

THE DAILY QUIET TIME REFLECTIONS SERIES

# RETURN AND LIVE

*Reflections on the Twelve Minor Prophets*

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Return and Live: Reflections on the Twelve Minor Prophets

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# How to Use This Book

## *Reading, Reflecting, Together*

This book was not written to be read in a single sitting. It follows the same daily rhythm as every volume in this series: one reading, one reflection, one day at a time. Each chapter corresponds to a portion of Scripture from the Bible Reading Plan included as an appendix, so that this book can be read alongside your own Bible in the same unhurried pace in which it was first written — as a daily discipline of Quiet Time, not a book to be consumed in a weekend.

Each chapter grew out of years of daily reflections shared by fellow readers working through the same passage on the same day, together with notes drawn from Sunday School classes at First Baptist Church in Dallas. What you are holding, then, is not a technical commentary but a companion for your own reading — written by fellow travelers, not experts, who have simply tried to sit with the text long enough to let it speak.

We encourage you to read the day's passage first, in your own Bible, before turning to the corresponding chapter here. Let Scripture have the first word. Then let this book help you listen more closely to what God has already said.

At the end of each chapter you will find a handful of reflection and discussion questions, suitable for personal journaling or group study. Take your time. These twelve short books were written by twelve very different men across more than three centuries of Israel's history, and each deserves to be heard on its own terms before we look for what they share in common.

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## Introduction

Somewhere between roughly 760 B.C. and 430 B.C. — a span of more than three centuries that saw the Northern Kingdom of Israel rise to its last great flowering under Jeroboam II and then vanish from history altogether, saw Judah pass through faithful kings and wicked ones on its own slower road toward the same exile, and finally saw a small remnant return from Babylon to rebuild a ruined temple in a ruined city — the LORD raised up twelve men to speak on His behalf. Their books are short enough that Jewish tradition bound all twelve of them together on a single scroll and called them simply "The Twelve." Our English Bibles call them the Minor Prophets, and the label has misled readers for centuries into imagining something lesser. They are minor only in length. Hosea alone speaks more directly and more painfully about the love of God than almost any other book in Scripture, Zechariah contains more messianic prophecy per chapter than any Old Testament book except Isaiah, and Malachi's closing words are the last thing God said to His people before four hundred years of silence. Shortness is not smallness.

This volume covers all twelve of these books, in the order our English Bibles have always placed them: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Read together, they trace the arc of an entire era — the last century and a half of the divided kingdom, the trauma of exile that the earlier prophets warned about and the later ones lived through in hindsight, and finally the small, discouraged, but never abandoned community that returned to rebuild.

Twelve different men, called from twelve different circumstances — a heartbroken husband in the north, a farmer of sycamore figs from

a hill town south of Jerusalem, a reluctant missionary who ran the wrong direction, an unnamed servant of the LORD whose only word to us concerns the pride of a single small nation, a prophet who may have carried royal blood in his veins, and finally three men who ministered not before the exile but after it, to a ragged community trying to rebuild a temple and a national life out of rubble — wrote these books across more than three centuries. Hosea, Amos, and Jonah addressed the Northern Kingdom in the years of her final, false-hearted prosperity under Jeroboam II, before Assyria swallowed her whole in 722 B.C. Joel, Obadiah, and Micah addressed Judah at various points along her own longer road to judgment. Nahum announced, near the end of the seventh century, the destruction of the empire that had destroyed the north. Habakkuk and Zephaniah, writing as Babylon rose to replace Assyria as the great threat of the age, wrestled with the hardest of all questions and warned of the hardest of all days. And Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi — the last three, ministering across roughly a century after the Babylonian exile finally ended — spoke to a people who had already suffered the judgment the earlier prophets warned about, and who now needed something different: the courage to rebuild, the hope to keep believing in a still-future Messiah, and the honesty to admit that coming home had not, by itself, changed their hearts.

Read across, these twelve books do not tell a single continuous story the way Genesis through Kings does. But they do return, again and again, to a small number of the same convictions, sounded in different keys by different voices across more than three hundred years. Israel and Judah had broken a covenant, and covenant-breaking brings real consequences — this is the drumbeat beneath every one of the first nine books, whether the specific charge is Israel's idolatry (Hosea), the nations' cruelty (Amos, Obadiah), or

simple complacency about a coming day of judgment (Joel, Zephaniah, Habakkuk). And beneath the judgment, in every single one of these twelve books without exception, sits a deeper and more surprising conviction still: that the LORD is, in His own self-description, echoed almost verbatim from Exodus 34:6-7 through Joel, Jonah, and Nahum alike, "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love." Israel's prophets did not discover twelve different gods. They discovered twelve different circumstances in which to test the same one — and the last three discovered that even a people who had already been judged, exiled, and restored could still grow cold, still needed to be called back one more time.

That tension between judgment and mercy, patience and wrath, gives this volume its title. Hosea closes his book with the LORD's own appeal — "Return, Israel, to the LORD your God" — and the promise that follows: "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely." Zechariah, ministering generations later to the returned exiles, opens his book with almost the same words in reverse: "Return to me," declares the LORD, "and I will return to you." And at the very end of the volume, at the very end of the Old Testament as our English Bibles order it, Malachi closes the entire prophetic collection not with a threat but with the same claim the whole book opened with: "I have loved you." Return, and live. That is the whole of it, said in a dozen different ways by a dozen different men, from Hosea's opening chapter to Malachi's last.

We have organized this volume into twelve short parts, one for each prophet, following the reading plan included as an appendix. Three of the twelve — Hosea, Amos, and Zechariah — receive two chapters each, since the daily reading plan divides their material across two days; the other nine receive one chapter apiece. Where



two prophetic books fall on the very same reading day, as Obadiah and Jonah do, and as Habakkuk and Zephaniah do, we have separated them into their own parts, since they are entirely different books by entirely different writers, joined in the plan only by the calendar and not by any closer kinship.

Read slowly. These are old, strange, urgent little books, and every one of them still has something to say.

## Part One

### *Hosea — The Loyal Love of God*

Hosea ministered to the Northern Kingdom of Israel for roughly forty-five years, from the last golden years of Jeroboam II's reign through the chaos of six kings in barely a generation that followed, and on into the early years of Judah's King Hezekiah — long enough to see the very judgment he had warned about actually arrive in Assyria's conquest of Samaria in 722 B.C. No prophet's personal life was ever more thoroughly conscripted into his message than Hosea's. The LORD commanded him to marry a woman who would prove unfaithful, so that in his own marriage he might feel, from the inside, exactly what it cost God to love a people who kept turning to other gods. Gomer's infidelity was Israel's idolatry, acted out in one household so that an entire nation could see itself in the mirror.

The two chapters that follow correspond to the reading plan's own division of the book: Hosea 1 through 7, dominated by the marriage narrative and the LORD's astonishing promise to win back His unfaithful wife, and Hosea 8 through 14, a harder-edged series of oracles exposing exactly how Israel had broken faith, before the book closes with one of the most tender appeals in all the prophets. If Amos will show us God's justice and Jonah will show us God's compassion for outsiders, Hosea shows us something harder to categorize and, in some ways, more moving than either: God's loyal love — steady, wounded, and refusing to let go.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Hosea 1–7**

The command comes in the very first chapter, before Hosea has said a single word of prophecy: "Go, marry a promiscuous woman." Not a metaphor first and a marriage second. A real marriage, to a real woman named Gomer, entered into at God's own direction so that the prophet's whole life would become the message before he ever opened his mouth to preach it. Their children's names complete the sermon: Jezreel, for the coming judgment on Jehu's dynasty; Lo-Ruhamah, "not loved"; Lo-Ammi, "not my people." Every name a small verdict on a nation that had traded the LORD for Baal.

And then, astonishingly, the LORD reverses every one of those names in the very next breath. "In that day," a phrase that recurs like a heartbeat through chapters two and three, He promises to betroth Israel to Himself forever — "in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion... in faithfulness." The one called "not my people" will be called "sons of the living God." This is no minor consolation tacked onto a book of judgment. It is one of the earliest and clearest anticipations anywhere in the Old Testament of the new covenant that Jeremiah and Ezekiel would later describe in fuller terms — a covenant God Himself initiates, sustains, and guarantees, with no room left for the marriage to fail a second time, because this time its success rests entirely on Him rather than on His often-unfaithful bride.

That is the pattern behind everything else in these chapters. Israel's problem, as Hosea diagnoses it again and again, was never a shortage of religious activity. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," the LORD says in chapter four — not lack of ritual, but lack of the kind of knowing that produces faithfulness. They cried out, "Our God, we acknowledge you," while their hands shaped idols out of silver and gold. Their prayers, Hosea says later, were not appeals from the heart but appeals for benefits — wailing

on their beds not for God Himself but for the grain and new wine He might supply if He were flattered enough. It was, in short, lip service: language that acknowledged the LORD while a life quietly went on serving something else entirely.

It would be easy to read all this and feel superior to eighth-century Israel, until we notice how precisely the diagnosis still fits. We too can learn the vocabulary of faith — the right words to pray, the right postures to strike — while our actual appetites, ambitions, and anxieties are directed somewhere else entirely. Hosea's God does not ask first for better religious performance. He asks to be known, the way a husband wants to be known by his wife rather than merely provided for by her. Gomer did not deserve Hosea's pursuit of her. Israel did not deserve the LORD's pursuit of her. That is precisely the point. A love that has to be deserved before it is given is not, in the end, the kind of love Hosea's whole life was built to demonstrate.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Hosea's marriage to Gomer was not a metaphor invented for a sermon; it was a real marriage that became the sermon. What does it cost you to let your own life — not just your words — communicate what you believe about God?
2. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" describes an ignorance that coexisted with regular religious activity. Where might that same gap exist in your own life, between what you say you believe and what you actually know and trust?
3. The LORD's promise to betroth Israel "forever" rests entirely on His own initiative rather than Israel's track record. How does

that change the way you think about the security of your own standing with God?

## CHAPTER TWO

### Hosea 8–14

"They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind," Hosea says of Israel's foreign alliances and homemade kings — a nation so thoroughly disconnected from the LORD that it had taken to manufacturing its own leadership and its own protection, with predictably violent results. The image recurs in different form a few verses later: "You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, you have eaten the fruit of lies." Whatever a nation or a person plants in secret eventually, unavoidably, becomes the harvest. Between those two agricultural warnings sits the positive form of the same principle, and it is worth lingering on: "Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD." A farmer does not simply scatter seed on packed, weed-choked soil and expect a crop. The ground must first be broken open. So, Hosea says, must the heart.

Chapter thirteen supplies the clearest picture in the whole book of exactly what went wrong once the ground was never broken. "When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me." This is almost word for word Moses' own warning in Deuteronomy, given centuries earlier, before Israel had even entered the land: that prosperity, left unwatched, curdles into pride, and pride forgets the Giver in the very moment it is most enjoying the gift. It is a strange and sobering law of the human heart that scarcity often drives people toward God while abundance drives them away from Him, and Hosea shows us the

Northern Kingdom at the peak of Jeroboam II's prosperity proving the rule exactly.

And yet — this is the turn Hosea makes better than perhaps any other prophet — even in the middle of pronouncing the sternest judgment in the book, comparing the LORD to a lion, a leopard, a bear robbed of her cubs, tearing open what He once fed and sheltered, the tone shifts one final time. The book's last chapter is not a threat but an invitation: "Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the LORD." No sacrifice is required, no elaborate atonement — only words, honestly spoken: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously." And the LORD's answer, given in advance, is breathtaking: "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them." Not grudgingly forgiven. Freely loved.

This is where the whole book has been heading from its very first chapter, when Hosea was told to go and marry a woman who did not deserve him. The marriage, the judgment oracles, the agricultural warnings, the wilderness imagery of a lion turned predator — all of it exists to set up this closing appeal, and the appeal itself is the entire theology of the book compressed into two words: return, and be healed. Hosea never tells us whether the generation he addressed actually did return. He tells us only that the invitation stood open, freely and without qualification, right up to the final page. It still does.

### ***For Reflection***

1. "When they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me." Where in your own life has abundance — of money,

health, success, or simple ease — quietly loosened your grip on God rather than deepening it?

2. Hosea 14 asks for nothing but honest words spoken in return — no elaborate sacrifice, no lengthy proof of sincerity. Is there a "return" you have been postponing because you assume it needs to look more complicated or costly than it actually does?
3. "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely." How does the word \*freely\* change the way you understand what it means to come back to God after failure?

## **Part Two**

### *Joel — The Day of the LORD*

We know almost nothing about Joel beyond his name, which means "the LORD is God," and his father Pethuel's — nothing about when he ministered, precisely, though his position among the earliest of the Minor Prophets in the Hebrew canon and the concerns of his book both point toward an early date, possibly during the reign of King Joash of Judah in the ninth century B.C. What we do know is what triggered his prophecy: a devastating locust plague, so total that it stripped the vines bare, dried up the grain offerings, and left the land looking, in Joel's own words, like a wilderness after fire. Out of that single agricultural disaster, Joel builds one of the Old Testament's clearest treatments of "the day of the LORD" — a phrase that names not one event but any moment when God acts decisively and visibly in history, whether in a locust swarm long past, an invading army not far off, or the still-future day when God pours out His Spirit on all flesh.

Three chapters, one continuous movement: mourning over a plague already suffered, urgent appeal in the face of a still-nearer human invasion, and finally a sweeping promise of restoration and outpoured blessing that stretches all the way to the events of Pentecost and beyond. Joel's short book asks a single, pointed question of every generation that reads it: when the LORD's hand is unmistakably at work — whether in judgment or in blessing — will we recognize it, and will we turn?

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Joel 1–3**

Locusts do not usually make it into a sermon, but Joel spends an entire chapter on them, describing a swarm so vast and so thorough that "what the locust swarm has left, the great locusts have eaten." It would be easy to read this as simply an agricultural report, but Joel insists we read it theologically: this was not chance weather. It was the LORD's hand, and He wanted His people to notice. The locusts stripped away every prop the people had learned to lean on instead of Him — the grain for their offerings, the wine for their celebrations, the fig trees stripped bare down to the white of their branches — until nothing remained to distract from the one question that actually mattered.

That question receives its clearest answer in chapter two, in words that echo through the rest of the Minor Prophets and, indeed, through the whole Bible: "Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity." Tearing one's outer garment was the standard ancient expression of grief or repentance — a visible,



external act that anyone could perform whether or not anything had actually changed inside. Joel calls for something the garment could never accomplish on its own: an inward tearing open, a heart broken and made accessible to God rather than a robe merely torn for show. This is the same insight Samuel gave Saul centuries earlier — "to obey is better than sacrifice" — offered here to a people facing a coming army, who might otherwise have settled for ritual mourning instead of the costlier work of actual repentance.

And notice what grounds the appeal: not a guarantee of the outcome, but the character of the One being appealed to. "Who knows? He may turn and relent," Joel says — real uncertainty about the specific outcome, held together with total certainty about who God is. That is a strange and important combination for us to sit with. We often want assurance about our circumstances before we are willing to repent of what caused them. Joel offers assurance about God's character instead, and asks that to be enough.

The book's final movement looks past both the recent locust plague and the still-nearer human invasion toward something further off: a day when the LORD will pour out His Spirit "on all people," when sons and daughters will prophesy and even male and female servants will receive what had once been reserved for kings and prophets alone. Peter would stand up on the day of Pentecost, centuries later, and declare that what the crowd was witnessing was "what was spoken by the prophet Joel" — not, most careful readers believe, the entire prophecy exhausted in a single afternoon, but its first, unmistakable installment, with the fuller outpouring — the sun turned to darkness, the moon to blood — still to come at history's true and final day of the LORD. Joel's locusts, in other words, turned out to be a small, bitter preview of something the LORD had

been planning to give His people all along, on a scale no swarm could ever picture.

### ***For Reflection***

1. "Rend your heart and not your garments" distinguishes visible religious performance from actual inward change. Where in your own life might you be tempted to perform repentance rather than genuinely undergo it?
2. Joel's appeal rests on uncertainty about the outcome but certainty about God's character — "who knows? He may relent" alongside "he is gracious and compassionate." How comfortable are you acting in obedience without a guaranteed result?
3. Peter connected the events of Pentecost to Joel's prophecy of the Spirit poured out on "all people." How does knowing you live in the outworking of that promise shape the way you think about your own place in God's larger plan?

## **Part Three**

### *Amos — Let Justice Roll Down*

Of all the writing prophets, only Amos tells us plainly what he did before God called him: he was a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs, a man of some means from the Judean hill town of Tekoa, with no priestly training, no prophetic pedigree, and — by his own account — no ambition whatsoever to become a prophet. God called him anyway, sent him north across the border into Israel, and had him preach judgment in Bethel, the very center of the Northern

Kingdom's counterfeit worship, during the last prosperous years of Jeroboam II's reign, sometime around 760 B.C.

The two chapters that follow track the reading plan's own division of Amos: chapters 1 through 5, opening with a sweeping series of judgment oracles against Israel's neighbors before the net closes on Israel herself, and chapters 6 through 9, four increasingly vivid visions of the judgment now, at last, unavoidably at hand. Where Hosea diagnosed Israel's unfaithfulness in the language of a broken marriage, Amos diagnoses the very same unfaithfulness in the language of a broken courtroom — bribed judges, false scales, and a worship life so disconnected from justice that the LORD Himself says He despises it.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Amos 1–5**

Amos opens with a formula so distinctive that it becomes the book's signature: "For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent." Eight times the phrase recurs — against Aram, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and finally, devastatingly, against Judah and Israel themselves. "Three... even four" is not a literal tally; it is Hebrew shorthand for a full measure of guilt tipped over into judgment, sin piled on sin until the LORD's patience — real, and not to be presumed on — reaches its limit. Amos's original hearers in Bethel would have nodded along through each oracle against a foreign enemy, perhaps even cheered a little, until the prophet's net swung around without warning and closed on them.

What makes Israel's indictment so much longer and more detailed than any of the surrounding nations' is not that her sins were more

exotic, but that her light was so much greater. Israel alone among the nations addressed had received God's law, God's covenant, God's presence in the tabernacle and later the temple — and had still ground the heads of the poor into the dust, sold the needy for a pair of sandals, and perverted the courts that were supposed to protect them. This is the pattern the rest of Scripture will repeat again and again: privilege does not exempt from judgment; it intensifies the standard by which judgment is measured.

That indictment reaches its most quoted expression in chapter five, in words Martin Luther King Jr. would borrow nearly three thousand years later to describe his own vision of justice: "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" The verse arrives as the answer to a hard question Amos has just posed on God's behalf: "I hate, I despise your religious festivals... away with the noise of your songs!" Not because worship itself displeased the LORD, but because Israel's worship and Israel's daily injustice had become two entirely separate compartments of life, with no bridge between them. Sacrifices offered by hands that had just cheated a poor neighbor were not received as worship at all; they were, in God's own word, a stench.

We are not the Northern Kingdom of the eighth century B.C., and few of us bribe judges or rig scales in any literal sense. But the deeper diagnosis travels well past its original setting: it is entirely possible to be devoted, sincere, even zealous in our religious life while quietly tolerating injustice, unkindness, or plain neglect of others in the rest of our week — to sing loudly on Sunday and grind someone down on Monday without ever noticing the contradiction. Amos will not let worship and justice be separated. Neither, in the end, will God.

### ***For Reflection***

1. The phrase "three sins... even four" pictures God's patience as real but not infinite. What does that image add to — or complicate — the way you usually think about God's patience with sin?
2. Amos indicts Israel most severely not for having less light than the nations around her, but for having more and doing less with it. Where has greater privilege or knowledge in your own life raised, rather than lowered, God's expectation of you?
3. "Let justice roll on like a river" was God's answer to worship divorced from justice. Where might your own devotional life and your treatment of others be running as two separate, unconnected streams?

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Amos 6–9**

Amos turns, in chapter six, from courtroom language to something closer to a dinner party gone wrong: "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion... who lie on beds adorned with ivory and lounge on their couches... but do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph." The charge here is subtler than outright cruelty. It is complacency — self-satisfaction that has simply stopped noticing the suffering of others, and apathy, a failure to grieve what genuinely deserves grief. Israel's leaders were not necessarily the ones actively grinding the poor into the dust; some of them were simply too comfortable to care that it was happening at all. Comfort, Amos suggests, can be every bit as spiritually dangerous as cruelty, because it rarely announces itself as sin.

Four visions follow in rapid succession — locusts, fire, a plumb line, a basket of ripe summer fruit — each one bringing Israel closer to a judgment now revealed as unavoidable. When Amos reports the plumb line vision publicly, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, does not repent; he reports the prophet to King Jeroboam as a political conspirator and orders him to go earn his living as a prophet somewhere else, in Judah, where the message might trouble someone else's kingdom instead. Amaziah could not tell the difference between a genuine word from the LORD and a threat to institutional stability — a failure of spiritual discernment that has repeated itself in every generation since, whenever comfortable religious leadership has preferred a quiet status quo to an uncomfortable truth.

The chapter's most haunting image comes almost as an aside, in the middle of the fourth vision: "'The days are coming,' declares the Sovereign LORD, 'when I will send a famine through the land — not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.'" Not a punishment inflicted from outside so much as the natural, terrible result of what Israel had already chosen. A people who had spent generations refusing to listen would eventually find that the LORD's voice had simply gone silent — and by then, no amount of frantic searching, "from sea to sea," would bring it back.

It is worth asking, in an age with more access to Scripture than any generation in history has ever had, whether we are in any real danger of that same famine — not from scarcity of Bibles, but from a settled inattention that makes abundant access functionally indistinguishable from silence. Amos's book does not end, mercifully, on that bleak note. Its final verses promise a day when the fallen tent of David will be restored, when the ancient ruins will

be rebuilt, and when Israel will be firmly planted in her own land, "never again to be uprooted." Judgment is real in Amos, and so, in the very last lines he wrote, is hope that outlasts it.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Amos indicts Israel's leaders for being "at ease" and failing to "grieve over the ruin of Joseph" — comfort that has stopped noticing others' suffering. Where might your own comfort be quietly dulling your concern for people around you?
2. Amaziah could not distinguish a genuine word from God from a threat to stability. Where have you seen — or experienced in yourself — a preference for comfortable religious routine over an uncomfortable but necessary truth?
3. The "famine of hearing the words of the LORD" arrived after generations of simply not listening. What practical difference is there, in your own life, between having access to Scripture and actually attending to it?

## **Part Four**

### *Obadiah — The Fall of Pride*

At only twenty-one verses, Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, and we know almost nothing about the man himself — not his father's name, not his hometown, nothing beyond the bare fact that his name means "servant of the LORD." What his brief oracle lacks in biographical detail, it makes up for in force. Its subject is Edom, the nation descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother — a people bound to Israel by blood and by a rivalry that began,

famously, before either brother was even born. When Jerusalem fell to a foreign invasion — most likely, in the majority scholarly view, the Babylonian destruction of 586 B.C. — Edom did not merely fail to help her brother nation. She stood aloof, gloated, and even assisted the invaders in looting the city and capturing fugitives. Obadiah's entire prophecy is God's response to that betrayal, and to the pride underneath it.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Obadiah 1**

"The pride of your heart has deceived you," Obadiah announces to Edom in verse three, "you who live in the clefts of the rock... who say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?'" This is not poetic exaggeration. Edom's territory really was a natural fortress, a landscape of cliffs and narrow passes later famous as the site of Petra, and the Edomites had built a national identity out of self-sufficient isolation — fiercely independent, confident that geography alone made them untouchable. Obadiah's answer to that confidence is simple and unanswerable: "though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down." No cliff face is a match for the God who made the cliffs.

The specific charge against Edom is not merely that she failed to help a brother nation in crisis — though Obadiah lingers over that failure in painful detail, cataloguing the day Jerusalem fell almost verse by verse: Edom stood aloof while strangers carried off Israel's wealth, gloated over her brother's destruction, boasted in the day of his trouble, and finally seized the fugitives fleeing the ruins and handed them over to the enemy. Each of these, Obadiah says, was a real and specific betrayal, not a vague failure of neighborliness —



and each earns a real and specific sentence: "as you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head."

That principle — sown and reaped in exact proportion — is the same law of the harvest Hosea described several chapters earlier, applied here on the scale of an entire nation's history rather than a single life. And it is worth noticing that this same law appears, centuries earlier still, as a promise given directly to Israel through Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse." Edom's judgment in Obadiah is, in a real sense, that ancient promise finally coming due — proof that God's covenant commitments, however long deferred, are never forgotten.

It would be easy for us, reading this today, to feel a kind of secondhand satisfaction at Edom's downfall and move on. Obadiah does not let the application stop there. If God took Edom's mistreatment of Israel this seriously, it is worth asking what confidence we build our own security on, and whether we have ever treated another person's downfall — a rival's failure, an estranged family member's hardship, anyone we quietly consider beneath our concern — with anything like Edom's aloof satisfaction. Pride, Obadiah insists, always eventually meets the God who made the mountains it hides in. The only real safety was never in the cliffs at all.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Edom's pride rested on geography — cliffs and fortresses that made them feel untouchable. What "cliffs" — financial security, reputation, competence, isolation from others — have you leaned on for a safety that only God can actually provide?

2. Obadiah specifies exactly what Edom did wrong: standing aloof, gloating, boasting, and finally handing over fugitives. Which of these postures, even in a much smaller and more private way, have you recognized in your own response to someone else's hardship?
3. "As you have done, it will be done to you" echoes God's ancient promise to bless those who bless Abraham's descendants and curse those who curse them. How does this shape your own posture toward those God has particularly chosen to bless?

## **Part Five**

### *Jonah — The Compassion of God*

Jonah stands apart from every other prophetic book in the Old Testament in one striking respect: it contains almost no actual prophecy. Instead, it tells a story — the story of the one Old Testament prophet God sent, not to His own covenant people, but to a hostile foreign capital, with a five-word Hebrew sermon and an outcome its own messenger did not want. Jonah ministered to the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II, roughly contemporary with the early years of Hosea and Amos, and Nineveh — the great city he was sent to — was, at the time, not yet Assyria's official capital but already a major and menacing power center of an empire Israel had every reason to fear. That fear is, in the end, the real subject of the book: not whether Jonah could survive three days inside a great fish, remarkable as that is, but whether an Israelite prophet — and by extension Israel herself — could bear to see God's

compassion extended to an enemy who did not deserve it any more than Israel did.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Jonah 1–4**

Jonah's disobedience is almost comic in its transparency: told to go east to Nineveh, he boards a ship sailing as far west as the ancient world's maps went, to Tarshish, "away from the LORD" — as if the God who made the sea could somehow be outrun on it. The storm that follows, the sailors' terror, Jonah's own strange calm as he sleeps through the tempest he caused, his eventual confession and voluntary request to be thrown overboard, the great fish sent not to punish him further but to save him — every detail conspires to show a God who will not simply let His reluctant prophet go, even when His prophet is actively trying to escape the assignment. By the time Jonah is vomited onto dry land, the message could not be plainer: nothing, not even a fleeing prophet, can finally thwart what God has purposed to do.

What makes the book so unsettling is what happens next. Jonah does eventually go to Nineveh, does eventually preach the five words of judgment God gave him, and Nineveh — from the king down to the animals in the field — repents in sackcloth and ashes with a thoroughness no Israelite audience Jonah had ever preached to had managed to match. And Jonah's response to this staggering success is not joy. It is fury. "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love," he tells the LORD, and it is clear from context that this is not praise; it is complaint. Jonah did not run to Tarshish because he doubted God's mercy. He ran

because he was entirely certain of it, and did not want Nineveh to receive it.

God's response is not to rebuke Jonah's theology — every word of Jonah's confession about the LORD's character is, after all, exactly true, echoing His own self-revelation to Moses almost word for word. Instead, God gives Jonah an object lesson: a leafy plant, grown overnight to shade the sulking prophet, then destroyed overnight by a worm and a scorching wind. Jonah grieves the loss of the plant with real intensity, and God's final question exposes the whole problem in a single sentence: "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow... Should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people?"

The book ends there, unresolved, on a question rather than a resolution — and that unfinished ending is itself the point. We are never told whether Jonah's heart actually changed. We are left, instead, to answer the question ourselves. Every one of us has a Nineveh: a person, a group, a nation we would, if we are honest, rather see judged than shown mercy — and every one of us is invited, exactly as Jonah was, to notice how strange it is that we can rejoice in undeserved grace toward ourselves while resenting the very same grace extended to someone we have already decided does not deserve it. God's compassion, this whole strange book insists, was never contingent on our approval of its recipients.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Jonah fled not because he doubted God's mercy but because he was certain of it, and didn't want Nineveh to receive it. Is there a person or group toward whom you would honestly rather see judgment than mercy?

2. God never rebukes Jonah's theology — his description of God as "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger" is entirely accurate. What does it mean that correct belief about God's character did not, by itself, produce a right heart in Jonah?
3. The book ends on an unanswered question rather than a resolution. If God asked you directly, "Should I not have concern?" about the person or group hardest for you to extend grace to, how would you answer?

## **Part Six**

### *Micah — What the LORD Requires*

Micah prophesied to Judah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, making him a close contemporary of Isaiah in the south and Hosea and Amos in the north — close enough in both time and message that later generations remembered his words alongside Isaiah's. Where Isaiah moved easily in Jerusalem's royal court, Micah spoke from Moresheth-gath, a small town in Judah's rural hill country, and his sympathies show it: no eighth-century prophet writes more pointedly on behalf of ordinary people ground down by corrupt judges, priests who taught for pay, and false prophets who would give a favorable word to anyone able to pay for it. Micah's seven short chapters move in three cycles, each one beginning with judgment and ending with a promise of restoration — a rhythm that finally resolves into the single most quoted summary of true religion anywhere in the Minor Prophets.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

## Micah 1–7

Micah opens his final oracle with an unusual courtroom scene: the LORD calling not human witnesses but the mountains and hills themselves to hear His case against Israel. The charge, once again, is covenant unfaithfulness — but the way Micah frames it is worth pausing over. God does not begin with a list of Israel's sins. He begins by rehearsing what He has already done for them: redeeming them from slavery in Egypt, giving them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to lead them, bringing them safely into the promised land. Judgment, in Micah's telling, is never simply about broken rules. It is about a relationship in which one party has given everything and the other has repaid Him with rebellion.

Confronted with that charge, the prophet's imagined response — voiced as though on behalf of the whole guilty nation — escalates in a way that exposes exactly how badly Israel had misunderstood what God actually wanted: "Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression?" Each offer is more extravagant than the last, moving from the ordinary to the extraordinary to the unthinkable — and every single one misses the point entirely, because the problem was never a shortage of sacrifice. Micah's answer, verse eight, is one of the most compressed and complete summaries of biblical religion ever written: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Three things, not thirty. Justice — not a vague sentiment but concrete fairness in how the powerful treat the powerless, the very thing Micah's Judah had abandoned in her corrupt courts. Mercy —

or more precisely the Hebrew \*hesed\*, covenant loyalty and loving-kindness, the same steadfast love Hosea had spent his whole book describing. And humility — walking, not striding, with God, the posture of someone who knows the relationship was never a negotiation between equals. No sacrifice, however costly, could substitute for these three, because these three were never separable from genuine relationship with God in the first place; they were what that relationship actually looks like, lived out.

The book's closing lines turn from this summary of what God requires to a summary of what God is like, and the shift is not incidental. "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy." Micah 6:8 tells us what a life shaped by God looks like from the outside. Micah 7:18-19 tells us why that life is even possible: because the God who requires justice, mercy, and humility of us has already shown us all three, definitively, Himself. We do not manufacture mercy toward others out of nothing. We extend what we have already, first, received.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Israel's imagined offers escalate from ordinary sacrifices to the unthinkable, all while missing the actual point. Where might you be tempted to offer God something costly and dramatic in place of the simpler, harder obedience He actually asks for?
2. Micah 6:8 names three things, not thirty: justice, mercy, and humility. Which of these three comes least naturally to you, and what would it look like to grow in it this week?
3. Micah grounds his ethical demand ("what the LORD requires") in God's own character ("who is a God like you, who delights to

show mercy"). How does knowing God's mercy toward you change your capacity to extend mercy to someone who has wronged you?

## **Part Seven**

### *Nahum — The LORD Is Slow to Anger*

A century and a half before Nahum wrote, Jonah had preached a five-word warning to Nineveh and watched, with visible resentment, as the entire city repented and was spared. By the time Nahum took up the same subject — sometime between 663 and 612 B.C., most likely in the earlier part of that window — Nineveh's repentance was a distant memory, its cruelty had returned in full and then some, and the empire it ruled had grown into the terror of the ancient world. Nahum's three short chapters announce, in some of the most vivid poetry in the Minor Prophets, that the patience Jonah's generation had once received was not unlimited. What Jonah's book reveals about God's mercy toward the repentant, Nahum's reveals with equal force about His justice toward the unrepentant — two halves of a single, unchanging character, expressed a century and a half apart to the very same city.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **Nahum 1–3**

Nahum's opening chapter is a portrait of divine anger unlike almost anything else in Scripture — four different Hebrew words for wrath crowded into its first two verses alone, building toward a single



overwhelming impression: the LORD, thoroughly and finally, has had enough. "The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies." It would be easy to read this and picture something like human rage — out of control, indiscriminate, prone to collateral damage. Nahum insists on exactly the opposite: "the LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished." God's anger, unlike ours, is never impulsive. It arrives only after long patience has been thoroughly exhausted, and even then it lands with perfect precision on those who actually deserve it.

That precision matters enormously for the second half of the same verse, easy to skim past in the shadow of the anger surrounding it: "the LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him." The God whose wrath falls on Nineveh's cruelty is the very same God who is, in the same breath, a stronghold for anyone who takes refuge in Him. Wrath and refuge are not two different gods for two different audiences. They are the same God's single, consistent response to two entirely different postures — proud self-sufficiency on one side, humble trust on the other.

Nineveh's specific sin, as Nahum details it across the following two chapters, was not merely idolatry but violence — a city Nahum calls, memorably, "the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims," an empire that had built its wealth and power on the systematic cruelty of conquest. Pride toward God and cruelty toward other human beings travel together throughout Scripture, almost without exception, and Nineveh's downfall shows why: a nation that has stopped fearing God rarely continues to show mercy toward the people under its power. The two failures are, in the end, one failure viewed from two directions.

And yet even this harshest of the Minor Prophets closes on an unexpected note of comfort for God's own people, hemmed in as they were by Assyria's shadow: "Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfill your vows." The same news that spelled doom for Nineveh spelled deliverance for Judah — a reminder that what feels, from one vantage point, like unrelieved divine severity can be, from another vantage point held by different people in the very same moment, an answer to years of prayer. Nahum never asks Judah to feel sorry for Nineveh's fall. He asks them to trust that the God who is slow to anger, and who is now finally executing long-overdue justice, remains exactly what He has always been to those who take refuge in Him: a stronghold in the day of trouble.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Nahum pairs God's fierce judgment on Nineveh with the statement that "the LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble" in the very same breath. How do you hold together God's wrath and God's goodness as expressions of one unchanging character rather than two competing ones?
2. Nineveh's pride toward God and cruelty toward others are presented as two sides of a single failure. Where might unchecked pride in your own life be quietly making you less merciful toward people within your power or influence?
3. What Nahum announces as devastating news for Nineveh is, in the same verse, described as "good news" and "peace" for Judah. Where in your own life have you needed to trust that God's justice toward someone else's wrongdoing is actually good news for you?

## Part Eight

### *Habakkuk — Faith in the Dark*

Habakkuk stands apart from every other prophet in this volume in one important way: he does not primarily bring God's word to the people. He brings the people's hardest questions directly to God, and waits for an answer. Writing sometime between 605 and 597 B.C., as the Neo-Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar was rising to become the great threat of the age, Habakkuk watched violence and injustice flourish unchecked in his own nation of Judah and could not understand why God seemed to be doing nothing about it. When God finally answers — with news that He is already raising up Babylon, an even more wicked nation, to execute judgment on Judah — the prophet's confusion only deepens. The book's three short chapters record an honest, unflinching dialogue between a troubled believer and his God, and its resolution, in a single verse quoted three times in the New Testament, would become one of the load-bearing walls of the entire Christian gospel.

## CHAPTER TEN

### **Habakkuk 1–3**

"How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?" Habakkuk's book opens not with a message from God but with a complaint to Him — violence, injustice, and law paralyzed all around the prophet, and heaven, as far as he can tell, entirely silent about it. This alone makes Habakkuk unusual among the prophets: most of them speak God's hard word to a resistant people. Habakkuk speaks the people's hardest question to what feels, at first,

like a resistant God. Scripture makes room, it turns out, for exactly this kind of unresolved, unembarrassed protest, addressed directly and respectfully to the One who alone can actually answer it.

God does answer, but not with the comfort Habakkuk was hoping for. He is already raising up the Babylonians — "that ruthless and impetuous people," already marching across the earth — to bring judgment on Judah's own injustice. This only intensifies the prophet's crisis: how can a holy God use a nation even more wicked than Judah to punish Judah's wickedness? Habakkuk takes his post at a watchtower, determined to wait for God's reply to this second, harder question, and what he receives is not a full explanation — God never actually resolves the philosophical problem of how a just God can use an unjust instrument — but a single verse that would outlast the empire it was written about by twenty-six centuries: "See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright — but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness." Babylon's pride would prove, in the end, self-destructive. The righteous, meanwhile, were given something better than an explanation: a way to live in the space before the explanation ever arrives.

That single verse becomes, in Paul's hands centuries later, the theological foundation of the entire book of Romans — "in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed... just as it is written, 'The righteous will live by faith.'" The writer of Hebrews quotes it again, at the hinge of his own argument about persevering faith. What began as God's specific reassurance to one troubled prophet, facing one specific national crisis, became, in the hands of the New Testament writers, the single verse most responsible for articulating how anyone, in any age, is made right with God — not by their own righteousness, but by trusting the God who has promised to be faithful, even when the present moment offers no visible proof of it.

Habakkuk's own faith is tested one final time in his closing hymn, and what makes it so remarkable is what it does not include: no promise that the crisis will be averted, no guarantee that Judah's judgment will somehow be canceled. "I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled" — this is not a stoic prophet, unmoved by what is coming. He is genuinely shaken, the way Jesus Himself would later be genuinely shaken in Gethsemane, facing what could not be avoided. And yet, trembling exactly as he is, Habakkuk writes the verses that have carried believers through catastrophe ever since: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior." Every single prop of ordinary security, stripped away in that list, one by one — and joy remaining anyway, not because the circumstances have changed, but because the object of that joy was never the circumstances to begin with.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Habakkuk brings his hardest, most honest questions directly to God rather than suppressing them. Is there a question about God's apparent inaction in your own life that you have been afraid to voice, even in prayer?
2. "The righteous will live by faith" gave Habakkuk a way to live in the space before his questions were fully answered, not a resolution to the questions themselves. Where in your own life are you being asked to live by faith rather than by explanation?
3. Habakkuk's closing hymn names every ordinary source of security — food, flocks, harvest — being stripped away, and rejoices

anyway. What would it look like, practically, for your own joy in God to survive the loss of whatever you currently lean on most for security?

## Part Nine

### *Zephaniah — From Complacency to Song*

Zephaniah's opening verse traces his ancestry back four generations to a Hezekiah who was very likely King Hezekiah of Judah — which, if true, would make Zephaniah the writing prophet with the most royal blood in his veins outside David and Solomon himself. He ministered during the reign of King Josiah (640–609 B.C.), most likely in the years before Josiah's great reforms began in earnest, to a nation that had absorbed more than fifty years of state-sponsored idolatry under Josiah's predecessors Manasseh and Amon. Whatever Josiah's own personal devotion to the LORD, the ordinary people of Judah had a long history of formal religion with very little real commitment behind it, and Zephaniah's burden was to expose exactly that gap.

His name has been translated several ways by scholars who disagree over its exact meaning — "Yahweh Hides," "Yahweh's Watchman," "Yahweh Treasured" — but each is fitting for a book whose subject is, more than any other in the Old Testament, "the day of the LORD." No prophet used the phrase more often or wove it more thoroughly through every chapter of his book. Zephaniah's three short chapters move from the most sweeping judgment language in the Minor Prophets to, in its very last lines, some of the most tender words the LORD speaks anywhere in the Old Testament — a

movement worth watching for as the single chapter that follows unfolds.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **Zephaniah 1–3**

"The LORD will not do good, nor will he do evil," the complacent residents of Jerusalem tell themselves in 1:12 — not outright denial of God, but something in some ways more corrosive: the quiet conviction that He simply does not care enough to act either way. Zephaniah names this complacency as the specific sin that draws the coming judgment, and it is worth noticing how ordinary its symptoms are. These were not people bowing openly to idols in the streets; they were people who had grown comfortable enough, prosperous enough, and unaccountable enough that God's approval or disapproval had stopped mattering to how they actually lived. Practical atheism rarely announces itself with a denial of God's existence. It shows up first as indifference to His opinion.

That indifference, Zephaniah says, will not go unanswered. "Though they build houses, they will not live in them; though they plant vineyards, they will not drink the wine" — the same warning Jesus would later dramatize in the parable of the rich fool, who built bigger barns for a harvest he would never live to enjoy. Wealth, security, and comfortable homes are not condemned in themselves anywhere in this book; what draws judgment is treating them as a substitute for devotion to the LORD rather than gifts to be received from Him with gratitude and used in His service. "Be silent before the Sovereign LORD," Zephaniah warns in 1:7, "for the day of the LORD is near" — a summons not to more religious noise but to the

kind of reverent stillness a complacent nation had entirely forgotten how to practice.

Chapter two widens the lens to include Judah's neighbors — Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, Assyria — the same pattern Amos used more than a century earlier, and for the same reason: the LORD's justice is not provincial. He measures every nation, not Judah alone, and no empire's size exempts it from account. Chapter three turns the same charge back on Jerusalem itself, and specifically on her leaders: princes like roaring lions, judges like evening wolves who leave nothing for the morning, prophets who lie, priests who profane what is holy. The people had every reason to expect protection and instruction from exactly these offices, and received predation instead.

And then, with no transition softened by half-measures, the book's final six verses turn from the harshest judgment language in the Minor Prophets to some of the most tender words in the whole Old Testament. "The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." Not merely forgiveness withheld in patience, but active delight — the LORD Himself singing over His restored people the way a parent sings over a child finally, safely, home. The God who searched Jerusalem with lamps to expose her complacency in chapter one is the same God who quiets His people with His love in chapter three. Both are true of Him at once, and neither cancels the other.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Zephaniah's complacent Jerusalem believed "the LORD will not do good, nor will he do evil" — not denying God, but assuming



He no longer cared. Where might that same quiet indifference to God's opinion have crept into your own comfortable routines?

2. The judgment on Judah in chapter one echoes Jesus's parable of the rich fool: houses built but not lived in, wine planted but not drunk. What would it look like to hold your own security and comfort as gifts to be used for God rather than substitutes for devotion to Him?
3. Zephaniah ends with the LORD rejoicing over His people "with singing." How does picturing God's love this actively — not just patient forgiveness but active delight — change the way you imagine His disposition toward you?

## **Part Ten**

### *Haggai — Consider Your Ways*

Haggai's ministry is the most precisely dated of any prophet in the Old Testament: four short messages, delivered across less than four months in 520 B.C., each one stamped with an exact day, month, and regnal year. We know almost nothing else about the man himself — not his father's name, his tribe, or his hometown — but we know exactly when he spoke, because exactly when he spoke was the whole point. Eighteen years earlier, the first wave of exiles had returned from Babylon under Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua, rebuilt the altar, and laid the temple's foundation. Then opposition arose, the work stopped, and for sixteen long years it stayed stopped — not because the opposition never let up, but because the people had grown comfortable enough with the delay

that they quietly redirected their energy toward their own houses instead.

Into that stalled, complacent community the LORD sent Haggai with a single, relentlessly practical burden: finish the temple. His name may mean "Festal" or "Feast of Yahweh," fittingly enough for a book that, more than any other Minor Prophet, is aimed entirely at a program of construction rather than at abstract theology — though, as the single chapter that follows shows, what began as a building project turns out to carry far more than bricks and cedar beams on its shoulders.

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **Haggai 1–2**

"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?" The question is Haggai's opening salvo, and its force lies in the specific contrast: not that the people had abandoned religion altogether, but that they had quietly reordered their priorities so that their own comfort came first and God's house came last, without ever quite admitting that was what they had done. Seventeen years of "not yet" had passed. The temple's foundation sat exposed to the weather while paneled houses went up around it. Haggai does not accuse the returnees of unbelief; he accuses them of misplaced priorities dressed up as prudence.

"Consider your ways," the LORD tells them through Haggai — and then shows them exactly what their misplaced priorities had cost. They sowed much and harvested little; they ate but were never satisfied; they earned wages that seemed to leak away as if their purses had holes in them. This is the language of Deuteronomy's

covenant curses, and Haggai's point is precise: their poverty was not bad luck. It was the direct, covenantal consequence of putting their own houses ahead of the LORD's. The remedy was equally direct — not more effort at their own projects, but a reordering of what came first. "Go up to the mountains and bring down timber and build my house," and only then, implicitly, would the fields and purses stop leaking.

The people obeyed, and remarkably, quickly. Within about three weeks of Haggai's first message, the LORD stirred Zerubbabel, Joshua, and "the whole remnant of the people" to resume work, and with the resumption came an immediate promise that would matter more than any construction timeline: "I am with you." This was the deepest fear the destruction of Jerusalem had left behind — that the LORD had simply abandoned His people along with His ruined house. He had not. The temple they were building would look unimpressive next to Solomon's, unimpressive enough to move some of the older exiles who remembered the original to tears. But Haggai relays a promise that reaches past mere architecture: "the glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house," because "the desired of all nations will come" and fill it — a promise that would not find its full answer until, four centuries later, the Messiah Himself walked through this same temple's courts.

The book closes with a private word to Zerubbabel alone, promising that on some future "day" the LORD would overthrow the thrones of nations and make him "like a signet ring" — an image of intimate, treasured authority, spoken to a governor who would never in his own lifetime rule anything more than a small, subject province. Zerubbabel would not live to see that promise fulfilled, any more than Abraham lived to see his descendants as numerous as the stars.

But he belongs, along with them, to the line the Gospel of Matthew traces forward to the Messiah — proof that a promise given to one generation, and not fulfilled within it, is not for that reason a promise broken. It is simply a promise still in motion.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Haggai's audience never stopped believing in God; they simply let their own comfort quietly become more urgent than His house. Where might the same pattern — not unbelief, but misplaced priority dressed up as reasonable delay — be at work in your own life right now?
2. "Consider your ways" ties the people's material frustration directly to their misplaced priorities. Have you ever noticed a season of your own life where putting God's priorities first seemed to change how far your other resources actually stretched?
3. Zerubbabel received a promise he would not live to see fulfilled, in a line that led four centuries later to the Messiah. What promise of God are you currently trusting without yet seeing its fulfillment?

## **Part Eleven**

### *Zechariah — Return to Me*

Zechariah began his ministry two months after Haggai, to the very same struggling community, and the two prophets' messages complement each other almost by design. Where Haggai's burden was entirely practical — finish the building — Zechariah's was visionary: show the people why the building mattered, by pulling

back the curtain on what God was doing, and would yet do, for Israel and for the world. Zechariah was himself both a prophet and a priest, likely born during the Babylonian exile and returned to Jerusalem as a young man, and his book is, chapter for chapter, one of the most densely messianic in the entire Old Testament — outmatched in sheer volume only by Isaiah, and packed into a fraction of the space.

The two chapters that follow track the reading plan's own division of this, the longest of the Minor Prophets: chapters 1 through 7, containing Zechariah's eight strange and vivid night visions along with his answer to a question about ritual fasting, and chapters 8 through 14, where the book turns from vision to oracle and traces, with startling specificity, both the first coming of the Messiah in humility and His second coming in glory and judgment.

## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

### **Zechariah 1–7**

"Return to me," declares the LORD in the book's opening appeal, "and I will return to you." It is the same invitation Hosea issued generations earlier from the other end of this Minor Prophets collection, now addressed to a people who have already lived through the very judgment Hosea warned about and have already, physically, returned to the land — and who still need to hear that geography is not repentance. Coming home to Jerusalem was not the same thing as coming home to the LORD, and Zechariah's first word to the returnees insists on the difference.

What follows are eight visions in a single night, each built on the same pattern: something strange appears, an interpreting angel

explains it, and the explanation turns out to concern either judgment on the nations that had scattered Israel or restoration for Israel herself. A horseman among the myrtle trees reports that the whole earth is at rest while Jerusalem still lies in ruins, and the LORD answers with jealous love for His city. Four horns that scattered Judah are met by four craftsmen sent to terrify and cast them down. A man with a measuring line goes out to survey a Jerusalem that will one day grow too large for any wall, protected instead by the LORD Himself as "a wall of fire around it." Each vision answers a specific fear the exiles actually carried — powerlessness, insecurity, the sense of being small and forgotten — with a specific, concrete assurance that the LORD had not forgotten them at all.

The fourth vision deserves to be lingered over longer than the rest. Joshua the high priest stands before the LORD in filthy clothes, with Satan at his right hand to accuse him — and the accusation is not false. Joshua's garments are genuinely filthy; his guilt, standing in for the nation's guilt, is real. But the LORD silences the accuser not by disputing the charge but by overruling it: "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" Then, without a word of self-defense from Joshua, the filthy clothes are stripped away and rich garments are put on him instead, with the explanation, "See, I have taken away your sin." It is one of the clearest gospel pictures anywhere in the Old Testament: a guilty man, a true accusation, and a righteousness he did nothing to earn, given to him because the LORD Himself chose to remove what he could never have removed on his own.

The fifth vision supplies the phrase every discouraged builder in Jerusalem needed to hear, and every discouraged reader since: "'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD

Almighty." A tiny, powerless remnant was being asked to finish a project no army or treasury of theirs could complete — and the promise was never that they would suddenly acquire might or power to match the task. It was that the task had never depended on might or power to begin with. Chapter seven closes this first half of the book with a question about whether the exiles should keep observing the fasts that commemorated Jerusalem's fall, and the LORD's answer reaches back to Amos and Micah's same insistence: what He actually wanted, seventy years earlier and still now, was true justice and genuine mercy toward the widow, the orphan, the foreigner, and the poor — not ritual mourning offered instead of it.

### ***For Reflection***

1. "Return to me, and I will return to you" was addressed to people who had already physically returned to Jerusalem. Where might you be going through the outward motions of returning to God without the inward reality catching up?
2. In Joshua's vision, the LORD doesn't dispute the accusation against him — the charge is true — but removes it anyway and clothes him in righteousness he didn't earn. How does this picture shape the way you understand your own standing before God on your hardest days?
3. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" was spoken to people facing a task far beyond their own resources. What task in your life right now requires you to trust the Spirit's sufficiency rather than your own?

## **CHAPTER FOURTEEN**

### **Zechariah 8–14**

The second half of Zechariah opens with a picture of restoration so specific and so domestic that it reads almost like a census report: "streets full of boys and girls playing there," and "men and women of ripe old age" sitting in the same streets, each with a cane in hand for support. This is what peace actually looks like at ground level — not abstract prosperity but children safe enough to play unsupervised and elders old enough to have earned their rest. The same chapter widens the picture outward to the nations: "ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" Israel's restoration was never meant to end with Israel alone.

Chapter nine contains one of the most precisely fulfilled prophecies in the entire Old Testament: "See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey." Both Gospel writers who record the triumphal entry — Matthew and John — quote this verse directly, seeing in the crowds waving palm branches before Jesus the exact scene Zechariah had described five centuries earlier. The king Zechariah promised did not arrive on a warhorse commanding armies. He arrived lowly, riding the animal of peace rather than the animal of conquest, and the two Gospel writers who noticed the connection wanted their readers to notice it too.

But the same book that predicts a lowly arrival also predicts a violent rejection, and here Zechariah's prophecy becomes almost unbearably specific: a shepherd sold for thirty pieces of silver, the exact price thrown back into the temple and used to buy a potter's field — details Matthew traces precisely to the events of Judas's betrayal. And in chapter twelve, the LORD Himself speaks in the first person of being "pierced": "They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child."



John's Gospel connects this directly to the spear thrust into Jesus's side at the cross, and Revelation quotes it again as a description of His return, when "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him." Rejection and piercing, in other words, were never outside the plan; they were the plan, foretold five hundred years in advance by a priest-prophet writing to a discouraged handful of returned exiles who could not have imagined how far their small story would eventually reach.

The book's final chapter looks past both the first coming and the crucifixion to a day still future even to us: the LORD's own feet standing on the Mount of Olives, which splits in two before Him, and a kingdom finally established over the whole earth in which "the LORD will be king over the whole earth" and "there will be one LORD, and his name the only name." Zechariah began with a small, anxious community trying to finish rebuilding a modest temple under foreign occupation. He ends with the same LORD who spoke to that community ruling, without rival, over all creation. The distance between those two pictures is the entire argument of the book: what looks small and uncertain in the moment is never the whole story God is telling.

### ***For Reflection***

1. Zechariah 8's picture of restoration is strikingly domestic — children playing safely, elders resting in the streets. What would that same picture of ordinary, unhurried peace look like in your own home or community?
2. Zechariah predicted both a lowly, peaceful arrival for the Messiah and a violent rejection of Him, five centuries in advance and in remarkable detail. What does this level of fulfilled prophecy

suggest about how much weight the still-unfulfilled parts of Scripture deserve in your own expectations?

3. The book moves from a small, uncertain, rebuilding community to a vision of the LORD ruling unrivaled over the whole earth. Where in your own circumstances do you need to remember that the present, uncertain chapter is not the whole story God is telling?

## Part Twelve

### *Malachi — I Have Loved You*

Malachi's name means "my messenger," and he is, in every sense that matters, the last one: the final prophetic voice of the Old Testament, closing out roughly a thousand years of God speaking to Israel through His prophets before four centuries of silence that would end only with the appearance of another messenger, John the Baptist, whose coming Malachi himself predicted. We know nothing about the man beyond his name — no father, no hometown, no tribe — but the internal evidence of the book points to a date sometime in the mid-to-late fifth century B.C., likely during the governorship of Nehemiah, since the two books address startlingly similar problems: corrupt priests, neglected tithes, and marriages to foreign wives that violated the covenant.

What makes Malachi distinctive among the prophets is not his subject matter so much as his method. Rather than simply announcing judgment, he stages a series of arguments — six of them in all — in which the LORD makes a claim, the people (or the priests specifically) object, and the LORD answers the objection

with evidence. It is the most argumentative book in the Minor Prophets, and it opens with the claim that governs everything that follows: "I have loved you."

## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

### **Malachi 1–4**

"'I have loved you,' says the LORD. 'But you ask, "How have you loved us?"'" The exchange that opens Malachi sets the pattern for the entire book, and it is worth sitting with the bluntness of the people's response. Not gratitude, not even doubt exactly, but something closer to bored skepticism — as if God's love were a claim requiring proof rather than a reality they were already living inside. This is what a restored people who have grown comfortable in their restoration sound like: they had the temple back, the sacrifices back, the land back, and somewhere in the process of getting all of it back, they had stopped noticing that any of it was love at all.

The LORD's answer to that skepticism does not come in the form of sentiment; it comes in the form of specific charges against the very people most responsible for representing Him — the priests. They offered blind, lame, and diseased animals on the altar, the kind of defective goods they would never have dared present to their own governor, let alone the King of the universe. They had "corrupted the covenant of Levi" by showing partiality in their instruction of God's law. And in one of the book's sharper turns, the charge extends past ritual into the most intimate of relationships: Judah had been faithless to "the wife of your youth" through easy divorce, even though, Malachi says, "the LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth" — marriage itself treated as a covenant the

LORD personally guarantees, not a private arrangement dissolved at convenience.

The most practical of the six disputations concerns the tithe: "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings." Read in its original context, addressed specifically to a priesthood that appears to have been withholding from the storehouse what was meant to support the Levites who served alongside them, the charge is less a universal financial formula than a specific indictment of those entrusted with distributing what the people had already given. But the underlying principle reaches further than the original audience: withholding from God what belongs to Him, whether resources, attention, or devotion, while still going through the motions of worship, is its own form of robbery — quieter than theft, but no less real for being quiet.

Yet even here, in a book built almost entirely out of confrontation, Malachi makes room for a different kind of scene: "Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name." A small, faithful remnant within the larger complacent nation, noticed and treasured by name, even when everyone around them had grown cold. And the book's very last words look forward, past four centuries of prophetic silence, to "the sun of righteousness" rising "with healing in its wings," and to Elijah — or one in his spirit — sent "before that great and dreadful day of the LORD... to turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents." Malachi closes the entire Old Testament, in other words, exactly where Hosea opened this whole collection: with a call to turn — to return — before the day of reckoning that both prophets, three hundred years apart, agreed was surely coming.

## ***For Reflection***

1. The people's response to "I have loved you" was skeptical boredom rather than gratitude — the sign of a people grown comfortable in blessings they had stopped recognizing as love. Where might familiarity have dulled your own sense of what God has actually given you?
2. Malachi's charge about robbing God in tithes and offerings was addressed to priests misusing what the people had given, but the underlying principle — withholding from God while still going through religious motions — reaches further. Where might you be quietly withholding something from God while maintaining the outward form of devotion?
3. Malachi closes the Old Testament with the same call to "return" that opens Hosea at the start of this collection, three centuries apart. What would returning to the LORD look like for you today, right where you actually are?

## **Conclusion**

Twelve prophets, twelve very different lives, more than three centuries — a herdsman from Tekoa, a heartbroken husband in the north, a man whose only recorded word concerns his own brother nation's fall, a runaway missionary who got exactly what he feared, a country lawyer for the oppressed, a poet of God's terrifying anger, a man who dared to argue with heaven and was answered, a prophet who may have carried royal blood, a builder who finished what discouragement had stalled for sixteen years, a priest-prophet whose visions reach further into the future than almost any other Old Testament writer, and finally a messenger whose six-part argument

with a spiritually exhausted nation closed the book on the entire Old Testament era. We called this volume \*Return and Live\* because those two words describe the single movement every one of these twelve men, in his own voice and his own century, kept calling God's people back to. Hosea opens the collection with it: "Return, Israel, to the LORD your God." Zechariah, generations later, echoes it from the other side of the exile: "Return to me... and I will return to you." Habakkuk answers the question of how to live in the space before God's promises are visibly kept: "the righteous person will live by his faithfulness." And Malachi closes the entire Old Testament with the LORD's own claim standing exactly where it stood on Hosea's first page: "I have loved you."

It would be easy to read these twelve short books as twelve separate case studies in ancient Near Eastern politics, each addressed to a nation and a crisis long since resolved one way or another. But underneath the specific historical circumstances — Assyria's rise and fall, Babylon's ascendancy and collapse, the slow, difficult work of rebuilding a temple and a national life after exile — these books keep circling back to a single, remarkably consistent portrait of God, drawn almost word for word from His own self-description to Moses at Sinai: gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love, and unwilling, in the end, to leave the guilty unpunished. Hosea and Malachi, bookending the whole collection three centuries apart, both insist on His loyal love even toward a people who keep growing cold. Amos and Micah insist on His justice. Jonah and Nahum together show both the reach and the limit of His patience toward the very same city, a century and a half apart. Obadiah and Zephaniah show what happens when pride and complacency finally meet a God who has been watching all along. And Haggai and Zechariah show that even a people who have already been judged, exiled, and mercifully restored still need to hear,

one more time, that returning to a place is not the same as returning to Him.

If there is a single thread that ties \*Return and Live\* together with the rest of this series — with Deuteronomy's call to choose life, with the historical books' long record of failure and mercy, with the exile and the slow road back — it is this: God's people have never once earned their way back into His favor by getting the ledger balanced first. Every single "return" in these twelve books precedes, rather than follows, any real change in behavior. The LORD's grace goes looking for Gomer before she asks to be found. His compassion reaches Nineveh before Nineveh has done anything to deserve it. His promise to the righteous who live by faith comes before Babylon's judgment has even fallen, let alone been reversed. His invitation to the discouraged builders of the second temple — "I am with you" — arrives before a single additional stone has been laid. Return is always the first step, never the last requirement.

May we, like Hosea's Israel and Zechariah's returned exiles both, hear the invitation to return and take it seriously rather than treating it as a formality. May we, like Haggai's small community, discover that finishing what God has called us to build matters more than the comfort of postponing it. May we, like the faithful remnant in Malachi who simply "talked with each other" about the LORD and found themselves remembered by name, keep fellowship with others who fear Him even when the wider culture around us has grown cold. And may we, like Habakkuk standing at his watchtower with every ordinary security about to be stripped away, learn to say — not once the circumstances improve, but exactly as they are — "yet I will rejoice in the LORD." Return, and live. It was enough for twelve very different men across more than three centuries of ancient

history, from a heartbroken prophet's opening appeal to a messenger's closing promise. It remains enough now.



# APPENDIX

## Daily Bible Reading Plan

*A one-year plan through the whole Bible, following the same daily rhythm used throughout this series. This volume's thirteen Hosea–Malachi readings are shaded below.*

| January  |                 |      |                 |
|----------|-----------------|------|-----------------|
| 1/10     | Genesis 1-3     | 1/11 | Genesis 4-7     |
| 1/12     | Genesis 8-11    | 1/13 | Genesis 12-15   |
| 1/14     | Genesis 16-18   | 1/15 | Genesis 19-21   |
| 1/16     | Genesis 22-24   | 1/17 | Genesis 25-26   |
| 1/18     | Genesis 27-29   | 1/19 | Genesis 30-31   |
| 1/20     | Genesis 32-34   | 1/21 | Genesis 35-37   |
| 1/22     | Genesis 38-40   | 1/23 | Genesis 41-42   |
| 1/24     | Genesis 43-45   | 1/25 | Genesis 46-47   |
| 1/26     | Genesis 48-50   | 1/27 | Exodus 1-3      |
| 1/28     | Exodus 4-6      | 1/29 | Exodus 7-9      |
| 1/30     | Exodus 10-12    | 1/31 | Exodus 13-15    |
| February |                 |      |                 |
| 2/1      | Exodus 16-18    | 2/2  | Exodus 19-21    |
| 2/3      | Exodus 22-24    | 2/4  | Exodus 25-27    |
| 2/5      | Exodus 28-29    | 2/6  | Exodus 30-32    |
| 2/7      | Exodus 33-35    | 2/8  | Exodus 36-38    |
| 2/9      | Exodus 39-40    | 2/10 | Leviticus 1-4   |
| 2/11     | Leviticus 5-7   | 2/12 | Leviticus 8-10  |
| 2/13     | Leviticus 11-13 | 2/14 | Leviticus 14-15 |
| 2/15     | Leviticus 16-18 | 2/16 | Leviticus 19-21 |
| 2/17     | Leviticus 22-23 | 2/18 | Leviticus 24-25 |
| 2/19     | Leviticus 26-27 | 2/20 | Numbers 1-2     |

|              |                   |             |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>2/21</b>  | Numbers 3-4       | <b>2/22</b> | Numbers 5-6       |
| <b>2/23</b>  | Numbers 7         | <b>2/24</b> | Numbers 8-10      |
| <b>2/25</b>  | Numbers 11-13     | <b>2/26</b> | Numbers 14-15     |
| <b>2/27</b>  | Numbers 16-17     | <b>2/28</b> | Numbers 18-20     |
| <b>March</b> |                   |             |                   |
| <b>3/1</b>   | Numbers 21-22     | <b>3/2</b>  | Numbers 23-25     |
| <b>3/3</b>   | Numbers 26-27     | <b>3/4</b>  | Numbers 28-30     |
| <b>3/5</b>   | Numbers 31-32     | <b>3/6</b>  | Numbers 33-34     |
| <b>3/7</b>   | Numbers 35-36     | <b>3/8</b>  | Deuteronomy 1-2   |
| <b>3/9</b>   | Deuteronomy 3-4   | <b>3/10</b> | Deuteronomy 5-7   |
| <b>3/11</b>  | Deuteronomy 8-10  | <b>3/12</b> | Deuteronomy 11-13 |
| <b>3/13</b>  | Deuteronomy 14-16 | <b>3/14</b> | Deuteronomy 17-20 |
| <b>3/15</b>  | Deuteronomy 21-23 | <b>3/16</b> | Deuteronomy 24-27 |
| <b>3/17</b>  | Deuteronomy 28-29 | <b>3/18</b> | Deuteronomy 30-31 |
| <b>3/19</b>  | Deuteronomy 32-34 | <b>3/20</b> | Joshua 1-4        |
| <b>3/21</b>  | Joshua 5-8        | <b>3/22</b> | Joshua 9-11       |
| <b>3/23</b>  | Joshua 12-15      | <b>3/24</b> | Joshua 16-18      |
| <b>3/25</b>  | Joshua 19-21      | <b>3/26</b> | Joshua 22-24      |
| <b>3/27</b>  | Judges 1-2        | <b>3/28</b> | Judges 3-5        |
| <b>3/29</b>  | Judges 6-7        | <b>3/30</b> | Judges 8-9        |
| <b>3/31</b>  | Judges 10-12      |             |                   |
| <b>April</b> |                   |             |                   |
| <b>4/1</b>   | Judges 13-15      | <b>4/2</b>  | Judges 16-18      |
| <b>4/3</b>   | Judges 19-21      | <b>4/4</b>  | Ruth 1-4          |
| <b>4/5</b>   | 1 Samuel 1-3      | <b>4/6</b>  | 1 Samuel 4-8      |
| <b>4/7</b>   | 1 Samuel 9-12     | <b>4/8</b>  | 1 Samuel 13-14    |
| <b>4/9</b>   | 1 Samuel 15-17    | <b>4/10</b> | 1 Samuel 18-20    |
| <b>4/11</b>  | 1 Samuel 21-24    | <b>4/12</b> | 1 Samuel 25-27    |
| <b>4/13</b>  | 1 Samuel 28-31    | <b>4/14</b> | 2 Samuel 1-3      |
| <b>4/15</b>  | 2 Samuel 4-7      | <b>4/16</b> | 2 Samuel 8-12     |

|             |                                   |             |                    |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| <b>4/17</b> | 2 Samuel 13-15                    | <b>4/18</b> | 2 Samuel 16-18     |
| <b>4/19</b> | 2 Samuel 19-21                    | <b>4/20</b> | 2 Samuel 22-24     |
| <b>4/21</b> | 1 Kings 1-2                       | <b>4/22</b> | 1 Kings 3-5        |
| <b>4/23</b> | 1 Kings 6-7                       | <b>4/24</b> | 1 Kings 8-9        |
| <b>4/25</b> | 1 Kings 10-11                     | <b>4/26</b> | 1 Kings 12-14      |
| <b>4/27</b> | 1 Kings 15-17                     | <b>4/28</b> | 1 Kings 18-20      |
| <b>4/29</b> | 1 Kings 21-22                     | <b>4/30</b> | 2 Kings 1-3        |
| <b>May</b>  |                                   |             |                    |
| <b>5/1</b>  | 2 Kings 4-5                       | <b>5/2</b>  | 2 Kings 6-8        |
| <b>5/3</b>  | 2 Kings 9-11                      | <b>5/4</b>  | 2 Kings 12-14      |
| <b>5/5</b>  | 2 Kings 15-17                     | <b>5/6</b>  | 2 Kings 18-19      |
| <b>5/7</b>  | 2 Kings 20-22                     | <b>5/8</b>  | 2 Kings 23-25      |
| <b>5/9</b>  | 1 Chronicles 1-2                  | <b>5/10</b> | 1 Chronicles 3-5   |
| <b>5/11</b> | 1 Chronicles 6                    | <b>5/12</b> | 1 Chronicles 7-8   |
| <b>5/13</b> | 1 Chronicles 9-11                 | <b>5/14</b> | 1 Chronicles 12-14 |
| <b>5/15</b> | 1 Chronicles 15-17                | <b>5/16</b> | 1 Chronicles 18-21 |
| <b>5/17</b> | 1 Chronicles 22-24                | <b>5/18</b> | 1 Chronicles 25-27 |
| <b>5/19</b> | 1 Chronicles 28-2 Chronicles<br>1 | <b>5/20</b> | 2 Chronicles 2-5   |
| <b>5/21</b> | 2 Chronicles 6-8                  | <b>5/22</b> | 2 Chronicles 9-12  |
| <b>5/23</b> | 2 Chronicles 13-17                | <b>5/24</b> | 2 Chronicles 18-20 |
| <b>5/25</b> | 2 Chronicles 21-24                | <b>5/26</b> | 2 Chronicles 25-27 |
| <b>5/27</b> | 2 Chronicles 28-31                | <b>5/28</b> | 2 Chronicles 32-34 |
| <b>5/29</b> | 2 Chronicles 35-36                | <b>5/30</b> | Ezra 1-3           |
| <b>5/31</b> | Ezra 4-7                          |             |                    |
| <b>June</b> |                                   |             |                    |
| <b>6/1</b>  | Ezra 8-10                         | <b>6/2</b>  | Nehemiah 1-3       |
| <b>6/3</b>  | Nehemiah 4-6                      | <b>6/4</b>  | Nehemiah 7         |
| <b>6/5</b>  | Nehemiah 8-9                      | <b>6/6</b>  | Nehemiah 10-11     |
| <b>6/7</b>  | Nehemiah 12-13                    | <b>6/8</b>  | Esther 1-5         |

|               |                   |             |                  |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------|
| <b>6/9</b>    | Esther 6-10       | <b>6/10</b> | Job 1-4          |
| <b>6/11</b>   | Job 5-7           | <b>6/12</b> | Job 8-10         |
| <b>6/13</b>   | Job 11-13         | <b>6/14</b> | Job 14-16        |
| <b>6/15</b>   | Job 17-20         | <b>6/16</b> | Job 21-23        |
| <b>6/17</b>   | Job 24-28         | <b>6/18</b> | Job 29-31        |
| <b>6/19</b>   | Job 32-34         | <b>6/20</b> | Job 35-37        |
| <b>6/21</b>   | Job 38-39         | <b>6/22</b> | Job 40-42        |
| <b>6/23</b>   | Psalms 1-8        | <b>6/24</b> | Psalms 9-16      |
| <b>6/25</b>   | Psalms 17-20      | <b>6/26</b> | Psalms 21-25     |
| <b>6/27</b>   | Psalms 26-31      | <b>6/28</b> | Psalms 32-35     |
| <b>6/29</b>   | Psalms 36-39      | <b>6/30</b> | Psalms 40-45     |
| <b>July</b>   |                   |             |                  |
| <b>7/1</b>    | Psalms 46-50      | <b>7/2</b>  | Psalms 51-57     |
| <b>7/3</b>    | Psalms 58-65      | <b>7/4</b>  | Psalms 66-69     |
| <b>7/5</b>    | Psalms 70-73      | <b>7/6</b>  | Psalms 74-77     |
| <b>7/7</b>    | Psalms 78-79      | <b>7/8</b>  | Psalms 80-85     |
| <b>7/9</b>    | Psalms 86-89      | <b>7/10</b> | Psalms 90-95     |
| <b>7/11</b>   | Psalms 96-102     | <b>7/12</b> | Psalms 103-105   |
| <b>7/13</b>   | Psalms 106-107    | <b>7/14</b> | Psalms 108-114   |
| <b>7/15</b>   | Psalms 115-118    | <b>7/16</b> | Psalms 119:1-88  |
| <b>7/17</b>   | Psalms 119:89-176 | <b>7/18</b> | Psalms 120-132   |
| <b>7/19</b>   | Psalms 133-139    | <b>7/20</b> | Psalms 140-145   |
| <b>7/21</b>   | Psalms 146-150    | <b>7/22</b> | Proverbs 1-3     |
| <b>7/23</b>   | Proverbs 4-6      | <b>7/24</b> | Proverbs 7-9     |
| <b>7/25</b>   | Proverbs 10-12    | <b>7/26</b> | Proverbs 13-15   |
| <b>7/27</b>   | Proverbs 16-18    | <b>7/28</b> | Proverbs 19-21   |
| <b>7/29</b>   | Proverbs 22-23    | <b>7/30</b> | Proverbs 24-26   |
| <b>7/31</b>   | Proverbs 27-29    |             |                  |
| <b>August</b> |                   |             |                  |
| <b>8/1</b>    | Proverbs 30-31    | <b>8/2</b>  | Ecclesiastes 1-4 |

|                  |                        |             |                       |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <b>8/3</b>       | Ecclesiastes 5-8       | <b>8/4</b>  | Ecclesiastes 9-12     |
| <b>8/5</b>       | Song of Songs 1-8      | <b>8/6</b>  | Isaiah 1-4            |
| <b>8/7</b>       | Isaiah 5-8             | <b>8/8</b>  | Isaiah 9-12           |
| <b>8/9</b>       | Isaiah 13-17           | <b>8/10</b> | Isaiah 18-22          |
| <b>8/11</b>      | Isaiah 23-27           | <b>8/12</b> | Isaiah 28-30          |
| <b>8/13</b>      | Isaiah 31-35           | <b>8/14</b> | Isaiah 36-41          |
| <b>8/15</b>      | Isaiah 42-44           | <b>8/16</b> | Isaiah 45-48          |
| <b>8/17</b>      | Isaiah 49-53           | <b>8/18</b> | Isaiah 54-58          |
| <b>8/19</b>      | Isaiah 59-63           | <b>8/20</b> | Isaiah 64-66          |
| <b>8/21</b>      | Jeremiah 1-3           | <b>8/22</b> | Jeremiah 4-6          |
| <b>8/23</b>      | Jeremiah 7-9           | <b>8/24</b> | Jeremiah 10-13        |
| <b>8/25</b>      | Jeremiah 14-17         | <b>8/26</b> | Jeremiah 18-22        |
| <b>8/27</b>      | Jeremiah 23-25         | <b>8/28</b> | Jeremiah 26-29        |
| <b>8/29</b>      | Jeremiah 30-31         | <b>8/30</b> | Jeremiah 32-34        |
| <b>8/31</b>      | Jeremiah 35-37         |             |                       |
| <b>September</b> |                        |             |                       |
| <b>9/1</b>       | Jeremiah 38-41         | <b>9/2</b>  | Jeremiah 42-45        |
| <b>9/3</b>       | Jeremiah 46-48         | <b>9/4</b>  | Jeremiah 49-50        |
| <b>9/5</b>       | Jeremiah 51-52         | <b>9/6</b>  | Lamentations 1:1-3:36 |
| <b>9/7</b>       | Lamentations 3:37-5:22 | <b>9/8</b>  | Ezekiel 1-4           |
| <b>9/9</b>       | Ezekiel 5-8            | <b>9/10</b> | Ezekiel 9-12          |
| <b>9/11</b>      | Ezekiel 13-15          | <b>9/12</b> | Ezekiel 16-17         |
| <b>9/13</b>      | Ezekiel 18-20          | <b>9/14</b> | Ezekiel 21-22         |
| <b>9/15</b>      | Ezekiel 23-24          | <b>9/16</b> | Ezekiel 25-27         |
| <b>9/17</b>      | Ezekiel 28-30          | <b>9/18</b> | Ezekiel 31-33         |
| <b>9/19</b>      | Ezekiel 34-36          | <b>9/20</b> | Ezekiel 37-39         |
| <b>9/21</b>      | Ezekiel 40-42          | <b>9/22</b> | Ezekiel 43-45         |
| <b>9/23</b>      | Ezekiel 46-48          | <b>9/24</b> | Daniel 1-3            |
| <b>9/25</b>      | Daniel 4-6             | <b>9/26</b> | Daniel 7-9            |
| <b>9/27</b>      | Daniel 10-12           | <b>9/28</b> | Hosea 1-7             |

|                 |                     |       |                            |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------|----------------------------|
| 9/29            | Hosea 8-14          | 9/30  | Joel 1-3                   |
| <b>October</b>  |                     |       |                            |
| 10/1            | Amos 1-5            | 10/2  | Amos 6-9                   |
| 10/3            | Obadiah 1,Jonah 1-4 | 10/4  | Micah 1-7                  |
| 10/5            | Nahum 1-3           | 10/6  | Habakkuk 1-3,Zephaniah 1-3 |
| 10/7            | Haggai 1-2          | 10/8  | Zechariah 1-7              |
| 10/9            | Zechariah 8-14      | 10/10 | Malachi 1-4                |
| 10/11           | Matthew 1-4         | 10/12 | Matthew 5-6                |
| 10/13           | Matthew 7-8         | 10/14 | Matthew 9-10               |
| 10/15           | Matthew 11-12       | 10/16 | Matthew 13-14              |
| 10/17           | Matthew 15-17       | 10/18 | Matthew 18-19              |
| 10/19           | Matthew 20-21       | 10/20 | Matthew 22-23              |
| 10/21           | Matthew 24-25       | 10/22 | Matthew 26                 |
| 10/23           | Matthew 27-28       | 10/24 | Mark 1-3                   |
| 10/25           | Mark 4-5            | 10/26 | Mark 6-7                   |
| 10/27           | Mark 8-9            | 10/28 | Mark 10-11                 |
| 10/29           | Mark 12-13          | 10/30 | Mark 14                    |
| 10/31           | Mark 15-16          |       |                            |
| <b>November</b> |                     |       |                            |
| 11/1            | Luke 1              | 11/2  | Luke 2-3                   |
| 11/3            | Luke 4-5            | 11/4  | Luke 6-7                   |
| 11/5            | Luke 8-9            | 11/6  | Luke 10-11                 |
| 11/7            | Luke 12-13          | 11/8  | Luke 14-16                 |
| 11/9            | Luke 17-18          | 11/10 | Luke 19-20                 |
| 11/11           | Luke 21-22          | 11/12 | Luke 23-24                 |
| 11/13           | John 1-2            | 11/14 | John 3-4                   |
| 11/15           | John 5-6            | 11/16 | John 7-8                   |
| 11/17           | John 9-10           | 11/18 | John 11-12                 |
| 11/19           | John 13-15          | 11/20 | John 16-18                 |

|                 |                            |              |                       |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| <b>11/21</b>    | John 19-21                 | <b>11/22</b> | Acts 1-3              |
| <b>11/23</b>    | Acts 4-6                   | <b>11/24</b> | Acts 7-8              |
| <b>11/25</b>    | Acts 9-10                  | <b>11/26</b> | Acts 11-13            |
| <b>11/27</b>    | Acts 14-15                 | <b>11/28</b> | Acts 16-17            |
| <b>11/29</b>    | Acts 18-20                 | <b>11/30</b> | Acts 21-23            |
| <b>December</b> |                            |              |                       |
| <b>12/1</b>     | Acts 24-26                 | <b>12/2</b>  | Acts 27-28            |
| <b>12/3</b>     | Romans 1-3                 | <b>12/4</b>  | Romans 4-7            |
| <b>12/5</b>     | Romans 8-10                | <b>12/6</b>  | Romans 11-13          |
| <b>12/7</b>     | Romans 14-16               | <b>12/8</b>  | 1 Corinthians 1-4     |
| <b>12/9</b>     | 1 Corinthians 5-8          | <b>12/10</b> | 1 Corinthians 9-11    |
| <b>12/11</b>    | 1 Corinthians 12-14        | <b>12/12</b> | 1 Corinthians 15-16   |
| <b>12/13</b>    | 2 Corinthians 1-4          | <b>12/14</b> | 2 Corinthians 5-9     |
| <b>12/15</b>    | 2 Corinthians 10-13        | <b>12/16</b> | Galatians 1-3         |
| <b>12/17</b>    | Galatians 4-6              | <b>12/18</b> | Ephesians 1-3         |
| <b>12/19</b>    | Ephesians 4-6              | <b>12/20</b> | Philippians 1-4       |
| <b>12/21</b>    | Colossians 1-4             | <b>12/22</b> | 1 Thessalonians 1-5   |
| <b>12/23</b>    | 2 Thessalonians 1-3        | <b>12/24</b> | 1 Timothy 1-6         |
| <b>12/25</b>    | 2 Timothy 1-4              | <b>12/26</b> | Titus 1-3, Philemon 1 |
| <b>12/27</b>    | Hebrews 1-6                | <b>12/28</b> | Hebrews 7-10          |
| <b>12/29</b>    | Hebrews 11-13              | <b>12/30</b> | James 1-5             |
| <b>12/31</b>    | 1 Peter 1-5                |              |                       |
| <b>January</b>  |                            |              |                       |
| <b>1/1</b>      | 2 Peter 1-3                | <b>1/2</b>   | 1 John 1-5            |
| <b>1/3</b>      | 2 John 1, 3 John 1, Jude 1 | <b>1/4</b>   | Revelation 1-3        |
| <b>1/5</b>      | Revelation 4-8             | <b>1/6</b>   | Revelation 9-12       |
| <b>1/7</b>      | Revelation 13-16           | <b>1/8</b>   | Revelation 17-19      |
| <b>1/9</b>      | Revelation 20-22           |              |                       |