

**Week 40**  
**THE WRITING PROPHETS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM (PART 2)**

***Key Verse: Hosea 12:10 “I spoke to the prophets, giving revelation after revelation, and employing parables in the prophetic writings.” ISV***

This week we will conclude the study of the writing prophets of the Divided Kingdom. Not all of the prophets left recorded messages. Some of the most prominent, non-writing prophets during the United Kingdom were Nathan, Gad, Ahijah. Some of the non-writing prophets during the divided kingdom were Elijah and Elisha. Others we have read of are Shemaiah, Azariah, Obed, Hananiah.

Here are a few guidelines that are suggested by Homer Hailey in his *Commentary on the Minor Prophets* to aid in our understanding of their message:

1. It is necessary to understand the political, moral, social, and religious conditions at the time in which the prophet lived and preached, and how he proposed to meet these conditions.
2. The prophet’s teaching of a future kingdom and king was to be fulfilled in one who was to come. . . a lasting king who should rule in righteousness was the true hope of the future.

The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible also adds these guides:

1. Everything that God caused to be included in the Bible is of real importance for His people throughout the ages, yet the prophets spoke directly to men of their time. Understanding the historical background helps in the interpretation of the prophecy.
2. Start with the simple, then move to the more complex passages in order to understand what they are saying.
3. Always let scripture interpret scripture. Look for other information in scripture that helps you gain insight into the scripture you are studying so that you can see how the prophecy applies to you and the future.

Prophecy can be applied in three different ways.

1. Understanding the context of the prophecy for the people to whom it was written.
2. Interpreting the prophecy of how the Lord has “quickened” it to your spirit so that it applies to you.
3. Discerning how the prophecy might apply to a future day in regard to the Lord’s return and setting up His future Kingdom.

***DAY ONE: PROPHET OF DOOM (Micah)***  
***Selected passages of Micah***

***Read Micah 1***

1. Micah’s ministry spanned the rule of what three kings of Judah (1:1)\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah was a city prophet, and Micah was a prophet of the country. He was a prophet to the common people. He championed the cause of the poor and cried out against social and moral injustices. Micah’s message, however is so similar to Isaiah’s that Micah has often been referred to as “Isaiah in shorthand.”

Micah was the last of the writing prophets sent to announce the doom of Israel, and of Judah if she didn’t repent. Amos and Hosea were prophets of Israel sent directly with a message to Israel. Isaiah and Micah were prophets of Judah who announced the imminent destruction of Israel and the threat coming from the ungodliness that had spread to Judah (1:3-9)

2. To whom was Micah’s prophecy addressed? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Do you think that includes us today? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What was the sin of Samaria that caused the Lord to come out of His Holy Temple? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Micah 2**

5. What two future events does Micah speak of in 2:12-23 that gives Israel hope?

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What does Micah tell them will happen in 4:10, following the Babylonian captivity?

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There are three great texts that stand out in the book of Micah:

1. *“Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest” (3:12)* This verse is the keystone and climax of Micah’s message of judgment. It was so noteworthy that it was remembered for more than a century and was instrumental in saving the prophet Jeremiah’s life (see Jeremiah 26:17-19)
2. Micah 4:8, and 5:2 are significant Messianic passages that reveal specifically where Jesus will be born.
3. Micah 6:2 reminds us of exactly what the Lord requires of us. These three requirements can only be done under the power of God. (i.e. the Holy Spirit living through us.) External religion without an internal experience is worthless!

**PRAYER FOCUS:** Micah concludes in chapter 7 by praising God for his mercy and forgiveness. Read 7:14-20 and thank the Lord that He delights in mercy. List some times that He has had compassion on you . \_\_\_\_\_ Aren’t you glad He has cast your sins into the depths of the sea?!

**DAY TWO: Prophet of Doom (Habakkuk)**

**Read Habakkuk**

Habakkuk was one of the last of the prophets sent to Judah to address her sins before God’s judgments at the hands of the Babylonians (2 Chronicles 36:14-16). He expected God’s judgment to come upon Judah (1:2-4) but wasn’t quite prepared for how God was going to do it.

1. How was God going to bring that judgment? (1:5-13) \_\_\_\_\_

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The Chaldeans (Babylonians) lived northwest of the Persian Gulf, and made a rapid rise to power around 630 B.C. By 605 B.C. they had conquered Assyria and Egypt to become the strongest world power. But they were as wicked as the Assyrians. They had no regard for humanity. To get a picture of their tactics, the word that is translated as violence in 1:2, 3, 9; 2:17 is the word “hamas.”

Judah’s coming punishment would be at the hands of the Babylonians. Habakkuk was surprised that God would use a nation more wicked than Judah to punish Judah. But the Babylonians did not know they were being used by God to help Judah return to him. Babylon’s pride in its victories would be its downfall!

2. What was Habakkuk instructed to do when the Lord began to give him the answer to his cry?

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It’s a good reminder that when we seek the Lord for an answer, we should do it with paper and pencil in hand!

3. Some have called Habakkuk 2:4 the most profound verse in the bible. Compare Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38. These passages elaborate on who the just are, how they are to live, and what faith is. Give your definition of faith: \_\_\_\_\_

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I recently read that “the hardest part of faith is the last 30 minutes!” What do you think that means and why do you think that is so?

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Habakkuk found himself in a moral dilemma, trying to understand the works of God. His message does not teach us as other prophets do – it does not call the people to repentance. Rather it challenges us to accept by faith the work of God, even when it doesn’t make sense to us. His message doesn’t even offer to explain God’s works – just to challenge us to have faith in them.

4. Have you ever had to back off and let the Lord work, even when you couldn’t make sense of what He was doing? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. In the midst of Habakkuk’s “woes”, he finds hope in the Lord. The purpose of God in all things is to establish His Kingdom. What does 2:14 tells us will fill the earth? \_\_\_\_\_

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We learn from Habakkuk that God is always just and merciful, even when His works don’t make sense to us. We find out how to go on living and believing in spite of certain missing answers.

**PRAYER FOCUS:** *Read Habakkuk 3:17-19 and praise the Lord for your salvation. Allow Him to show you His strength today. Ask Him to be your surefooted confidence in the midst of difficulties.*

**DAY THREE: PROPHET OF DOOM (Jeremiah)**  
*Selected passages in Jeremiah*

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The book of Jeremiah does not follow a chronological order. It is comprised of sketches of biography, history, and prophecy.

The world situation of Jeremiah’s day was in an uproar. Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon were vying for world domination. Assyrians power and domination was waning. She had been weakened by numerous rebellions throughout the empire – especially by Babylon. Babylon was emerging as the dominant world power.

Judah had turned away from God and vacillated between alliances with Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon. They had forsaken God and turned to idols. They had degenerated to such a point that God even forbid Jeremiah from praying for them. There was still hope if they would repent, but knowing they wouldn’t, God decreed that they would go into captivity for 70 years.

1. The message of Jeremiah is summed up in 25:11 and 30:11. What is that message? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Jeremiah 1** to get a feel for the setting of the book.

2. Jeremiah was from Anathoth, four miles north of Jerusalem in the southern kingdom. He lived and prophesied during the reigns of what kings of Judah? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. When was Jeremiah chosen to be a prophet to the nations? (1:5) \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Have you recognized the calling that God has on your life? \_\_\_\_\_  
What do you think that is? \_\_\_\_\_

The book of Jeremiah is made up of twelve addresses given by Jeremiah to the Jewish people. However, these are not necessarily in chronological order. God earnestly tried to reason with the people of Judah. He told Jeremiah to speak in Jerusalem, which was the center of their idolatry. God reminded the people of His blessings and miracles, and how they had rejected Him and turned to the idols that their neighbors worshipped. Jeremiah compared this to a marriage where the initial devotion of the bride (the Jewish people) was replaced by unfaithfulness.

5. What two evils does God say His people have committed in 2:13? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Cisterns were tanks used to collect rain water, and were common in the East where wells were in short supply. The water from the cisterns was far inferior to a fresh supply, and if the stonework was cracked or broken, the water would leak out. God said that His people had forsaken Him, the fountain of living waters, and turned to false gods, who were comparable to a broken cistern that could hold no water.

6. What false gods do we see people turning to today? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Jeremiah 20**

Jeremiah cried out in despair mixed with praise as he unburdened his heart to God. He had faithfully proclaimed God’s word and had received nothing in return but persecution and sorrow. Yet Jeremiah could not keep silent.

7. How does he describe what God’s word feels like to him? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Read Jeremiah 23**

8. In chapter 23, Jeremiah contrasts the present corrupt leaders with the coming Messiah, the perfect King who would come from whose line? \_\_\_\_\_ What kind of King will He be? \_\_\_\_\_  
What will His name be? \_\_\_\_\_

The Book of Jeremiah is the only prophetic book in the Old Testament that gives so many personal details about the life and service of the writer. In addition to his account of God’s calling him to be a prophet at a young age, Jeremiah described his persecution at the hand of the people of Judah, and his grief at their rejection of his message, earning him the title of the “weeping prophet.” Baruch was Jeremiah’s scribe, and he faithfully wrote what Jeremiah dictated to him.

**PRAYER FOCUS:** *Read Jeremiah 24:6-7 and use it as a prayer for someone you know that needs to return to the Lord. Ask the Lord to give them a heart to know Him, that He is the Lord.*

**DAY FOUR: PROPHETS OF DOOM (Zephaniah, Nahum)**  
**Read Zephaniah**

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Good King Josiah, but he must have prophesied before Josiah’s great reformation was in full force. The people had become degenerate both religiously and morally. About 80 years had passed since seeing God’s great judgment against Israel. It was about time for one to come against Judah, and God was calling them to repentance before it came.

1. Zephaniah’s message is summarized in 1:14 and 2:3. What is that message? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When the Israelites arrived in the Promised Land, God had commanded that they completely rid the land of its heathen inhabitants, who worshiped idols. But the Israelites failed to do so, and gradually they began to worship the Canaanites’ gods. The Canaanites believed in many gods that represented many aspects of life, and the chief god was Baal, symbolizing strength and fertility. God was extremely angry when his people turned from him to Baal. The terrain of history is littered with idols and their worship.

2. What idols are people trusting in today? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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3. Zephaniah mentions “the day of the Lord” 20 times. How would you describe the “day of the Lord?”

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4. Did it come to sinners of Zephaniah’s day? \_\_\_\_\_ Will it come to sinners of our day? \_\_\_\_\_

I recently read this definition of “the day of the Lord.”

*That moment when Jehovah grasps the reigns, which he seems to have held slackly before, when the currents of his moral rule, which had been running sluggishly, receive a mysterious quickening, and the Lord’s work upon the earth is at last full performed.*

**Read Nahum**

Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, and during the time of Nahum was at the peak of wealth, fame, and power. “Up to this time, Nineveh had been impregnable. The city, with its walls one hundred feet high and wide enough for three chariots to drive side by side on its top, has remained unconquered for more than a century. It is said that outside this massive wall was a moat one hundred and forty feet wide and sixty feet deep, dominated by some twelve hundred defense towers.” (H.I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*, p. 289)

5. The message of Nahum is summarized in 1:2-3. What is that message? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What did the destruction for Assyria (1:9-11,13) mean for Judah? (1:12-13,15) \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Galatians 6:7-8 reminds us why Assyria had to face the consequences. What is that word of warning from Galatians? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Had God warned Nineveh before? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Does destruction 150 years later seem like God was slow to anger? \_\_\_\_\_

So complete was the destruction of Nineveh that modern archaeologists have only found one broken statue left from the first Nineveh. History has no other example of so complete a destruction! This is a good reminder that God forgives sin repented of; He will not condone sin persisted in.

**PRAYER FOCUS:** *Read Nahum 1:7 and be reminded of times you have taken refuge in the Lord in times of trouble. Thank Him for being there for you. Confess any sin that you might be persisting in.*

**DAY FIVE: Babylonian captivity: ( Lamentations)**

**Read Lamentations**

Jeremiah’s grief ran deep. His lament in this second book that he authors looks back on the destruction of Jerusalem. Lamentations is a series of funeral dirges, or short poems of mourning. The book of Lamentations allows us to see what made Jeremiah sorrowful.

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1. How does Jeremiah convey the message of the book in the sad words of 1:12? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What does this book tell us is God’s attitude toward sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the hope of Lamentations 3? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the reason for their punishment? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What does Jeremiah ask the Lord for in his fifth lament? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER FOCUS:** *Re-read Lamentation 3:21-26. Seek the Lord. Wait quietly on Him. Listen for His still, small voice. What did He say to you?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God warned the nation when they first entered the Promised Land that there would be consequences for disobedience to Him in Deuteronomy 28.

Israel was carried off into Assyrian captivity in 722 BC because of her idolatry, and because she had rejected the prophets whom God sent to warn her (2 Kings 17:3-23). As the years had passed and Israel became more wicked, God chose Assyria as His rod of wrath against His own people (Isaiah 10:5-6) God ruled in the destiny of Israel and Assyria. In spite of all of Assyria’s power and domination, it was merely an instrument in the hand of God.

The Babylonian captivity was actually not an event but a process. Three different groups were taken away in 606, 597, 586 B.C. Thus the kingdom of Judah was brought to an end. Judah brought the captivity upon herself because of her sins (2 Chronicles 36:14-16; 2 Kings 24:3-4) . Jeremiah told the captives to dwell in Babylon peacefully because they would remain there for 70 years. Then they would be restored to their homeland (Jeremiah 25:8-14; 29:4-14) God punished a nation of evildoers so that He could be gracious to a remnant who would serve Him faithfully.

Sources:

*Kings and Prophets* by Rob Harbison  
*DayBreak* from [www.apostolicfaith.org](http://www.apostolicfaith.org)  
Life Application Bible