (of) the land of Assyria, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances" (Micah 5:6 NKJV). Numbers 24:22,24 also has an early historical reference to Assyria in the prophecy of Balaam of how that nations would carry Israel away into Captivity, and how later the ships from Greece would in turn afflict Assyria. And Psalm 83:8 and II Chronicles 20:1-4 give the historical account of Assyria under Shalmaneser II who allied with Moab and Ammon against Israel under King Jehosphaphat. The nation of Israel was victorious,

but this was just the beginning of the real world power of Assyria. We now come to the description of Nineveh in the book of Jonah. B.H. Carroll gives us a summary of the description of Nineveh in Jonah.

“The record here in Jonah says that Nineveh was a 'great city.' It was located on the Tigris River and in the shape of a parallelogram, sixty miles around and three days' journey on a straight line through it. Its walls were sixty feet high, with 1,500 towers, 200 feet high. The walls were broad enough on top to receive three chariots driving side by side. It is almost certain that this city was larger than Babylon, especially if we include in the estimate of its suburbs. Jonah calls it 'an exceeding great city of three days' journey' and with 120,000 infants, all of which indicate that Nineveh was no ordinary city.”

8-6: “What Is Most Important to God?”

We do not have the details about how Jonah preached in the city; but we do know that Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah and that God spared the city. I think that Carroll is right that the story of Jonah and the whale, or large fish, got back to the city of Nineveh before Jonah, the king and the people deciding that the God that could do that could also destroy them. I think you begin to see what is most important to God in the dialogue between Jonah and God as he built his hut on the hill and waited for the destruction of the city! “Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” (Jonah 3:10 NKV) It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. (Jonah 4:1) Jonah started pouting, and he prayed.

“A, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!”

1. What Was So Important to Jonah?

Before we come to some of the details about what was so important to God, let us figure out as a background what was so important to Job that he first got angry; then he protested to God that he had told Him so back his home country; then excused himself for running off to Spain because he knew this would happen; and then the anger turned to despair of returning home where this news of the salvation of Nineveh would go ahead of him, asking God to take his life.

(1). Jonah like all of the Jews had a hatred for the idolatrous Gentiles of Nineveh.

(2). "Ah, didn't I tell you so, God," Jonah prayed. He had the fear that God would show mercy and the Great Preaching with the Prediction of Destruction that God told him would be discredited. His life was over as a prophet and priest. He had lost face!

(3). Nineveh would grow in strength and if spared would become a terror to Israel. Therein Jonah was also a prophet. Nineveh with Babylon and the whole nation Assyria did become a powerful nation, and did take captives of Israel and Judah.

2. What Was Important to God?

(1). God is concerned about rightness of our attitudes, emotions, and conscience. First of all it was important to God what was the attitude of Jonah on the matter of preaching, repentance, and as to God changing His mind about destructions.

"Then the LORD said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?'" (Jonah 4:4 NJV) God was saying in effect, "I know your conscience tells us that these people should be destroyed, but is your conscience right! Check the value system of your conscience. Is it right for you to be angry?"

(2). God has a sense of humor, and that is important to Him.

"So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city." (He was still looking for and hopeful of destruction.) There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'" (Jonah 4:5-8 NJKV)

Don't you see a sense of humor there. Jonah's emotions as he awaited for something to happen to the city were up and down. He was satisfied that he had made a shelter from the sun; and then as it was enhanced by the blessing from God of additional shade from the hot desert sun as God make a large plant like a tree to provide additional relief from the desert. And since God knew that the tired prophet was tired, and that he was make a decision while he was tired, never a good thing, thus provided a good night's rest. However,

since it was time for the Prophet to move on back to Israel, and take up the work of God there, God sent a worm to fester the plant of shade and wither it up. Not only did Jonah's plant shade disappear, but then a violent wind came from the east that blew his shelter across the desert. Jonah grew faint in the desert heat, and I know you can appreciate that. Then again Jonah wished that it was better for him to die than to live.

(3). God is concerned about our value system. Jonah became just as angry about the loss of the plant that had provided shade as he did over God relenting over the destruction of Nineveh. Jonah, Is it right for you to be angry? Child of God today, is it right for you to be angry. Is it right for you to be angry with a brother that has wronged you? Is it right for you to be angry with that fellow member of the church, or that preacher? Or you holding a grudge because things did not work out for you the way they were planned?

(4). God like many of His servants are concerned about the plants like the lilies of the field and the sparrow, but God is more concerned about those who are lost.

"Then God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?' (Jonah 4:9a NJKV)

"And Jonah said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" (Jonah 4:9b NJKV)

God is patiently working to change the value system and conscience of Jonah. To change the concept of what is right and what is wrong. Is it right for you to be angry? Often our concepts of what is right is self-centered. It is more a matter of what is right and wrong for us than what is right and wrong for a whole city, or even what is right and wrong to God! But Jonah is still determined, and says, "Yes, it is right for me to be angry even unto death."

(5). It is important to God to be consistently what He is, gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

a. God is gracious and wants us to be gracious.

b. God is merciful and wants us to be merciful

c. God is slow to anger and wants us to be the same way. He was trying to get that message over to Jonah as He said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

d. God is abundant in lovingkindness and expects the same from us.

(5). God spells out what is important to Him now that He hopefully has the attention of Jonah.

"But the LORD said, 'You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred

and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much livestock?" (Jonah 4:10-11 NJKV)

a. Your conscience has allowed you to have more concern about a plant that for 120,000 children that do not know the difference between right and wrong.

b. Your concerns are too short ranged rather than eternal. You are more concerned for a plant that grew up in one night and perished in one night.

c. You are more concerned about the things for which you have not labored than those things for which you have labored.

d. Think of the livestock if you can not think of the children.

The History of Nations in the Writing Prophets

You have noticed how that many of the Prophet mention the say nations so that you could almost write a history of the early world from the writings of the Prophets. You noticed, for example, at the beginning of this book how that Edom and their destruction was not only mentioned in Obadiah but echoed and told in differing stages in other Prophets. There is one thing that this allows us to clearly see and that is that God is interested in the people of all nations, and the nations of all peoples. Also, that God never performs a judgment on any peoples without first giving those same people the message of judgment and the opportunity to repent. This is especially true of the Final Judgment at the end of time, and this is one of the prime subjects of all 16 of the Writing Prophets.

8-7: AMOS and What Is Happening in the Home Country?

Okay, Jonah is off touring the city of Nineveh in Assyria, so who is minding the store back in Judah and Israel. Recall that Jonah was a prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel. We see this in II Kings 14:25. "*He (Jeroboam II) restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Jehovah, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.*" (II Kings 14:25) Jonah identifies himself as the son of Amittai (Jonah 1:1), and Joshua 19:3 describes Gath-hepher as a town three miles northeast of Nazareth which places him in the northern kingdom. Then obviously, Jeroboam II was a king of Israel, and his reign is called the "Indian Summer" of Israel's history (II Kings 14:23-29). While Jonah was off pouting in Assyria, Amos was preaching to the northern kingdom. However he was from the southern kingdom, so he too was a missionary in a more limited sense of distance. Tekoa, the home town of Amos, was 12 miles south of Jerusalem. Actu-

ally while Jonah's Judah ministry was at the beginning of Jeroboam's ministry, approximately 800 B.C., Amos' ministry was approximately 760 B.C. after Israel had started to prosper from the reign of Jeroboam and as always began to lapse into moral indulgences. There was a big difference between the Prophetic work of Amos as compared to Jonah. While Jonah was a priest and prophet, Amos was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees.

Amos on National Accountability

The subject of Amos prophetic book is judgment, or national accountability. First he denounces in the name of God and with the word of God that other nations surrounding Israel: Syria (1:3-5), Philistia (1:6-8), Phoenicia (1:9-10), Edom (1:11-12), Ammon (1:13-15), Moab (2:1-3), Judah (2:4-5), his home country, and then lastly Israel (2:6-16). I'm sure as Amos started preaching at Bethel, no doubt on a feast day, about the overthrow of Israel's neighbors, it attracted the attention of Israel. These heathen nations, according to the preaching of Amos, knew what was wrong in their practices of cruelty or inhumanity; and the God of the Universe was holding them accountable. Judah and Israel since they possessed the law of Moses and the teachings of the Prophets were held to a higher standard of national accountability. Amos denounces Israel for: covetousness, injustice, lasciviousness, sacrilege, for forgetting Jehovah's kindness, and for rejecting Jehovah's messengers. B.H. Carroll writes of the history of the times in Israel and Judah. "It was when Israel and Judah both enjoyed great prosperity and there was much indulgence in the luxuries of wealth by the upper classes while the poor were suffering from their extreme poverty. The moral condition of the people were terrible. Crime was perverted, and almost every form of iniquity abounded in the land. The nations round about were also corrupt and Judah had turned away from the law of Jehovah."

What is Happening in Israel?

"Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:1,2 KJV)

1. Judgment is on the way, and God first identified to Israel that He never has and never will do anything without first revealing it to His Prophets.

“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7 KJV)

We are going to find more and more as we progress through the Prophets that increasing temporal and isolated judgments on single nations turned to a great predicted judgment on the heavens and the earth at the end of time. Always, however, in the case of limited judgments and the final judgment, there were and are ample warnings from the Prophets and later the Apostles as well as from Jesus Himself. Much of these end-time judgments center around the key words “the day of the LORD” or the “One Day of the LORD and Lord.”

(1). The Day of the LORD in Amos.

Amos as one of the early writing Prophets introduces this “day of the LORD”, although you have to read it carefully in Amos 5:16-20 to know that it is talking about more than just the immediate and temporal judgment on Israel. You see that in the passage with the emphasis on darkness instead of light; and when you take the messages from all the Writing Prophets, Jesus, and the Apostles you know that at the end of the last days the sun, moon, and stars will be turned into darkness.

(2). The Day of the LORD in Isaiah.

You see also this One Day of the LORD judgment in Isaiah; and once again there is the more immediate threat to Israel and Babylon, but here is clearer that the larger meaning is an end-time judgment.

“Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: and they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.” (Isaiah 12:6-8)

a. It doesn't say that it is a destruction from the Almighty God, but it says that it will come “as a destruction from the Almighty”.

b. Seems like we have navy terminology here as it states that first in Babylon, and then later in the world “all hands” shall be faint.

c. The figurative language continues as it states as these events of judgment begin to unfold, that men's hearts shall melt. It seems that this can be both figurative and literal; for we know from the teachings of the Apostle Peter later that the earth shall be melted with a fervent heat.

d. Every man living on the earth during these end times will be afraid. Recall how Jesus said that men would cry for the rocks of the mountains to fall on them in order that they might be covered up.

e. Although there may be a time of prosperity and luxury now, it will be a time of pain and sorrow then!

f. Men and women will look at each other in amazement, like what are we going to do, what can we do.

g. Their faces will look like flames. I'm sure the blood pressure goes up with what men will see and hear and feel, and from the fervent heat the faces will literally break into flames.

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." (Isaiah 13:9-11 KJV)

a. We read a lot in the Bible about the love and mercy of God; and part of that love and mercy is a warning through His Prophets and Apostles that there is an inevitable Judgment on sinners, evil doers, the iniquities of the wicked, the arrogancy of the proud, and the haughtiness of those in power and wealth. We read in Jonah about the patience and longsuffering of God toward the city of Nineveh; but here not only is coming judgement pronounced on the whole nation of Babylon, but also later at the end of time on the whole world.

b. Notice clearly this time that the sun, the moon, and the stars will cease to give their light. We should look at the same thing re-echoed from Jesus Himself many years later.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her lights, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken..." (Matthew 24:29 KJV)

c. Notice that God looks ahead past the people of Babylon to the people far in the future near the end of time, telling what they will be like, and what it is about them that displeases him. Can this apply to the people of our nation?

[1]. God will punish the world for its evil. I am sure that Israel during prosperity and Babylon during prosperity and world domination thought they were getting away with evil, but mark these words, **GOD IS GOING TO PUNISH THE WORLD OF EVIL**. Wicked nations and wicked people will be held accountable for their iniquities.

[2]. The arrogancy of the proud will cease. I am sure that in Israel with prosperity and power, and more so in Babylon as a world ruler, the arrogancy of pride was increasing. I am also sure that the increase we are now witnessing

in pride and arrogancy will continue to increase right up to the time that God says, "No more"; and it will cease!

[3]. God will lay low the haughtiness of the powerful. Those of status and wealth and position and power, especially those that take advantage of the poor, will be brought down from their high position to a low position.

2. God says through Amos for the leaders who live in the palaces of Israel and Egypt to look at the great mass of the oppressed poor people, and then to look in their own palaces where violence and robbery is stored up (Amos 3:9,10).

8-8: Contemporary City versus the Ultimate City.

The Prophet Isaiah in the city and the Prophet Micah in the country were delivering God's message to Judah and the city of Jerusalem. There is a contrast in the message of both Prophets, as they compare the characteristics of the ultimate city, the New Jerusalem of the New Age, with the Jerusalem that they see before them. Isaiah and Micah, like the other Writing Prophets, are interesting in that they deal with the politics of the city and country. Also they deal with social problems, government, and personal relations as well as religion. The Prophets are very interdenominational. You see, the God of the Universe that is speaking through these Prophets is aware that He is the only God, that He is the Creator of the whole world and all the people; and therefore He does not hesitate to speak to all peoples. It amazes me the similarity of the book contents of the Writings of the Prophets to the writings of the authors on American Studies. Both deal with politics, government, social relations, and international affairs. The only difference is that while American studies authors deal with literature, the Prophets do not in the literal sense of the word, although as you noticed in the figurative language of Amos that they also create national literature. Of course, in another sense the Prophets do deal with other literature in that they quote from each other. Once again we should realize that there is a world of difference between the inspiration of other literature like the books in American Thought and the inspiration from God of the writings of the Prophets.

The Prosperity That Brought the Degradation

The reign of King Uzziah in Judah is considered to be the most prosperous era in the nation since that of King Solomon. The year that Uzziah died is the year that the young Isaiah was called to be a Prophet. Sampey describes the condition of the country and the city. "The country had enjoyed an era of agricul-

tural and commercial development under Uzziah. Tribute flowed in from the Ammonites, and the avenue of trade through the Red Sea was open, as in the days of Solomon. The country was at peace with its neighbors. Wealth increased in the hands of the nobility and other landowners. Luxury, with its attendant train of evils, entered Jerusalem. There was sore need of a prophet to call the people to repentance and reformation."

Isaiah Chapter 1, An Explosive Introduction

Only a message from God to His rebellious subjects could start as does the book of Isaiah in chapter 1. The first verse is historical, then....

"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." (Isaiah 1:1 RSV)

Well, that is harmless enough, but stayed tuned.

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD hath spoken..."

It seems that Isaiah is talking to the stars and sky and to the earth itself as he is about to tell the nation to just keep on going as it has been, without listening and seeing!

"Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand." (Isaiah 1:2,3 RSV)

We see the pathos of God as His love and care has been rejected, as a rebellious son would reject the care of a father; and of a people that do not know or understand the God who has adopted them! Now, we come to the crux of the accusations that God has against the nations.

"Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged." (Isaiah 1:4 RSV)

If you are a wife and your husband says that you "are utterly estranged" you have better believe it, or at least listen; and if you are the chosen people of God, the chosen nation from among all the nations of the earth and that God says that you "are utterly estranged" you had best listen!

God is tired of their religious worship and practices, desiring rather to see them doing good.

"What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come

to appear before me, who requires of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and the calling of assemblies--I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:11-18 RSV)

1. As a nation when God tells you that He is no longer interested in the sacrifices you make as part of your religious worship, you are in trouble!
2. As a nation when God says your attendance at worship is no more than the stepping on His holy house, you are in trouble!
3. As a nation when God says your religious activities His soul hates, you know you are in trouble!
4. When God is weary of those religious activities and they become a burden to Him, all is lost!
5. You can pray and fix your hands in a certain manner to pray, but God will not listen. He says it is because of the blood on your hands.

Rather than religious attendance and activities, this is what God expects of a nation.

1. Making yourself clean by washing. Remember the previous chapter on baptism and the real meaning of baptism. This is an inward cleansing that comes from repentance and renewed faith!
2. Remove from before God the evil doings, and if they are removed from before God, who sees and knows all, then they are removed from the face of the earth.
3. Stop doing evil and learn to do good.
4. Seek justice and correct oppression.
5. Defend the fatherless and plead for the widows.

It sounds much like the similar admonitions from the Apostle Peter much later on what it will take to live a long life.

"He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile; let him turn away from evil and do

good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil." (I Peter 3:10-12 and Psalm 34:12-16 NJKV)

The Ideal versus the Actual City

Isaiah was a hometown boy, raised and educated in the city of Jerusalem. He loved that city and desired something better for it, say that of the New Jerusalem come down from heaven from God. First, he talks of how the condition of the city has evolved to a lesser state.

"How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water. Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Every one loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them." (Isaiah 1:21-21)

Then starting in chapter 2 we have the introduction of the Perfect, Ideal City. It comes as word which Isaiah saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 1:1).

"It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nations, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:2-4 RSV)

There you have the Perfect City. It is a city raised high on the highest of all mountains. The weapons will be turned into fishing instruments and the swords into instruments of cultivation. Is that what you see in Jerusalem and Israel today. Hardly! Because it is not the "latter days", the end times of the "last days"!

8-9: Micah

Compare the Beginning of Micah. How does the beginning of Micah compare with Isaiah. Recall that Micah though in the northern kingdom of Israel also had a message for Jerusalem. "The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresh-

eth in the days of Jotham, Azah, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." (Micah 1:1 RSV) Well, it has a similar historical beginning. Let us see if the introduction then is as explosive.

"Hear, you peoples, all of you; hearken, O earth, and all that is in it; and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For behold, the LORD is coming forth out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will be cleft, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place. All this for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the sin of the house of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards; and I will pour down her stones into the valley, and uncover her foundations. All her images shall be beaten to pieces, all her hires shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste; for from the hire of a harlot she gathered them, and to the hire of a harlot they shall return. For I will lament and wail; I will go stripped and naked; I will make lamentations like the jackals, and mourning like the ostriches. For her wound is incurable; and it has come to Judah, it has reached to the gate of my people, to Jerusalem." (Micah 1:2-9 RSV)

Yes, it is as explosive in the introduction of Micah as in Isaiah. Notice that in both cases the cities are called harlots!

Woes on Certain Classes of People in Isaiah

In chapter 5, Isaiah declares the woes of God on certain classes of people. Listen to it sounds like a modern city today.

1. Woe on the land sharks.
2. Woe on drunken revelers
3. Woe on unbelievers.
5. Woe to those who confuse right and wrong.
6. Woe on the conceited politicians.
7. Woe on corrupt, drunken judges.

8-10: Hosea.

Hosea, the Contemporary Prophet Marries a Harlot. During this what Sampey calls "the Golden Age of Prophecy", God was determined to make the point of harlotry to Judah and Israel, so Hosea, a contemporary Prophet with Isaiah and Micah, was told to take a wife that was a harlot.

"The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the sons of Joash, king of Israel. When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, 'Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry for forsaking the LORD.' So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son." (Hosea 1:1,2 RSV)

Word got around in the little countries of Judah and Israel, and what the Prophets did and said became household words. We saw in the case of Jonah being swallowed by the whale on the trip across the Mediterranean to Spain, that this word from the sailors traveled back to Nineveh before Jonah got there. Well, as his marriage and children were discussed, God wanted it to count for something.

"And the LORD said to him, 'Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. And on that day, I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.'" (Hosea 1:4)

It was drastic behavior, these instructions from God for Hosea to follow; but it was a prophecy that was a drastic, he was predicting the end of the nation of Israel, the northern kingdom, and at the same time he was telling the nation and nations that the reason was because of their harlotry. Jezreel was a valley in northern Israel, and was the place that Jehu murder the sons of Ahab in order to become the king of Israel. The end of the kingdom is fulfilled by the Assyrian Captivity.

Gomer bore a daughter next which God told Hosea to call Lo-Ruhamah (which means Not Pited, as God was no longer going to have pity on the nation of Israel to forgive them. At this point God was still have pity on the southern nation of Judah; and said that he would deliver them this time, yet not by war. And then a third child was born, and God said to name him "Not my people" as the people of Israel were no longer His people and God was not their God.

The Real People of God of the Real Israel

Then we come to see in Hosea 1:10 and with its explanation in Romans 9:25,26 that the real people of God after this rejection of Israel would become a kingdom of Gentiles from across the earth.

"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there it shall be said to them, 'You are the sons of the living God. Then the children of

Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel!" (Hosea 1:10,11 NJKV)

And the quote with explanation preceding the quote is found in Romans 9:24,25.

"Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee (the Greek word for Hosea), I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." (Romans 9:24,25 KJV)

8-11: Last Prophet of the Assyrian Period, Nahum

Nahum was the last prophet of the Assyrian Period. In fact, it was his message to predict the destruction of Nineveh, the city-state of the Assyrian Empire. Isaiah, the Prophet of the generation before Nahum, wrote both predictions and history about Assyria. Perhaps the most famous is the record of Isaiah 36. First King Sennacherib of Assyria took the other fortified cities of Judah, then stood outside the gates of Jerusalem.

"Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Then the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. And he stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field." (Isaiah 36:1,2 NJKV)

Three men from the court of Hezekiah came out to met the Rabshakeh from Sennacherib. The Rabshakeh told them to give up and asked them what was Hezekiah trusting in to save them. Apparently Hezekiah had rebelled against Assyria, refusing to pay tribute. Jerusalem was taunted. If you are trusting in Egypt, you are trusting in a spear that will pierce you. If you pledge allegiance to the king of Assyria I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able to put riders on them. You can't be trusting in your army as you can not repel even the least of one of our captains. When the three from the court asked the Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic which they could understand but not the common people on the wall, again they were taunted and instead the Rabshakeh spoke in Hebrew. This time he addressed the people saying to listen to the great king, the king of Assyria; and told them not to be deceived by Hezekiah as he was not able to deliver them.

"Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his on fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a

land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards." (Isaiah 36:16,17 NJKV)

He was going to grant them some time in their own city, then later take them to a supposedly good Captivity in Nineveh. Then the representative of Sennacherib began to taunt the God of Judah, and that was a big mistake.

"Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered it land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand?" (Isaiah 36:18,19)

These were peoples that had fallen. Then they had the nerve to compare the God of the Universe to the false gods, idols, of other nations. It was true that Assyria had already taken captive the northern kingdom of Israel with the largest city of Samaria. The taunt before the God of Jerusalem continued.

"Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" (Isaiah 36:20 NJKV)

When the three men from the court of Hezekiah took the message to him, he rent his clothes and went into the temple to pray. After pray, Hezekiah sent representatives to talk to the Prophet of God, Isaiah with the following message.

"It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left." (Isaiah 37:4 NJKV)

Isaiah told the messengers of king Hezekiah not to be afraid of the words from the king of Assyria. The king had blasphemed God. Sennacherib was haughty and determined; and why not, he had destroyed and captured every nation of the known world.

"Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" 'Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and will you be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telasar.'" (Isaiah 37:10-12)

One city was southwest of Jerusalem, the others were in Mesopotamia and in Syria. And the word traveled freely in those days in the small world: Hezekiah and his court had heard about all this! Nineveh and Assyria, one and the same, were a terror to the whole world during this times of Isaiah, Micah, Hosea, and

now Nahum. If you have not seen that previously, you see it in the prayer of Hezekiah to God after this second message from the Assyrian King.

"Then Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying: 'O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands--wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD, you alone.'" (Isaiah 37:15-20 NJKV)

God answered the prayer of Hezekiah. He answered it through the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah that since he had prayed to God against Sennacherib, this was the answer.

"...this is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning him (king Sennacherib): 'The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you, laughed you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind your back! Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice, and lifted up your eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel. By your servants you have reproached the Lord, and said, 'By the multitude of my chariots I have come up to the height of the mountains, to the limits of Lebanon; I will cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypress trees; I will enter its farthest height, to its fruitful forest. I have dug and drunk water, and with the soles of my feet I have dried up all the brooks of defense.'" (Isaiah 37:22-25 NJKV)

The King would recognize from this that God had been watching what was happening as he had taken captive the cities of the northern kingdom. Now, King Sennacherib is about to learn from the real King God who he has been blaspheming.

"Did you not hear long ago how I made it, from ancient times that I formed it? Now I have brought it to pass that you should be for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins." (Isaiah 37:26 NJKV)

But you see Sennacherib you were dealing with peoples of little power; with those who were dismayed before you; and they are temporal like the grass of the field. Then God lets Sennacherib know that he knows all about him.

"But I know your dwelling place, your going out and your coming in, and your rage against Me. Because your rage against Me and your tumult have come up to My ears, therefore I will put my hook in your nose and My

bride in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came.” (Isaiah 37:28,29 NJKV)

Wow, what an impact this must have had on Sennecherib. God was going to put a hook in his nose and a bridle in his lips. God through Isaiah gives a sign to Sennecherib: he will sow and reap for three more years, and during those three years the remnant of Judah will remain in Jerusalem. And you know the rest of the story how an angel of God went into the camp of the Assyrians and slayed 185,000 without a shot being fired. When the people of the city rose early in the morning the corpses of the dead were spread before them.

“So Sennecherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.” (Isaiah 37:37,38 NJKV)

Nahum predicted the demise of Nineveh, and Isaiah before him predicted that it would be Babylon that would take the rest of the Judeans into captivity (Isaiah 39). Micah also stated that Babylon would be the city-state where Jerusalem and the rest of Judah would go into exile (Micah 4:9,10). If you look on a map you will see Nineveh at the far north of the Mesopotamia Valley with Ur where Abraham was called from far to the south close of the Persian Gulf, and Babylon in between Nineveh and the Gulf, closer to Ur than to Nineveh.

I suppose it is somewhat of a mystery why two hundred years before Sennecherib, God after the preaching of Jonah had spared Nineveh so that it could later become a scourge to Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem. Except as God told Jonah because of the 120,000 children and cattle. Yet we know also that God used Assyria as a punishment on Israel and part of Judah, to go into Captivity because of their sins of rebellion and captivity. The history of the Assyrian Empire is readily available from 1350 B.C. where it was somewhat limited to a few cities around Nineveh and on the Tigris River, to westward expansion in 1300 B.C. toward the west to take in territories of the Euphrates River, to expansion north west, east and south under Sargon II and Sennacherib in 720 BC and 700 BC, then under Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib in 675 BC all the way to the Persian Gulf and to include Egypt.

The Babylonian Kingdom occupied much the same territory as the Assyrian Kingdom. The Medes of the north and east of Assyria, called the Chaldeans, were the actual destroyers of the city of Nineveh, although it was a contest as to who would be there first, Cyaxares from the Medes, Nabopolassar of Babylon, or Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. It was the Medes that laid siege to Nineveh for two years before the city finally fell, and it is in the prophecy of Nahum that we

know the details of that siege and fall, years before it took place. Approximately 607 B.C. the city of Nineveh ceased to be forever. Later, we will talk about some of the archeological remains that have been found there.

8-12: Joel.

Joel and Jeremiah, nobodys, but they are speaking to the nations. You know without status in the community or the nation, the people of their day were asking, "Who is Joel?" and "Who is Jeremiah?"

The Prophet Joel on Edom, Israel, and the "Last Days".

We should begin on the Prophet Joel with an analogous comparison between Obadiah 17 and Joel 2:32.

"But in Mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions..." (Obadiah 17 RSV)

"And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls." (Joel 2:32 RSV)

"as the LORD has said..." makes it obvious that Joel is quoting from Obadiah; and in spite of the discussions on whether Obadiah was written in either 840 BC (with the plundering of Judah and Jerusalem by the Philistines and Arabians) or 588 BC (when Jerusalem was conquered and burned by the Babylonians). Recall that Obadiah's predictions against Edom necessitates the previous assistance of the Edomites in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Since we immediately recognize this verse from Joel, Joel 2:23, as part of the quote from Peter on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Jesus, as Acts 2:17-21 and Joel 2:28-32, we also comprehend the two aspects of predictive prophecy. In Obadiah and Joel, you have a promise of reassurance to the nation of Israel that they will re-occupy the land of Canaan--there will be those who escape and there will be survivors in both Obadiah and Joel (remember the returns from Captivity as recorded in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi), as well as the historical statements that some stragglers remained to live in the land; and then the larger and later application of the predictive element as the name of the Lord is being called on for salvation after the beginning of the "last days" of Joel and Acts.

We need to think of predictive prophecy as having a time spectrum of truth fulfillment: (1) in this case, after the Captivity and during the Captivity some

stragglers remain and others return to rebuild the temple; (2) some Jews escape the neglect of salvation and the consequences of the neglect of salvation during the time of Christ and immediately after; and (3) the larger nation of Israel, the larger New Zion, the larger body of the children of God will group during this period of "last days".

I. Joel, or God through Joel, uses a historical calamity--a previous plague of locusts--to describe an impending Invasion and Captivity of a human army.

First, what the locusts plague had done to Judah.

"What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten. Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth." (Joel 1:4,5 RSV)

Second, what the invading human army will do.

"For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and without number; its teeth are lions' teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vines, and splintered my fig trees; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white." (Joel 1:6,7 RSV)

The problem always with any peoples is that we tend to think that things will continue as they have always been. The sun rises, the sun sets, we go to work five days a week, and essentially continue our weekend routines year after year. Much like Jesus predicted about the surprise of the Second Coming people will be "eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage" as if things will continue in that manner forever, but suddenly the end will come. So it was with Israel, so Joel reminded them that the previous plague of locusts had been a sudden and tragic departure for the normal routine. So also would be the sudden invasion of a terrifying army. Don't you see that in the introductory words of Joel?

"Hear this, you aged men, give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation." (Joel 1:2,3 RSV)

II. Also the "as the LORD has said" of Joel 2:32, as Joel quotes from Obadiah, makes it obvious that God is speaking through the Prophets.

This is the way Joel's message begins.

"The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Petuel..." (Joel 1:1 RSV)

This is the beginning of Obadiah.

"The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God..." (Obadiah 1:1 RSV)

As treated in the second chapter, the Bible is the Word of God: this is true of the Prophets, the Law, the Poetical books, and the New Testament. The Bible is divine in origin. It came from God, and it came through the Prophets in such a manner as to make the misunderstanding of it, unless someone is so pre-disposed, to be difficult.

8-13: God Always Speaks to His People and Reminds Who He Is!

The LORD God is always reminding His people that He is speaking to them and that He is!

1. Joel 2:12 -- in spite of the impending judgment of the invading army, if they will repent, who knows if He will change His plan of Judgement.

"Yet even now, says the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.' Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil. Who knows whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God?" (Joel 2:12-14 RSV)

2. If God's people who are called by His Name will repent, they can know that He is in the midst of them and that He is our God.

"You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame." (Joel 2:26,27)

This is not only a promise that follows repentance and calling on the name of the LORD by the chosen people, but it is a promise and prediction that will come to pass; however, it becomes more spiritual than physical. Although there is a promise of physical blessings on a nation as that nation honors God, there is the spiritual blessing that starts with Joel 2:28 as the Holy Spirit is democratically poured out on all flesh.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out of my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions (perhaps Obadiah was a young man as he saw a vision). Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit." (Joel 2:28,29 RSV)

3. Quickly even as the "last days" of Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 1 end with the old heaven and earth rolling up like a scroll and the advent of the new heaven and earth, so from that point on in Joel (2:30) the emphasis is on the end time.

"So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who dwell in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy and strangers shall never again pass through it. And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and the water the valley of Shittim." (Joel 3:17-18 RSV)

It amazes me that we don't readily see that with a new heaven and a new earth that John saw in the book of Revelation, and the new Jerusalem that John saw lowered down from heaven to earth, that there is the new Zion of the holy mountain; and a new chosen people of God, complete in number of Jews and Gentiles. This is the wrap up of all time as we know it. Where we have so much difficulty with the Prophets is in the failure to realize the message of Romans as to who the real nation of Israel is, consequently also the new Jerusalem, Zion, and etc.

III. Always with the Prophets, there is a message to the nation of a call to repentance and righteousness.

Halley writes in his Bible Handbook:

"Modern books on the Prophets lay great emphasis on their social message, their denunciation of the political corruption, oppression and moral rottenness of the nation. However the thing that bothered the prophets most was the IDOLATRY of the nation. It is surprising how largely this is overlooked by modern writers."

1. You see this in Joel 1:14 with a call for a national Fast.

"Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God; and cry to the LORD." (Joel 1:14 RSV)

2. As previously mentioned the call for national revival in Joel 2:12 in order to avert the sure and impending disaster.

"'Yet even now,' says the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.'" (Joel 2:12 RSV)

3. The call for a national assembly to fast and beseech God that the nation would be spared.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, 'Spare thy people, O LORD, and make

not they heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" (Joel 2:15-17 RSV)

What Was the Nation Doing that Was So Bad?

We will make a quick read through again of Joel, only 3 chapters, making note of any hint of wrong doing on the part of the nation.

Offerings were not being made in the house of God (Joel 1:13).

The people were not worshipping God with all their hearts (Joel 2:12).

The people were outwardly rending their garments but not inwardly their hearts (Joel 2:13).

The Day of the LORD in Joel.

There is an immediate Day of the LORD as immediate judgment is passed on Israel, an army from the LORD. (Joel 2:1-11)

There will be an immediate restoration of the people (Joel 2:18-27)

The last days will start on the First Day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Christ (Joel 2:28-32)

A Final Restoration of the Chosen of God, the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem; and the gathering of all nations for final Judgment (Joel 3:1-21).

(1). The reasons for Harsh Judgment with the nations (Joel 3:2,3).

For the sake of God's people and His heritage in Israel.

Because these nations have scattered His heritage in Israel among the nations.

Because these nations have divided up God's land.

Because these nations have cast lots for God's people.

They have made harlots out of the boys of Israel.

They have sold the girls for wine.

They act like they are trying to get even with God.

They have taken the silver and gold out of the house of God.

They have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks.

(2). The Gathering of all Nations for Final Judgment. (Joel 3:9-12)

Prepare for war.

Gather all the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

There God will sit to judge all the nations round about (Joel 3:12)

Put in the sickle, the harvest is ripe, the wine press is full, and the vats are overflowing with great wickedness (Joel 3:13).

Multitudes are in the valley of decision since the day of the LORD is near: the sun and moon and stars are darkened (Joel 3:14,15)

The heavens and earth are shaken while at the same time God is a refuge to His people. (Joel 3:16)

The New Heaven (Joel 3:17-18).