

An Inductive Bible Commentary

Spreading the Faith

Joel

Micah

Zephaniah

By Bernard Spencer

ABOUT THIS BOOK

To Locate material regarding a particular chapter and verse, look up the verse by chapter and verse number in the Questions section, in the Answers section, and in the Spirit of Prophecy references section, where there is one.

To facilitate using this volume for a class studying the books of Joel, Micah, or Zephaniah, this book has been divided into 13 lessons.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

List as much as you can, about the issues implied or expressed in the following biblical passages, as you write out answers to the following questions. These questions are designed to guide you into an increased awareness of the message of the prophet being studied. Be precise. Seek to avoid using overworked words like share and relationship.

In the opinion of this author, the more effort you put into finding the answers on your own, before you consult the answers section of this booklet, the greater will be the blessing you realize from these studies.

Most of the answers will not require more information than is supplied in the Biblical passage being studied; but word dictionaries, dictionaries of theology, and commentaries will at times be a source of enlightenment with which to surround the precise answer.

Using a King James Version of the Bible, if you don't have an interlinear, will give you theological consistency to a good extent. Where a literal reading of the text is required to answer the questions, the New American Standard Bible is the one being used as the basis for the question because of its reasonable fidelity to the Hebrew text. Be sure to note its marginal readings.

Such popular editions of the Bible as The New English and New International will make the questions almost impossible to answer because of the interpretive element incorporated into the translation process used by such versions.

Be prepared to support your answers by showing the relationship between the various portions of a text or passage.

You should also be prepared to support your answers from Ellen White's materials.

As a student you should always seek to be able to show from the Scripture being studied the Biblical accuracy of the Spirit of Prophecy material you cite.

To always ask, "Is it true?" of the Ellen White material makes a good Bible Student. Such a question does not need to be irreverent; it does not even need to imply a doubt as to the reliability of the Spirit of Prophecy. To be able to defend one's faith is to be able to share it. We may even gain a great respect for the theological keenness of the Spirit of Prophecy works as we seek to define the relation between various theological statements and Biblical passages.

Perhaps we need to be reminded again that the Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians, not because they believed their instructor (the Apostle Paul) but because they studied to see if what Paul said was true (of Acts 17:11).

Throughout the course of this study be prepared in class to disprove this author's positions by showing from EGW that the Spirit of Prophecy quotes used in this lesson booklet in support are

misapplied, or that the quotations presented are properly presented, by using other Spirit of Prophecy material you have read; be prepared to do the same with the Biblical texts cited.

Remember to

“Allow no one to be brains for you, allow no one to do your thinking, your investigating, and your praying. . . . You know that no earthly treasure is attainable without painstaking effort. Why should you expect to understand the treasures of the word of God without diligently searching the Scriptures?” Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 307.

The effort to understand the Scriptures is worthwhile for Scripture says, “He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.” Ps. 107:20.

“If you rest your faith only on the minister’s word, you will be lost.” Ellen G. White, Present Truth and Review & Herald Articles, vol. 2, p. 335.

Supplement

“Wycliffe was one of the greatest of the Reformers. In breadth of intellect, in clearness of thought, in firmness to maintain the truth, and in boldness to defend it, he was equaled by few who came after him. Purity of life, unwearying diligence in study and in labor, incorruptible integrity, and Christlike love and faithfulness in his ministry, characterized the first of the Reformers. And this notwithstanding the intellectual darkness and moral corruption of the age from which he emerged.

“The character of Wycliffe is a testimony to the educating, transforming power of the Holy Scriptures. It was the Bible that made him what he was. The effort to grasp the great truths of revelation imparts freshness and vigor to all the faculties. It expands the mind, sharpens the perceptions, and ripens the judgment. The study of the Bible will ennoble every thought, feeling, and aspiration as no other study can. It gives stability of purpose, patience, courage, and fortitude; it refines the character and sanctifies the soul. An earnest, reverent study of the scripture, bringing the mind of the student in direct contact with the infinite mind, would give to the world men of stronger and more active intellect, as well as of nobler principles. . . . “The entrance of the words,’ says the Psalmist, ‘giveth light; it giveth understanding.’ Psalm 119:130.” Ellen White, The Great Controversy, p. 94.

INTRODUCTION TO JOEL

All we know of Joel, the man for whom this biblical book is named, is that he is the son of a man named Pethual. The book bearing his name tells us nothing more about him, or about his father.

Ellen White, as far as I have found, is also silent about the man Joel, though she often quotes from the book of Joel.

This means we know almost nothing about the time Joel does his writing, or even the time when he lived. We do not even know to which period or periods of history he understood his prophecies were intended to apply. He was obviously an Old Testament personality, and, if the minor prophets are arranged in the Scriptures chronologically, he may have worked with Hosea and Amos.

There is no agreement among scholars as to the answers to the questions raised by Joel's silences; however, it is clear that the message of Joel concerns Judah and Jerusalem, and the day of the Lord.

The basic issue that confronts us, as we seek to study the message Joel's book presents us, is whether the three chapters of the book (four in the Hebrew Bible) are to be considered as a prophecy, or whether chapters one and two are to be considered as a description of events which have already occurred, with only chapter three being a prophecy.

While either choice is apparently open to us, we side with those scholars who have expressed the opinion that all the chapters in Joel are prophecies.

However, as is often noted, "whichever interpretation is adopted, the eschatological teachings of the book remain the same. Joel is focusing on the great day of the Lord. . . ." Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p.940.

The difference in the historical-prophetic and the completely-prophetic viewpoints that is seen is that the primary application of Joel's message about the certainty of coming judgment and the necessity of proper preparation if one is not to suffer great loss in the day of the Lord, this primary application is made to a time and events other than the time of Joel in the completely-prophetic viewpoint.

To put it concisely, if Joel's book is a prophecy, it was not for this time – as Daniel's book was not for his time.

The viewpoint we are going to follow here, that the book of Joel is completely a prophecy, means that for this study we will look at the Old Testament messages which appear in Joel's book first; then we will look at their New Testament eschatology application, as found in the Spirit of Prophecy works. That is we will seek the eschatology of Joel that Ellen White sets forth by the contexts in which she sets her quotations from the book of Joel.

Perhaps we should note that this methodology is different than what we will be doing as we study Micah and Zephaniah, for among the Old Testament books, the book of Joel is unique.

(Note: A brief study to provide clarification of the concepts “Old Testament Eschatology” versus “New Testament Eschatology,” referred to above, appears in this booklet under Micah 4, “Introduction.” You may read that material at this time if you desire.)

Lesson 1

Joel – The Historical Message

Assignment Questions

Chapter 1

Read Chapter one through; then respond to the following:

Joel 1:1

- a. What is the source of Joel's book?
- b. Read the book of Joel through watching for a division in the lines of thought presented: Is the book one united message, introduced only by verse 1, or do you find other introductory passages?

Joel 1:2, 3

- a. Paraphrase verse 2; notice that the "anything like" in the NASB is supplied. The Hebrew reads, "Has this been in your days, or (and) even in days of your fathers?"
- b. What are they to tell about, and to whom?

Joel 1:4-12

- a. Make a brief list of the results referred to in verses 8-12 resulting from the activities described in verses 4-7.

Joel 1:13-14

- a. How had God's people responded to the events of 1:4-7 and their results described in verses 8-12? See verse 13c.
- b. Were God's leaders commanded in verses 13a, 13b, and 14 to respond to the events of 1:4-12, or to the acts of the people in verse 13c?
- c. Was the great tragedy in this chapter described in verses 4-12 and 16-20, or in verse 13c?

Joel 1:15

- a. Are the events of verses 4-12 the description of the day of the Lord?
- b. Are the events of verses 4-12 the cause of the day of the Lord?
- c. Are the responses of the people recorded in 1:13c to the events of 1:4-12, in the context of Joel 1, the cause of the day of the Lord warning found in 1:15?

Joel 1:16-20

- a. What causes joy and gladness to be cut off from the house of God in verse 16 b – the events of verse 13c or the events of 1:4-12 and 16-20?

- b. What do the beasts of 1:20 have in common with Joel? See verse 19a.

Joel 1:1-20

- a. Summarize briefly the story of chapter 1.
- b. What is the relationship between the events described in chapter one and the day of the Lord?
- c. What is the message of chapter 1?

LESSON 1

Joel – The Historical Message

Assignment Answers

Joel 1:1

- a. The source of Joel's book is the word of the Lord that came to him.
- b. The book appears to this writer to be one united message flowing from the "word of the Lord" recorded in verse 1.

Joel 1:2, 3

- a. Verse 2 can be paraphrased by the American idiom, "you've never heard of anything like this before."
- b. They are to tell about the message which follows, which came to Joel in the word of the Lord of verse 1; they are to tell it to everyone and from generation to generation.

Joel 1:4-12

- a. The people are to mourn.
The house of the Lord is short of offerings, and the priests mourn.
The fields are ruined.
The fruit trees don't produce.
The people cease to be happy.

Joel 1:13-14

- a. The people responded to their loss of "stuff" by withholding from God their offerings of service.
- b. The intercession the priests were commanded to make, and the calling of the people together to seek God, was not because of their material loss but because of their withholding of their service to God as their response to their material losses.
- c. Verse 13c.

Joel 1:15

- a. No.
- b. No.
- c. **Yes.**

Joel 1:16-20

- a. The events of 1:13c.
- b. In their distress they longed for the Lord.

Joel 1:1-20

- a. The Lord's people, when great economic and agricultural losses came to them, turned from serving the Lord. Their spiritual leaders were commanded to intercede for them and then call them together to cry to the Lord, for the day of the Lord was very near.
- b. Here the day of the Lord is distinguished from the rest of the events described in chapter one, for the day of the Lord is still future (1:15).
- c. The message of these verses may be that when great tribulations come on God's people the day of His coming in judgment is very near. Here trials and difficulties are God's agents for communication and correction.

Note the following:

"In the days of Nehemiah, when the children of Israel had brought upon themselves humiliation and distress by their departure from God in disregarding his law, they sometimes felt that God had forgotten them. The Lord showed his rebellious people that they were dependent upon him for prosperity and safety, yet his eye was upon them." Ellen G. White in Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles, vol. 1, p. 405 (March 18, 1884).

Lesson 1

Joel – The Spirit of Prophecy Application

Section I

Assignment

List the eschatological events Mrs. White presents as being the subject or subjects of Joel's chapter 1 in the material quoted below. Note: Listing of subjects dealt with in material not listed in this booklet, but relevant to the Biblical material being studied, is proper and encouraged!

Section II

Spirit of Prophecy Quotations

Introduction

We have just looked at the historical setting of the message of Joel chapter 1, and we are now able to observe that no application of the prophetic message is presented. Therefore, we are confronted with the fascinated question, "What function is the message of Joel 1 to perform in the history of God's people?"

To find an answer to this question we will turn our study of Joel chapter 1 from a study of its historical message to a study of the Spirit of Prophecy applications of Joel's chapter 1 material. However, certain thoughts may be helpful if they are borne in mind regarding the kind of transposition we are doing here.

As R. V. G. Tasker reminds us in his little book *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, it is often difficult to tell from a prophecy itself exactly how it will be fulfilled. Often a Biblical prophecy would receive a partial fulfillment in the immediate future – some times a future so close the prophet himself saw it, but even in such cases involving a primary application of a particular prophecy, history later revealed a fuller message to also be included.

This means to us that it is almost impossible to tell exactly how any prophecy will be ultimately fulfilled until the final fulfillment comes. Ellen White has noted regarding some of the messages in Daniel and Revelation that some of the predictions will only be fully understood after they are fulfilled.

We believe this to be true of the Biblical prophecies in general, including the messages of Joel which we are studying. But in the case of Joel's materials we have what might be called an "interim help", a clue to Joel's messages that comes between the time of the giving of Joel's book and the time of that book's final fulfillment: Peter's statement in Acts 2, and the prophetic applications of Joel we find in Ellen White's materials.

This 'interim help' is not only of value to an academic struggling to unravel the message and function of Joel, but with very little superficial reading is found to be of great interest to all people because of its

relevance as a guide to future events, and because of the exciting instructional revelations contained therein for those who live when the events of Joel cease to be prophecy and become reality – a transition which may occur in our times – and if so, hopefully will also occur in our lives.

We will turn now to a survey of the various messages coming to us by means of Joel’s prophecies and terminology and their exciting amplifications found in scripture in Acts 2, and in the Spirit of Prophecy.

Our methodology for this portion of our study will be to list texts from the Biblical material and then quote without commenting from Mrs. White. The quotations will not be exhaustive, but will rather vary in length according to what we feel will accurately portray to the reader the general significance of the concept being studied, as Mrs. White sets it forth, and according to the space limitations of this study.

Section II

Spirit of Prophecy Quotations

Joel 1:15-18, 12

“The present is a time of overwhelming interest to all living. Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority, thinking men and women of all classes have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us. They are watching the strained, restless relations that exist among the nations. They observe the intensity that is taking possession of every earthly element, and they recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place. . . .

“Angels are now restraining the winds of strife, that they may not blow until the **world shall be** warned of its coming doom; but a storm is gathering, ready to burst upon the earth; and when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.

“The Bible, and the Bible only, gives a correct view of these things. Here are revealed the great, final scenes in the history of our world, . . .

“Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. . . .” (Joel 1:15-18, 12 is quoted) Education, pp. 179, 180.

Joel 1:10-12, 17-20

“When Christ ceases His intercession in the sanctuary, the unmingled wrath threatened against those who worship the beast and his image and receive this mark. . . will be poured out. The plagues upon Egypt when God was about to deliver Israel were similar in character to those more terrible and extensive judgments which are to fall upon the world just before the final deliverance of God’s people. . . .

“In the plague that follows, power is given to the sun ‘to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat.’ (Rev. 16, verses 8, 9). The prophets thus describe the condition of the earth at this fearful time: ‘The land mourneth; . . . because the harvest of the field is perished. . . All the trees of the field are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men.’ ‘The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate. . . How do the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture. . . . The rivers of water are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.’ . . Joel 1:10-12, 17-20; . . .” The Great Controversy, pp. 627, 628.

Section III

(List the eschatological subjects with which Mrs. White surrounds her quotations from Joel.)

Assignment Answers

Joel 1:10-12, 17-20

The Great Controversy, pp. 627, 628.

1. The close of probation
2. The plagues

Joel 1:15-18, 12

Prophets and Kings, pp. 537, 538 (Ed. p. 180)

“Here are revealed the great final scenes in the history of our world.”

LESSON 2

Joel – The Historical Message

Chapter 2 Assignment

Questions

Joel 2:1-11

- a. Who is the spokesman for these verses?
- b. Is the day of the Lord to be looked forward to or feared?
- c. Who controls the day of the Lord according to verse 11?
- d. What is the answer to the question asked in verse 11, who can endure the day of the Lord?

Joel 2:12-14

- a. Who is the spokesman for these verses?
- b. What is the function of these verses?
- c. What is the message of verse 14?

Joel 2:15-17

- a. What is the function of these verses?
- b. Between verses 17 and 18 something can properly be added. What is that message?

Joel 2:18-20

- a. What message is heard here for the first time?

Joel 2:21-22

- a. What is the message of these verses?

Joel 2:23

- a. What does verse 23 contribute to the message of verses 21 and 22?

Joel 2:24

- a. Why does verse 24 follow verse 23?

Joel 2:25

- a. State in your own words the message of this verse.

Joel 2:26

- a. What is the message of this verse?

Joel 2:27

- a. What is the message of this verse in light of the blessings listed just prior to it

(Joel 2:28-32 – these verses in the Hebrew Bible are chapter 3.)

Joel 2:28, 29

- a. When is “after this” in verse 28a?
- b. Who is “I” in verse 28b?

Joel 2:30, 31

- a. Who is “I” in verse 30a?
- b. When do the events described in verses 30 and 31 occur?

Joel 2:32

- a. Who is delivered (saved) in verse 32a?
- b. From what is he saved?
- c. What is among the survivors in verse 32c?
- d. Who received salvation in verse 32c?
- e. Is anyone saved who does not call on the name of the Lord in this verse?

LESSON 2

Joel – The Historical Message

Assignment Answers

Joel 2:1-11

- a. God; notice the phrase “My holy mountain” in verse 1.
- b. Feared.
- c. The Lord
- d. Those who respond to the invitation of verses 12-14 and make the preparation described in verses 12-17.

Joel 2:12-14

- a. Joel.
- b. They are God’s invitation to those on whom He has threatened to bring the day of the Lord described in 2:1-10. Apparently the response of the people (1:13c) to the events described in Joel chapter 1 was not offset by whatever reaction there was to the invitation of 1:13-15; in fact, no reaction of any kind is recorded. The people may have refused to present to God an offering before He replaced their losses.

This is apparently why 2:1 reads in part – blow a trumpet, let the inhabitants tremble, the day of the Lord is coming.

- c. That God provides us with that which He requires that we give to Him.

Joel 2:15-17

- a. They are Joel’s instructions to the people who wish to respond to the invitation of God presented in verses 12-14.
- b. Between verses 17 and 18 one can properly add, “If you do verses 15-17 then verses 18-20 will be fulfilled.”

Joel 2:18-20

- a. “I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.” A new era in Israel’s relation with the Lord will begin.

Joel 2:21, 22

- a. The surety of God’s promises is to be seen in the portions of the promise of verses 18-20 that are already fulfilled in verses 21, 22.

Joel 2:23

- a. The acts of verse 23, which are partially fulfilled promises themselves, foretell that greater blessings, the results of God's already-done acts, are on the way. Blessings bestowed testify to greater blessings to be received – as the rain foretells the harvest.

Joel 2:24

- a. This verse describes the blessings to result from the acts of **verse 23**.

Joel 2:25

- a. Verse 25 describes the greatness of the blessing being sent – all losses that God caused are restored when the people respond properly.

Joel 2:26

- a. The message of this verse is that when people learn through experience to serve God (Joel 1:1-2, 17), then God can always provide for all their needs (2:18-25), and the people praise Him for His wonderfulnesses – then His people will never be put to shame (2:26).

Joel 2:28, 29

- a. After the 'healing' of God's people described in verses 26 and 27.
- b. The "I" of verses 25-27, "the Lord your God,"

Joel 2:30, 31

- a. The people's Lord
- b. Before the day of the Lord.

Joel 2:32

- a. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord.
- b. Salvation here is from the destructions of the day of the Lord.
- c. Deliverance (salvation) from the destructions of the day of the Lord.
- d. Whoever the Lord calls.
- e. Yes; those whom the Lord calls.

There is a parable in the New Testament, told by Jesus, that tells the story of workers who worked various amounts of time, but who in the end of the day all received the same pay. The story is so told as to necessitate our having Jesus Himself explain to us its message.

The message is a question – will you be evil because God is good?

The message implies what the story explicitly portrayed – that there are people who are going to receive a reward from God that includes works people have not seen them do. Their reward

comes from the goodness of God, and is not commensurate with their obvious works, as is generally understood to be the teaching of the scriptures; My reward is with me to give to every man as his work is. By the parable the reward is shown to cover the intent of the worker, even if it did not produce. These workers had stood all day in line hoping for work. The last hour of the day they were still there; that was when they were hired. But the rewarder sees them as working all day.

One of the fascinating messages of Joel 2:32 is found in the assurance of salvation to all who call on the name of the Lord in verse 32a being followed by the assurance of salvation in verse 32c to all whom the Lord calls. This implies the Lord may save some people who have never called upon him!

Ellen White has an interesting account of some events in which this theological principle is applied. Her story is of particular interest to this writer in this place in our study of Joel, because it amplifies the verse we are considering, while the verse before us presents us with the Old Testament Biblical support of both Jesus' New Testament parable referred to above and Ellen White's story.

Mrs. White writes as follows:

“The hour is coming,’ Christ said, ‘in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.’ That voice is to resound through all the habitations of the dead; and every saint who sleeps in Jesus will awake and leave his prison house. Then the virtue of character we have received from Christ’s righteousness will ally us to true greatness of the highest order. Every action of ours in befriending God’s people will be rewarded as done unto himself.

“In the day of final reckoning, Christ does not present before men the great work he has done for them in giving his life for their redemption. He presents before them the faithful work they have done for him. What surpassing love is this! He even mentions the work of the heathen, who have no intelligent knowledge of the law of the Lord, but who have done the very things the law required, because they have heeded the voice speaking to them in the things of nature. When the Holy Spirit implants Christ’s spirit in the heart of the savage, and he befriends God’s servants, the quickening of the heart’s sympathy is contrary to his nature, contrary to his education. The grace of God working upon the darkened mind, has softened the savage nature untaught by the wisdom of men. And these uneducated heathen, in all their cruelty, are regarded in a more favorable light than are those who have had great light and evidence, but who have rejected the mercy and reproof of God.

“Christ implants His grace in the heart of the savage, and ministers to the necessity of the missionary, even before he has heard or comprehended the words of truth and life. Behold that crowd collected above God’s servant to harm him! But the Lord is working upon the heart and mind of perhaps one man to plead in behalf of His servant; and when the war council has

determined the destruction of the Christian's life, the intercession of that savage turns the decision, and his life is spared. O, the love that goes forth to the savage for this one act! To such Christ says, in the judgment; . . . 'come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" Ellen White in Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles, vol. 3, p. 608 (Sept. 20, 1898).

LESSON 2

Joel – The Spirit of Prophecy Application

Section I Assignment

List the eschatological events Mrs. White presents as being the subject or subjects of Joel's chapter two in the material quoted below. Note: Listing of subjects dealt with in material not quoted in this booklet, but relevant to the Biblical material being studied, is proper and encouraged!

Section II

Spirit of Prophecy Quotations

Joel 2:11

"It was needful that men should be awakened to their danger; that they should be roused to prepare for the solemn events connected with the close of probation. The prophet of God declares; 'The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it' . . . Joel 2:11 . . ." The Great Controversy, p. 310.

Joel 2:15-17

"The Shaking"

"November 20, 1857, I was shown the people of God, and saw them mightily shaken. Some, with strong faith and agonizing cries, were pleading with God. Their countenances were pale, and marked with deep anxiety, expressive of their internal struggle. Firmness and great earnestness were expressed in their countenances, while large drops of perspiration fell from their foreheads. Now and then their faces would light up with the marks of God's approbation, and again the same solemn, earnest, anxious look would settle upon them.*" (*"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders. . . . Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the alter, and let them say, spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God?" Joel 2:15-17. . . .)

"Evil angels crowded around them, pressing their darkness upon them, to shut out Jesus from their view, that their eyes might be drawn to the darkness that surrounded them. And they distrust God and next murmur against Him. Their only safety was in keeping their eyes directed upward. Angels of God had charge over His people, and as the poisonous atmosphere from the evil angels was pressed around these anxious ones, the heavenly angels were continually wafting their wings over them, to scatter the thick darkness.

“Some, I saw, did not participate in their work of agonizing and pleading. They seemed indifferent and careless. They were not resisting the darkness around them, and it shut them in like a thick cloud. The angels of God left. . . those who made no effort to help themselves, and I lost sight of them. . . .

“I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen, and was shown that it was be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God’s people.” Testimonies For the Church, vol. 1, pp. 179-181.

Joel 2:23

Author’s note: Joel 2:23 speaks of a Biblical concept famous among Seventh-day Adventists around the world. This concept, the early and latter rain, is often preached about and written on, as something very significant in the outworking of God’s plan of redemption. But the question that is often overlooked is the question, “what is it?”

That this question is generally left unanswered is not because Mrs. White has not written clearly about the early and latter rain; she has written much about this concept. Probably the material that deals in one place with the concept most clearly is found in Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 506-509. But Mrs. White has written much other material dealing with many aspects of this symbol.

Because of the multitude of relevant questions and the numerous passages in Ellen White treating of these issues, our methodology here is going to be to quote from a thesis titled American Seventh-day Adventist Latter Rain, by Bernard Spencer. This thesis is available at the Andrews University Library. Because of space limitations the footnote references identifying the sources on which the various statements are based have been omitted from this review.

Ellen White and the Latter Rain

The Terminology Employed; The Agricultural Heritage

In Palestine during agricultural times such as the times of the Bible prophets, the farmer would prepare the field for the sowing of the seed, plant the seed, and wait for a rain to cause the seed to sprout. During the course of time during which the sprouted seeds were growing into a mature state, rain continued to fall periodically, but just before the actual harvesting could begin a special rain fell which served to bring the crop to the final degree of maturity required for the farmer to realize a successful reward for his work.

The first rain, which sprouted the sown seeds, was known as the former rain or the early rain; the rain which fell just prior to the harvesting was known as the latter rain. These two rains were used by the Hebrew prophets as a figure to foretell “the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God’s church,” Ellen White writes. She also says that “the Lord employs those operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit.”

This means that for Ellen White, the rain symbol for the work of the Holy Spirit as He bestows spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God’s people has its roots in the agricultural phenomena of rains which come in their season and which produce a particular result – which symbol comes to us by the way of the Hebrew prophets.

The Historical Application of the Agricultural Figures

Mrs. White writes that the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts 2 marked the beginning of the early, or former, rain phase of the work of the Holy Spirit – the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God’s church that the early rain of Palestine as a symbol represented.

However, she also writes that the Acts 2 Pentecostal experience was only a partial fulfillment of the key “rain” prophecy – Joel 2; which scripture is nevertheless applicable to those events. The latter rain portion of the Palestinian rain symbol of Joel 2 will only be experienced when the events of Pentecost are repeated, with greater power. This “manifestation of divine grace” which will “attend the closing work of the gospel” is to occur just prior to the second coming of Jesus as the Great Harvester, in connection with specific eschatological developments, and fulfills completely Joel’s prophecy.

This means that it is the event of a Pentecost-repeated, only with greater power, which fulfills for Ellen White Joel’s latter rain prophecy.

The existential, or, in my life, early rain is an awakening process that occurs repeatedly in the soul bringing progressively increasing insights as the Christian lives daily life. It is complemented by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which anointing gives victories in character development, while the baptism of the Holy Spirit makes the awakening and overcoming Christian useful in service for God.

The latter rain is distinguished from these other works of the Holy Spirit by the fact that whereas the early rain is a continuing process of awakenings, and the anointing is repeated whenever a seeker for victory finds another victory is needed; and while the baptism of the Holy Spirit is available as a repeated experience every new morning, the latter rain comes at a historical point that is eschatologically timed, and brings final and complete results to the above processes. This is possible because the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the early and latter rain works of the Holy Spirit are all aspects of the work of grace in the soul realized through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

The anointing gives grace to the soul that produces an atmosphere and character, the baptism gives grace that one imparts in appropriate service, the early rain grace causes a progressive spiritual awakening, while the latter rain grace brings the growth in grace to completion.

These works of the Holy Spirit did not begin at Pentecost, rather, they have existed through the times of the Old Testament. Isaiah speaks of the anointing of the Holy Spirit and Mrs. White says Christ was baptized of the Holy Spirit daily. What is new at Pentecost is (1) the amount of the blessing bestowed and the miraculous signs that accompanied the bestowal; (2) the function of the timing of the bestowal; it showed Christ's inauguration was complete and it gave heaven's approval to the disciples teaching that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, in whom salvation was to be realized. Finally, the Pentecost experience was new in that it came on the church bringing about the rapid and power-filled proclamation of the Gospel to the world, while the repetition of the granting of the grace, that causes spiritual life to spring up, through the years since Pentecost shows the constancy of God's concern and His closeness to those who seek to be effective representatives of the Gospel story- when the blessing is sought it comes, until the whole process culminates in the bestowal of the grace represented by the latter rain figure.

This means that in the works of Mrs. White the rain work of the Holy Spirit is always a gift given progressively by God to a cooperating individual that enables him to do the work God gives him to do, today, and that makes him able to be ready for the events to transpire as the conflict between good and evil closes.

Summary. The "rain" work described by Ellen White that God does through the Holy Spirit is a process that is accomplished by the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon the soul. It has three effects; it brings conviction to the heart of one who hears the gospel story, it prepares people for useful service, and it brings to completion the transformation of character and soul the redemptive process includes.

It occurs over a period of time, having both historical and experiential aspects, and is divisible into two separate, but not disconnected phases- the early and the latter rain. It is also coordinated with both subjective and objective developments. The subjective are the elements of personal preparedness and cooperation with God, while the objective are the developments in the conflict between God and Satan which God makes transitional in bringing the great conflict between sin and righteousness to a close.

The reliability and validity of anyone's personal experience of those dynamic works of God through the Holy Spirit must be checked by the doctrines of Sacred Scripture and obedience to the Ten Commandments of God because Satan seeks to produce a counterfeit "rain" work. Emotion and miracles, however, are not to be criteria by which anyone tests the genuineness of a rain experience.

The early rain relates to the latter rain as that which goes before to prepare for increased amounts of the same, for Mrs. White writes that the blessings received by the apostles at

Pentecost are still available to earnest seekers today. This early rain experience, which brings with it power to work for God against the forces of evil, changes to a greater outpouring of grace, with a greater demonstration of God's power, when the historical aspect of the rain experience symbolized by the latter rain figure occurs. This increase of power is the result, Mrs. White says, of two developments; the increase of evil since Pentecost, and the arrival of the time of the closing of human probation.

This means that in the writings of Mrs. White the latter rain has as its function the completing of the work begun under the early rain figure.

Negatively, the rain work of the Holy Spirit is not a guarantee of one's salvation, and it is not an objective proof of one's sanctification.

It is rather the agency by which man's growth in the Christian pattern set by Christ is realized without ever taking away man's freedom to return to the doing of evil.

The latter rain eschatological context.

For our study, basic to the eschatology one finds being set forth by Mrs. White, are two premises; (1) the figures represent reality, and (2) the nature of man is capable of change. This second premise is the heart of the latter rain study, for in Ellen White's materials man can and must enter into a relationship with God that brings about a progressive change in man that is so complete he can accurately be described as a reborn and new creature. Man is here seen as a hand-crafted product made by God that is ruined by sin, but still being loved by his Maker, who, as soon as the fall of man occurs, sets into action a plan of restoration that develops men gradually into the creatures they would have been had Adam never fallen.

This restoration process is controlled externally by the choices of man, both as a group and as an individual, and by the developments of the great controversy that lead to a final full and complete vindication of God from any responsibility or contribution to the sin problem by all of God's created beings, including Satan himself.

Internally, the restoration process is determined by the amount of grace that man's daily cooperation with God, or lack of it, enables him to benefit from.

Grace is here not only an attitude of Gods toward sinful beings, but it is "as real as the air which circulates around the globe." Steps to Christ, p. 68. It is given through certain channels or "means of grace."

To Ellen White, how much spiritual growth an individual realizes depends on his choices, the circumstances of his life, and the eschatological developments that are occurring at the time in which he lives.

The eschatological developments that immediately surround the latter rain figure include such events as are represented by the following terminology:

1. The Loud Cry
2. The Third Angel
3. The mark of the Beast
4. The Seal of God
5. The Shaking Time
6. The Close of Probation
7. The Seven Last Plagues
8. The Time of Jacob's Trouble
9. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ
10. The Life Eternal

The element common to all of these events is that they are so designed as to progressively bring all people to a point of making a decision for or against Christ, under the threat of ruin and death as a result of a decision for Christ that will include a commitment to obey God's will as expressed in the Gospel and in the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20.

Conclusion

The central teaching of Mrs. White regarding the latter rain is that it brings the progressive work of grace in the soul to completion, a work that began with the early rain bestowal of grace; and that the events and requirements which accompany the salvific process in men's lives reveal the character of God to be a blending of justice, mercy, love, and righteousness, with omnipotence and omniscience.

The central purpose of the latter rain work is to give men the power to meet God's will for them at a particular eschatological time.

The primary effect of the latter rain grace when it has been imparted is that the receiver is prepared for meeting Christ at His second coming without fault – ready for translation.

The controlling motif in the outworking of the latter rain scheme is the vindication of God from any responsibility for the existence or continuance of evil, while the ultimate result of the combined works of grace which are brought to completion by the later rain grace is the full restoration of fallen man to the spiritual nature he had before the fall, and a resulting continual flow of praise to the God who could bring about such results.

Joel 2: 28, 29

“The Priests, determined to account for the miraculous power of the disciples in some natural way, declared that they were drunken from partaking largely of the new wine prepared for the feast. Some of the most ignorant of the people present seized upon this suggestion as the truth, but the more intelligent knew it was to false; and those who understood the different languages testified to the accuracy with which these languages were used by the disciples.

“In answer to the accusations of the priests Peter showed that this demonstration was in direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. . . .” The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 40, 41.

“In immediate connection with the scenes of the great day of God, the Lord by the prophet Joel has promised a special manifestation of His Spirit. Joel 2:28. This prophecy received a partial fulfillment in the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost; but it will reach its full accomplishment in the manifestation of divine grace which will attend the closing work of the gospel.” The Great Controversy, p. ix.

“If this prophecy of Joel met a partial fulfillment in the days of the apostles, we are living in a time when it is to be even more evidently manifest to the people of God. He will so bestow His Spirit upon His people that they will become a light amid the moral darkness; and great light will be reflected in all parts of the world. O that our faith might be increased, that the Lord might work mightily with His people. (MS 49, 1908).” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1175.

Joel 2:31

“Nor was the darkness of the night less uncommon and terrifying than that of the day; notwithstanding there was almost a full moon, no object was discernible but by the help of some artificial light, which, when seen from the neighboring houses and other places as a distance, appeared through a kind of Egyptian darkness which seemed almost impervious to the rays.” – Isaiah Thomas, *Massachusetts Spy*; or, *American Oracle of Liberty*, vol. 10, No. 472 (May 25, 1780). Said an eyewitness of the scene: ‘I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete.’ – Letter by Dr. Samuel Tenney, of Exeter, New Hampshire, December, 1785 (in *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 1792, 1st series, vol. I, p. 87). Though at nine o’clock that night the moon rose to the full, ‘it had not the least effect to dispel the deathlike shadows.’ After midnight the darkness disappeared, and the moon, when first visible, had the appearance of blood. May 19, 1780, stands in history as ‘The Dark Day.’ Since the time of Moses no period of darkness of equal density, extent, and duration, has ever been recorded. The description of this event, as given by eyewitnesses, is but an echo of the words of the Lord, recorded by the prophet Joel, twenty-five hundred years previous to their fulfillment: ‘The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.’ Joel 2:31.” The Great Controversy, p. 308.

Section III

(List the eschatological subjects with which Mrs. White surrounds her quotations from Joel.)

Assignment Answers

Joel 2:11

The Great Controversy, p. 310.
The Close of Probation.

Joel 2:15-17

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, pp. 179-181.
The shaking time.

Joel 2:23

(Thesis Material)
(The special bestowing of grace that brings the work of grace in the soul to completion.)
The close of probation.
The Seven Last Plagues.
The Loud Cry, etc.

Joel 2: 28, 29

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 40, 41.
The Early Rain, or the Acts 2 Pentecost.

The Great Controversy, p. ix
“The scenes of the great day of God.”

Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1175.
The days in which we live – the time of the end.

Joel 2:31

The Great Controversy, p. 308
The Dark Day of May 19, 1780.

Section IV Summary

Conclusion

We have gone through Joel looking for the answer to the question, what function is the message of Joel to perform in the history of God’s people. The answer now seems to be quite clear: Joel, as a prophecy, serves to point God’s church to the day when God will prepare His people for the events which close the great controversy between good and evil, while as accomplished history, the book of Joel functions as a revelation of where we are in those closing events, as an encouragement to those experiencing those events by portraying the ultimate victory of good, and as an invitation to all who read it to make the preparations necessary if one is to be involved on God’s side.

The book of Joel also serves as part of the Bible's confirmation of the truthfulness of the material Ellen White presents us with regarding the eschatology of the new Testament – both when the material serves to reveal, and when the material serves to excite us regarding the potential for those events to occur in our lives.

“As we see the fulfillment of prophecy, our faith in the final triumph of Christ's kingdom should strengthen; and we should go forth with renewed courage to do our appointed work.” Gospel Workers, p. 26f.

“He who beholds the Saviour's matchless love will be elevated in thought, purified in heart, transformed in character. He will go forth to be a light to the world. . . .” Gospel Workers, p. 29.

LESSON 3

Joel – the Historical Message

Chapter 3 Assignment

Questions

Joel 3:1-6

- a. To what days does “in those days and at that time” refer in verse 1?
- b. Who is called to judgment in verse 2 and why?

Joel 3:7

- a. Who is “them” in verse 7?

Joel 3:8

- a. Who is “I” in verse 8?
- b. Who sells sons and daughters in verse 3? Who does the selling of sons and daughters in verse 8?
- c. What is the message of verse 8 in the light of verse 4?

Joel 3:9-11b

- a. Who is to beat their plowshares into swords in verse 10a?
- b. What is “this” in verse 9a?
- c. Where is “there” in verse 11b?

Joel 3:11c

- a. What is the message here?

Joel 3:12, 13

- a. Who is “I” in verse 12c?
- b. Is Israel to be judged in the judgment of verse 12?
- c. *Who is the spokesman in verse 13, and to whom does he speak?*

Joel 3:14

- a. What is the content of the day of the Lord in this verse? Is it the events of Joel 1:4-12 and 16-20? Is it the events of Joel 2:3-10? Is it the events of Joel 2:28-31? Is it the events of Joel 3:1, 2, 12, 13?

Joel 3:15

- a. Do the events of this verse precede, follow, or occur simultaneously with the day of the Lord? Support your answer from the book of Joel.

Joel 3:16-21

- a. When do these events occur, or, what is their relationship to the day of the Lord of verse 14? Do they precede it, follow it, or are the events of these verses separated at some point by the activities of the day of the Lord – some preceding it and some following?
- b. Do verses 18-20 reflect Old Testament eschatology or New Testament eschatology?

LESSON 3

Joel – The Historical Message

Assignment Answers

Joel 3:1-6

- a. “Those days” are the days of blessing. In Joel’s book the ‘first’ events are acts of destruction by God to turn His people to righteousness. The ‘second’ events are the times of blessing such as are described in 2:18-20, 26, 28, and 29. The ‘third’ events are the forerunners to the day of the Lord – the ‘third’ event. The fourth ‘event’ in Joel is the time following the events of the day of the Lord – events such as those described in 3:18-21.
- b. Those called to judgment in this verse are those nations surrounding Israel (God’s people) who have abused God’s people. God’s servants are not involved in this judgment as its subjects.

Joel 3:7

- a. The Israelites who have suffered at the hands of the surrounding nations.

Joel 3:8

- a. “I” is God.
- b. In verse 3 the surrounding nations are selling the Israelite’s children, while in verse 8 God is selling the sons and daughters of Israel’s former persecutors.
- c. Joel 3:4 of course follows Joel 3:2, 3 where the nations have been destroying Israel as a nation and hurting Israelite people and their children.

In verse 4 God states that He will accept no repayment from those guilty of those actions against His people and country.

In this context the message of verse 8 is that He, God, will do to the persecutors of His people what they have done to His people; after He has exalted His abused people.

The Implied message of these verses is that there is an undefined boundary, known to God, that nations and their people may not pass over without going beyond the forgiveness of God, such as was extended in 2:21 and 22 and 28, where the beasts are encouraged and God’s spirit is promised to be poured out on all mankind.

Joel 3:9-11b

- a. The nations God is entering into judgment with, and drawing to the day-of-the-Lord judgment, because of their treatment of God’s people.
- b. The “this” of verse 9a is the events described in 3:1-8.
- c. The valley of Jehoshaphat (3:2a).

Joel 3:11c

- a. A talk-show host, in discussing on television the Biblical concept of God making the nations give an account of their deeds, remarked that if God was to come back to earth He had better be as powerful as the Bible portrays Him, for, said he, there are plenty of powerful people here who would like to kill him.

Joel 3:11c seems to have as its message a portrayal of this kind of hostility toward God as the ruler of this earth.

Joel 3:12, 13

- a. God, Israel's Lord.
- b. No.
- c. God, the Judge, is here speaking; apparently to His mighty ones (3:11c).

Joel 3:14

- a. It is the events of Joel 3:1, 2, 12 and 13

Joel 3:15

- a. These events precede the day of the Lord (2:31).

Joel 3:16-21

- a. It appears to this writer that the events of Joel 3:16-21 all follow the day of the Lord of 3:12, 13, for God is here speaking from Jerusalem, and serving as their refuge and the provider of permanent blessings.
- b. These verses reflect Old Testament eschatology.

LESSON 3

Joel – The Spirit of Prophecy Application

Section I

Assignment

List the eschatological events Mrs. White presents as being the subject or subjects of Joel's chapter 3 in the material quoted below. Note: Listing of subjects dealt with in material not quoted in this booklet, but relevant to the Biblical material being studied, is proper and encouraged!

Section II

Spirit of Prophecy quotations

Joel 3:16

"An earthquake marked the hour when Christ laid down His life, and another earthquake witnessed the moment when He took it up in triumph. He who had vanquished death and the grave came forth from the tomb with the tread of a conqueror, amid the reeling of the earth, the flashing of lightning, and the roaring of thunder. When He shall come to earth again, . . . 'The Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.' . . . Joel 3:16." The Desire of Ages, p. 780.

"Then it will be seen that Satan's rebellion against God has resulted in ruin to himself and to all that chose to become his subjects. He has represented that great good would result from transgression; but it will be seen that 'the wages of sin is death.' . . . Satan, the root of every sin, and all evil workers, who are his branches, shall be utterly cut off. An end will be made of sin, with all the woe and ruin that have resulted from it. . . .

"But amid the tempest of divine judgment the children of God will have no cause for fear. 'The Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.' Joel 3:16. The day that brings terror and destruction to the transgressors of God's law will bring to the obedient 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.'" Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 341.

"Soon I heard the voice of God which shook the heavens and the earth.* ("The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel." Joel 3:16 . . .) there was a mighty earthquake. Buildings were shaken down and fell on every side. I then heard a triumphant shout of victory, loud, musical, and clear. I looked upon this company, who a short time before, were in such distress and bondage. Their captivity was turned. A glorious light shown upon them. How beautiful they then looked! All weariness and marks of care were gone; health and beauty were seen in every countenance. Their enemies, the heathen around

them, fell like dead men. They could not endure the light that shone upon the delivered, holy ones. This light and glory remained upon them until Jesus was seen in the clouds of heaven, and the faithful, tried company were changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, from glory to glory. The graves were opened and the saints came forth, clothed with immortality, crying: 'Victory over death and the grave!' and together with the living saints they were caught up to their Lord in the air, while rich, musical shouts of glory and victory proceeded from every immortal tongue." Testimonies For the Church, vol. 1, p. 184.

Section III

(List the eschatological subjects with which Mrs. White surrounds her quotations from Joel.)

Assignment Answers

Joel 3:16

The Desire of Ages, p. 780

1. The second coming of Christ.
2. The "unfear" of His children.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 341.

1. The destruction of Satan and his followers.
2. The destruction of sin.
3. The judgment.
4. The protecting of God's children.

Testimonies, vol. 1. P. 184.

1. The voice of God which shakes the heavens and the earth.

INTRODUCTION TO MICAH

“This is a time every soul needs to cling earnestly to God. Those whom the Lord is leading to do his last work in the earth are to stand as Micah and Zephaniah and Zachariah stood in their day, to call to repentance and good works. The writings of these prophets contain warnings and instruction applicable to this time, and should receive our careful study. They should teach us to shun every phase of evil that made such warnings essential to the people of the past. Let every soul arouse and make diligent examination of self, that everything that would separate the people of God from righteousness may be put away.” Ellen White in the Present Truth and Review & Herald Articles, vol. 2, p. 542.

LESSON 4

Micah

Chapter 1 Assignment

Questions

Read: Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, pp. 330-339, 682 for the story of Israel in Micah's time.

Micah 1:1

- a. To whom was the Lord directing Micah?
- b. About when did Micah work?
- c. When were Samaria and Jerusalem destroyed? Where they both rebuilt? (For the historical material use a Bible dictionary such as the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 8.)

Micah 1:2-7

- a. Why did Jerusalem and Samaria suffer?
- b. Who is the "I" of verse 6?
- c. Who is the "I" of verse 7?

Micah 1: 8, 9

- a. Who is the "I" of verse 8?
- b. Who is the "it" of verse 9? (Heb: "he" has reached the gate.)
- c. Is there a connection between the "He" of verse 9 and verses 3 and 4? Please explain your answer.

Micah 1:1-9

- a. In your own words summarize the story presented in 1:1-9.

Micah 1:10-16

Skip these verses as an assignment, and read through the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary on these verses. They present a very interesting section of Scripture – but verses 10-14 are perhaps too difficult for us to exegete here.

However, do note the message of verses 15 and 16 when they are translated as they appear in the translation of verses 10-16 below.

Micah 1:10-16 may be read as follows:

- v. 10 – In Gath do not declare; (though) weeping you are not to weep.

In the house for Aphrah (in the house of dust), you roll in the dust.

v. 11 – Pass in nakedness (of) shame, inhabitant of Saphir.

The inhabitant of Zoanan will not go out. (The) customs of mourning of Beth-Haetzel will take from you its place to stand (support).

v. 12 – Because the inhabitant of Maroth became tired (weak) for good,

because evil went down, from the Lord to the gate of Jerusalem.

v. 13 – Tie up the chariot to the team of horses, O inhabitant of Lachish.

She was the beginning of sin to (the) daughter of Zion, because in you were found the rebellions of Israel.

v. 14 – Therefore you will give dowry (Holl. 371) unto Moresheth – Gath, houses of Aczieb (deceit), for deceit, to the kings of Israel.

v. 15 – Still (yet) the one taking possession (is) father to you, inhabitant of Marasheth, yet (to) Adulam he will come, the glory of Israel.

v. 16 – Shave (yourselves) bald (fathers), and shear upon the sons of your enjoyment;

Make wide your baldness as a vulture, (fathers), because they (your sons) will go into captivity from you.

LESSON 4

Micah

Chapter 1 Assignment

Answers

Micah 1:1

To the two capital cities of the children of God, Micah was sent probably during the last half or one third of the eighth century. Whereas Samaria was destroyed in 722 B.C., Micah's statement that "her wound is incurable" was almost immediately followed by judgment. Other prophecies of doom sent by God through his prophets were often only threatenings; therefore, this prophecy's quick fulfillment on Samaria may have been a means of conveying an appeal to Jerusalem, as her destruction did not come until the progressive destruction of 606-586 B.C.

The later rebuilding of Jerusalem was not paralleled by a reconstruction of Samaria.

Micah 1:2-7

- a. Verse 5a states that the reason for the sufferings foretold was the sins of the people. Their acts produced the results – God left His holy temple (1:2c), and came down to the earth (1:3), to reward the sins of the people (1:6, 7).
- b. The Lord is the "I" of verses 6 and 7c (cf. 1:3, 4).

Micah 1: 8, 9

a-c. The "I" of verse 8 is probably the prophet because the "he" of verse 9 is probably God; notice that it is God who is doing the moving from place to place in verses 2-4, and He is also the destroyer of verses 6 and 7, therefore the "He" of verse 9 is "the Lord" of verses 3 and 4. (To suggest that the "he" of verse 9 is someone like Nebuchadnezzar would make the pronoun stand alone without a preceding noun to modify.)

Summary of story: We know from our study of other Biblical passages that we sometimes suffer because Satan afflicts us, and that we sometimes suffer as a direct result of our deeds, but it perhaps is not so clear to us that we sometimes suffer because it is God who afflicts us. In this writer's opinion this is one kind of suffering we can realistically try and hope to avoid.

The fact that Samaria was not rebuilt tells us something about the limits God places on His forgiveness and consequent restoration. For some sins there is eternal loss, even if the transgressor eventually gains eternal life; just as some of the people of the northern kingdom were involved when the southern kingdom was restored, even though their capitol and nation were not restored.

Supplement

“Had all who were taken captive held firmly to correct principles, they would have imparted light in every place where they were scattered. But they remained impenitent, and still heavier punishment came upon them. Their calamities were sent for their purification. God would bring them to the place where they would be instructed.” Ellen G. White in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1194 (MS 151, 1899).

“Whenever He comes to us, His reward is with Him. He does not leave it in heaven, but gives it to us every day. Daily He gives us confidence and light and blessing.” Ellen G. White, in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1145 (MS 116, 1902).

“God’s children are always being tested in the furnace of affliction. If they endure the first trial, it is not necessary for them to pass through a similar ordeal the second time; but if they fail, the trial is brought to them again and again, each time being still more trying and severe. Thus opportunity after opportunity is placed before them of gaining the victory and proving themselves true to God. But if they continue to manifest rebellion, God is compelled at last to remove His spirit and light from them (MS 69, 1912).

“Sorrow and trial must come to all and is beautiful only as it works to polish, to sanctify, and refine the soul as a fit instrument to do service for the Lord.” Ellen G. White, in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1146. (letter 69, 1897).

“Jesus with solemn tenderness explained the purpose of the husbandman. The pruning will cause pain, but it is the Father who applies the knife. He works with no wanton hand or indifferent heart. There are branches trailing upon the ground; these must be cut loose from the earthly supports to which their tendrils are fastening. They are to reach heavenward, and find their support in God. The excessive foliage that draws away the life current from the fruit must be pruned off. The overgrowth must be cut out, to give room for the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness. The husbandman **prunes** away the harmful growth, that the fruit may be richer and more abundant.” Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, p. 677.

“Ministers and people need the work of purification in their souls, that God’s judgments may be turned away from them.” Ellen G. White in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1150 (MS 33, 1903).

“The truth of God received into the heart is able to make you wise unto salvation. In believing and obeying it you will receive grace sufficient for the duties and trials of today. Grace for tomorrow you do not need.” Ellen G. White, Testimonies to the Church, vol. 3, p. 333.

“God will test and prove his people. One sacred truth after another will be brought to bear upon their hearts, close and cutting, until their faith will be purified and tried like gold, until all their dross will be purged away, and Jesus will present them unto his Father without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. We must overcome through trials and sufferings, as Jesus overcame. We must not shun the cross or the suffering part of religion. The language of the heart should

be, Let me know the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. Let me suffer with him that I may reign with Him.” Ellen G. White in the Present Truth and Review & Herald Articles, vol. 1, p. 59.

“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” Isa 54:7, 8.

“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” II Timothy 2:25.

Micah 1:10-16

Re: verses 15-16 –

These verses, as translated in Assignment Questions under Micah 1:10-16, contain a great promise and set forth an important principle, for, if the one taking possession and thereby becoming father to the people of verse 15 is the enemy, as the context implies, then the promise that “he will come, the glory of Israel,” means that even in our sufferings God – the glory of Israel – comes to us; while verse 16 tells us that God’s presence does not necessarily negate the evil we have brought on ourselves.

The message of these verses is that in our sufferings God is present to sustain us, or as Micah’s partner Isaiah said, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.” (Isa. 63:9).

LESSON 5

Micah

Chapter 2

Assignment Questions

Micah 2

Read chapter 2 through, then respond to the following:

Micah 2:1-2

Who are the evil people addressed in these verses?

Micah 2:3

What family is “this family” (v. 3a)? Who is the “I” who devises an evil in verse 3b?

Micah 2:4

Who is the “he” of verse 4?

Micah 2:5

What is the message of verse 5?

Micah 2:1-5

What is the message of verses 1-5?

Micah 2:6

What is the function of a prophet in verse 6?

Micah 2:7

- a. What is the issue regarding the spirit of the Lord in this verse?
- b. To whom do the “my words” in verse 7 refer? Is it the “spirit of the Lord” of verse 7, or “the Lord” of verse 3?

Micah 2:8, 9

- a. Who is doing the abusing in verse 8 and verse 9a?
- b. How is the glory of God taken away in verse 9b?

Micah 2:10

Who is to “arise and depart” in verse 10a? Who sends them away?

Micah 2:11

What is the connection between this verse and 2:6?

Micah 2:12

Who is doing the assembling; who are being assembled? Why are they being assembled?

Micah 2:13

What is the picture this verse is painting?

Micah 2:6-13

What is the message of verse 6:13?

LESSON 5

Micah

Chapter 2

Assignment Answers

Micah 2:1, 2

Those who devise evil. The planners or inventors of injustice and workers of evil who are pronounced against in these verses are those who have the power to carry out their plans.

Whether their power is in the spiritual, political or physical realm, none who plan and/or carry out evil are excepted from the pronounced woe.

Micah 2:3

The “this family” of this verse is those who are arranging the evil of verses 1 and 2. The one who devises evil in 2:3b against those planners of evil is the Lord. Micah 2:3c makes clear that the evil time is the cause of God’s act, not the result.

(For a discussion of God as the planner and executor of evil, see above “Summary of Story” in the Assignment Answers section of Micah 1:8, 9)

Micah 2:4

The “he” of verse 4 is the Lord of verse 3 who said He would devise evil against evil planners and doers. The evil He has set in action results in verse 4 in the people being utterly devastated; the share of property of God’s people He will exchange; and He will divide their open country to the faithless, or apostate.

Micah 2:5

This verse can be translated, “therefore he will not be to you one throwing down a rope in lot in the assembly of the Lord.”

The message of verse 5 here appears quite clearly to be further explanation of the results of the sins of God’s people against their fellowmen; He will not be in their midst as a divider of promised blessings.

The message of Micah 2:1-5 is that by our sins against our fellowmen (2:1, 2) we can cause God to turn against us (2:3) in our present circumstances (2:4), and we can cause Him to cancel promised blessings for the future (2:5). But we also know from Scripture how “David’s sincere repentance and confession were accepted by God, notwithstanding he suffered for his transgression; . . .

"In the joy of his release he sang; 'I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.

'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. . .

'Thou art my hiding place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble;

'Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.'" Ellen White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 726.

Micah 2:6

The functions of a prophet are various, but in this verse, which is variously translated, the function of a prophet is to prevent disgrace to the people of God.

(Note: The verse can be literally translated, "You shall not prophesy, they shall prophesy (but) they have not prophesied to these, (therefore) disgrace will not draw back."

The New American Standard Bible translates this verse, "Do not speak out, so they speak out. But if they do not speak out concerning these things, reproaches will not be turned back." Micah 2:6

Micah 2:7

a/b. When the question is raised in verse 7, "are these doings the doings of the spirit of the Lord," that question is preceded by another question – "has the spirit of the Lord become annoyed?"

The implication is that either the spirit of the Lord has become annoyed (straightened), or at least the disgrace of verse 6 is not the result of the Holy Spirit's activity, for the "my words," the words of the Lord of verse 3, have as their result the doing of good to him that walketh uprightly – not the bringing of disgrace.

Micah 2:8, 9

- a. God's people.
- b. By appropriating the blessings God had provided the poor with to themselves - by buying too low and selling too high – the love of God to the poor is obscured. They never come to realize the blessings God had sent – someone stole it away by fraud. The children's resultant misunderstandings about God's character takes from them a vision of the splendor of God; while God's punishment of Israel for their sins further hides His splendor from Israel's children.

By people abusing other people (2:9a) the splendor or majesty of the character of God is taken from the children who suffer and don't see God's goodness as it should have been revealed in His providings for their needs.

This means that the splendor of God here is taken from the children in perhaps three ways:

1. The children don't have God's character in their lives – they didn't behold, so they weren't changed. This loss is of character.
2. The splendor of God is taken away by the hunger and want the children experience. This loss is in knowledge.
3. The splendor of God is taken away from the children in that they don't see the character of God reflected in the adults with whom they are surrounded and with whom their parents have dealings. This loss is of example.

That which is lost here from the children is that which men denied Christ had in Isaiah 53:2.

Micah 2:10

God's people – the ones who have been abusing their fellowmen and removing the glory of the Lord from their children – are the ones here ordered (Heb: imperative) by God Himself to leave the evil they are doing; because it is polluted and will destroy them with a sore destruction.

Micah 2:11

The connection between verse 11 and verse 6 is that the true prophet of verse 6 who would say that which would prevent disgrace to the people of God, and who is told to be silent by God's people, is gladly replaced, by those who claim they are God's people, by one who walks in the spirit of false hood and intoxicating drink, as their prophet, in verse 11.

Micah 2:12

If Jacob is a reference to the nation of Judah, and Ephraim another name for the ten tribes of Israel, then God is here saying that He will (sometime) gather together the remnant of Israel's ten tribes and all of Judah and place them where He wants them to be.

Micah 2:13

This verse speaks of the time when the remnant of Israel's ten tribes and Judah will turn from the evil they were called to leave in verse ten; pass through the confines that evil placed about them, and, together with a Christian king going before them, follow the Lord at their head.

The message of verse 6-13 is that there will be a faithful group from among God's professed people and leaders, who will listen to His counsel and turn from the evil that would have destroyed them, and the evil leaders (v. 11) who would approve to them their evil deeds, and follow a king who leads them by following the Lord, their Head.

LESSON 6

Micah

Chapter 3 Assignment Questions

Micah 3

Read Prophets and Kings, pp. **322**, 325, and Micah chapter 3.

Micah 3:1-3

Who is the “I” of verse one?

Micah 3:4

- a. Who is the “they” of verse 4, of whom the Lord says that He will not hear them, and that He will in fact hide His face from them?
- b. What is the significance of the Lord hiding His face?
- c. What caused the Lord to act this way?

Micah 3:5

Are the prophets of verse 5 God’s prophets?

Micah 3:6

Who is the subject of the pronouncement of verse 6?

Micah 3:7

- a. Are the Seers of verse 7 to be distinguished from the prophets of verse 5?
- b. Do the sins of false prophets, accepted by God’s people as true prophets, block messages of God to his true prophets?

Micah 3:8

Who is the “I” of verse 8?

Micah 3:6-8

What is the story of these three verses?

Micah 3:9-12

- a. For whose sake is zion plowed?
- b. What is the message of verse 9-12?

LESSON 6

Micah

Chapter 3 Assignment Answers

Micah 3:1-3

The “I” of verse one is God; it is He who calls the Israelites “my people” (3:3).

Micah 3:4

- a. The “they” of verse four is the heads of Judah and the rulers of the house of Israel addressed in 3:1.
- b. The significance of the Lord hiding His face is to be seen in the results set forth in 3:6-8; God will not communicate with His people.
- c. The sins of the leaders cause God to act this way; it is significant to recall that the pronouncements of God against His people are the result of the leader’s sins – rather than the mistakes of the followers of God’s peoples’ leaders.

Micah 3:5

No.

Micah 3:6

The prophets of verse 5.

Micah 3:7

- a. No.
- b. Yes; because of the sins of God’s people, committed at least in part because they are following false leaders, God’s communications to them are interrupted; His plans for them have to be altered.

Micah 3:8

Micah

Micah 3:6-8

Because of the sins of the leaders whom Israel is following, God ceases to speak to those leader’s prophets – there is no vision of God for them. But to God’s faithful prophet, the one who follows Him even when he must stand alone, God gives power, the Spirit of the Lord, and courage to make God’s feelings known.

Micah 3:9-12

- a. The sins of the rulers and leaders of 3:1-3 result in God's hiding his face from His people and not answering when they cry to Him (3:4). The sins of the prophets of 3:5 result in God's not giving them visions. But when these leaders add to their sins by saying that God is leading them and therefore no harm can come to them, God orders for Zion to be plowed as a field and Jerusalem to become a heap of ruins.
- b. The message of verses 9-12 is that when God's people's leaders err, and yet claim they are following God, and that He will protect them, the resultant sins of God's people are so grievous as to bring about results that are eternal.

Micah 3:9-12

Note: If the plowing-of-zion prophecy is in fact not finally fulfilled until A.D. 70, while Micah made the prophecy in the eighth century B.C., it is clear that

"The forbearance of God has been very great – so great that when we consider the continuous insult to His holy commandments, we marvel. The Omnipotent One has been exerting a restraining power over His own attributes.

"God allows men a period of probation; but there is a point beyond which divine patience is exhausted, and the judgments of God are sure to follow. The Lord bears long with men, and with cities, mercifully giving warnings to save them from divine wrath; but a time will come when pleadings for mercy will no longer be heard, and the rebellious element that continues to reject the light of truth will be blotted out, in mercy to themselves and to those who would otherwise be influenced by their example." Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 276.

"The desolation of Jerusalem stands as a warning before the eyes of modern Israel, that the corrections given through his chosen instruments cannot be disregarded with impunity." Ellen G. White in Present Truth and Review & Herald Articles, vol. 1, p. 535.

Micah 3:12

For further study: *If* the destruction of A.D. 70 is the result of a cumulation of sins, does A.D. 70, and its events, have a tie to sins committed prior to 606 B.C.? Does this passage teach that there are sins that though rebuked by Micah and his contemporaries, and punished (606-586) and forgiven (rebuilding of the Temple), are still shedding an influence for evil which adds to the cumulative total which results in the events of A.D. 70? For help with the answer to this question see Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 26-29.

LESSON 7

Micah

Chapter 4

Assignment Questions

Micah 4

Read Micah 4

Introduction: The eschatology of the Old Testament is different in structure from that of the New Testament. In the Old Testament God's people were to occupy a territory and there live out God's plan for His people's lives; the people doing the expressed will of God and God responding with more blessings and more revelations of His will.

As the nations surrounding Israel (a united nation) saw God's lifestyle lived out, they either asked to join with Israel in the covenant, or they rebelled and were destroyed; their geographical territory being then added to Israel's until Israel occupied the whole earth.

In the midst of this process the Messiah would come, die, resurrect, go back to Heaven, and then shortly return to earth, here to set up His kingdom. Thus one would have in existence at one time a portion of the earth like unto Heaven, and a portion of the earth as of yet unrenewed. (For the study of this Old Testament eschatology read in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, pp. 25-39.

Micah 4:1-8 is reflective of the eschatology of the Old Testament.

Micah 4:1-5

Why does Micah 4:1-5 follow Micah 3:12?

Micah 4:6-8

- Compare the results of Micah 3:6, 7, 9-11 as set forth in 3:12 with the results of 4:1-4 as expressed in 4:6-8.
- What does this cause and effect picture portray to be the function of a Christian's works in his own life – in the life of his nation?
- Is this cause-and-effect portrayal parallel to God's method of bringing about salvation, or to the divine basis of judgment? Consult Matthew 25:31-46.
- Why is 4:1-8 placed between 3:12 and 4:9, 10a, and 11?

Micah 4:9, 10a

- When is "now" in 4:9 and in 4:10a?
- What is the connection between 3:12 and 4:9, 10a?

- c. What is the story told by 4:9, 10a?

Micah 4:10b

These clauses say, there you will be delivered, there the Lord will redeem you from the power of your enemies; where is there? Where was this promise historically fulfilled?

Micah 4:11

Who is “you” in 4:11?

Micah 4:12a

- a. Who is “they” in 4:12a and 12b?
- b. Who is “them” in 4:12c?

Micah 4:13

- a. What is Israel’s role in 4:13?
- b. What is the message of 4:10c and 13?
- c. Do these events fulfill the prophecy in 4:1-8

LESSON 7

Micah

Chapter 4 Assignment Answers

Micah 4:1-5

Speaking of the times of Isaiah and Micah and their associates Ellen White writes, “In this time of ‘trouble and darkness’ and ‘dimness of anguish’ (Isa. 8:22), the future was made bright by means of many precious communications to the church of God concerning her future triumph.” Ellen G. White in The Present Truth and Review & Harold Articles, vol. 6, p. 482.

Here Micah 3:12’s predictions of disaster are immediately followed by pictures of hope.

Micah 4:6-8

- a. Micah 3:6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 shows that the continual and progressive sin by leaders and people result first in the loss of specific but ever widening blessings God would like to send, or has been sending, such losses finally culminating in complete destruction of that which the erring considered to be their source of strength; here – the temple and Jerusalem.

Micah 4:1-4 and 6-8 shows that God’s withdrawal of blessings in chapter 3, which culminated in 3:12, result in blessings to those who turn to God in their hour of need.

“He will punish those who misrepresent Him, but He will be gracious to all who sincerely repent. To those who call upon Him for strength for the development of Christian character, He will give all needed help.” Ellen White, Prophets and Kings, p. 590.

These verses also show us that the blessings God sends in response to His people’s acts result in blessing to other nations as well as repentant Israel – “And numerous nations will walk and they will say walk, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob and He will teach us from His ways and we will walk in His way. . . “

Finally, we see God not only the teacher and judge of His people, but their healer and Savior as well.

“Satan, by means of his success in turning man aside from the path of obedience, became ‘the god of this world.’ II Corinthians 4:4. The dominion that once was Adam’s passed to the usurper. But the Son of God proposed to come to this earth to pay the penalty of sin, and thus not only redeem man, but recover the dominion forfeited. It is of this restoration that Micah prophesied when he said, “O Tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto Thee shall it come, even the first dominion.’ Micah 4:8.” Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 682.

- b. These verses show that God, often, is limited in His blessing-giving to acts by Him directed to us that reveal the way He sees our acts accentuating our devaluing the work He is doing to bring about a restoration from the effects brought by sin.

The exceptions to these limitations are those times when He is acting for His own name sake.

This principle is true of God's relation to nations as well as to individuals – as Micah 3:12 shows.

- c. This cause-and-effect portrayal is parallel to the divine basis for judgment – but not to God's method of bringing about salvation.

Matthew 25:31-46 teaches that in the judgment we are rewarded on the basis of our works, while God's method of salvation is for Him to respond to expressions of faith. Justification, sanctification, and new birth, etc., are God-produced results that come in association with decisions as acts of faith done by us.

Mrs. White writes that "Our acceptance with God is sure only through His beloved Son, and good works are but the result of the working of His sin-pardoning love. They are no credit to us, and we have nothing accorded to us for our good works by which we may claim a part in the salvation of our souls. Salvation is God's free gift to the believer, given to him for Christ's sake alone. The troubled soul may find peace through faith in Christ, and his peace will be in proportion to his faith and trust. He cannot present his good works as a plea for the salvation of his soul.

"But are good works of no real value? Is the sinner who commits sin everyday with impunity regarded of God with the same favor as the one who through faith in Christ tries to work in his integrity? The Scripture answers, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In His divine arrangement, through His unmerited favor, the Lord has ordained that good works shall be rewarded. We are accepted through Christ's merit alone; and the acts of mercy, the deeds of charity, which we perform, are the fruits of faith; and they become a blessing to us; for men are to be rewarded according to their works. It is the fragrance of the merit of Christ that makes our good works acceptable to God, and it is grace that enables us to do the works for which He rewards us. Our works in and of themselves have no merit. When we have done all that it is possible for us to do, we are to count ourselves as unprofitable servants. We deserve no thanks from God. We have only done what it was our duty to do, and our works could not have been performed in the strength of our own sinful natures.

"The Lord has bidden us to draw nigh to Him and He will draw nigh to us; and drawing nigh to Him, we receive the grace by which to do those works which will be rewarded at His hands (RH

Jan.20, 1895).” Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Jan 29, 1895 quoted B.C., v, 1122. (See also Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, pp. 637-641.)

- d. Micah 4:1-8 is placed after 3:12 to make a time of trouble and anguish be seen in the context of the future which was made bright by promises of future triumph; Israel was here assured that God never strikes a useless blow – those who endure His correcting would live in people – but the transformation had not yet been realized, therefore, Micah 4:9, 10a, and 11 served to call the people back to the present.

Micah 4:9, 10a

- a. “Now” is the day in which Micah addressed them. Judgment time had arrived.
- b. Micah 3:12 is a prophecy of doom for God’s people that does not have a stated time element; it simply states what will happen, while 4:9, is a prophecy of doom that is stated to be for the people Micah is speaking to. The present fulfillment of 4:9, 10a gives certainty to the future fulfillment of 3:12.
- c. Israel’s chosen gods and leaders are powerless to stop Israel’s suffering when God sends trouble.

Micah 4:10b

“There” is in Babylon; God redeemed Israel when He caused them to experience that which turned them back to Him, and when He caused their captors to set them free at the end of the 70 years of Babylonian captivity.

Micah 4:11

“You” is God’s professed followers.

Micah 4:12

- a. “They” in 4:12 is the many nations of 4:11 who are actively against God’s people.
- b. “Them” is the hostile nations – hostile to Israel – who don’t realize they are gathered by the Lord.

Micah 4:13

- a. Israel’s role in this verse is to bring about the judgment of God on the nations God has assembled (4:12), for the purpose of releasing to the Lord those nation’s unjust gain and wealth.
- b. God will rescue His people from the trouble He has arranged for them, when they have become – through their trials – the kind of people who can help Him with His work on this earth. This principle is eternal, therefore the secondary application of Micah 4:10-12 is to the church of God, “in the hour of her greatest peril” – “the great final scenes in the history of our world.” (Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, pp. 537, 538.)

- c. The prophecy of hope in 4:1-8 is not fulfilled by any of the other events described in chapter 4. The gathering of the nations described in the events of 4:9-13 is brought about by God for their judgment (4:13c), not for their peaceful coexistence with Israel in the service of the Lord.

Note:

“In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.” Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings pp. 499, 500.

“In the word of God only is this clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations, as of individuals, is not found in the opportunities or facilities that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. It is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God’s purpose.” Ibid, p. 502.

LESSON 8

Micah

Chapter 5 Assignment Questions

Read

Micah 5

Micah 6:1

- a. What is the message of 5:1?

Micah 5:2

- a. What is the significance of “from long ago,” and “from the days of eternity”?
- b. What is the message of 5:2?

Micah 5:3

What is the message of this verse?

Micah 5:4

- a. Who is “He” in verse 4?
- b. What is “they”?
- c. What is the message of this verse?

Micah 5:5a

- a. Who is “this one”?
- b. What function does He have?

Micah 5:5b, 6

What is the message?

Micah 5:7, 8

- a. When is “then”?
- b. What is the message of these verses?

Micah 5:9

- a. Whose land is “your land”?
- b. What is the message of verse 9?

Micah 5:10-14

- a. What day is “that day” in verse 10?
- b. Whose horses, chariots, etc., are to be destroyed in verses 10-14?
- c. Who is the destroyer?
- d. What is the function of the destruction here foretold?

Micah 5:15

- a. Who is the destroyer in this verse and against whom is this destruction?
- b. What is the result of the destructions described in 5:9-15? Compare their cause and purpose with the cause and purpose of the conflict foretold in 5:5b and 6.

Micah 5:1-15

- a. What is the message of chapter 5?
- b. Is this Old Testament or New Testament eschatology?

LESSON 8

Micah

Chapter 5

Assignment Answers

Micah 5:1

In the Hebrew Bible the material found in our English bible as Micah 5:1 is the last verse of Micah, Chapter 4.

In our English Bible Micah 5:1 is another prophecy of doom to the rebellious people who claim to be serving God; in the Hebrew chapter and verse numbering it is a continuation of the prophecy of doom beginning in Micah 4:9. However one numbers it, the verse is a message of judgment against God's rebellious people. They are to prepare to fight, knowing God has planned for them to lose.

Micah 5:2

- a. The phrase "from long ago" can also be translated "springing out of," or "derived from ancient times" (BDB), but it interestingly also has the meaning of east; hence the phrase "from the ancient times" or "from long ago" (NASB), can also be translated "from the east." (Such a translation would be very interesting in the light of the Biblical kings of the east who might then be seen as the forces of God.)

The phrase "from the days of eternity" is from the Hebrew word meaning "all time" or "forever." (Holloday). In the intensive form the stress is on the concept translated "everlastingness" (BDB).

In Micah 4:7 the prophet says the Lord will reign "from now on and forever," the forever of 4:7 and of 5:2 being translated from the same Hebrew word. Here forever, therefore, can be carrying the meaning of a concept expressed by Mrs. White as living as long as God lives.

The significance of these phrases occurring together is that a general concept of long-timeness becomes a description of that which, or the one who, actually parallels or bears eternity.

- b. The message of Micah 5:2 is that from Bethlehem, the smallest or youngest in the thousands of Judah, is to come forth to the Lord (Heb.: From you to Me), the One to become the One ruling, or exercising dominion, in Israel; this One has had his beginning or going forth from eternity – therefore He is divine.

Note: Mrs. White said the Jews could have known the Christ was divine; perhaps the Biblical support for that statement is as clear in this passage as in i.e., Isa. 9:6.

Micah 5:3

Micah 5:3 says that Israel, the rebellious and offensive children of God, will be given up by Him until His special ruler is born. The message of this verse is that when God's children offend Him they have no hope of becoming right with Him again apart from the special One who is to be born (verse 3a).

After His birth the sons of Israel will again become united (verse 3b).

Micah 5:4

- a. "He" is the promised ruler of 5:2, 3.
- b. "They" is the ruled; the united sons of Israel.
- c. The message of the verse is that the promised ruler will rule over the united sons of Israel in the power and majesty of the name of the Lord; therefore he will become famous (great) to the ends of the earth and his subjects will now "live in safety" (Micah 5:4 margin – NASB; Heb.: dwell, or sit down).

Micah 5:5a

"This one" is the ruler of 5:4. His role is to be "our peace" to the united sons of Israel whom He rules. (Note: This phrase appears to be the concluding line of Micah 5:4).

Micah 5:5b, 6

When the Assyrian invades Israel's land, the sons of Israel, led by the ruler of 5:2-5a, will rise against him so successfully that they will become the rulers of Assyria (5:6a), because of the special blessing of God realized through Israel's promised One who rules in the majesty and power of the name of the Lord.

Micah 5:7, 8

- a. "Then" is when God's ruler does God's will and God's people follow God's ruler.
- b. When God's people follow God's true leader they are among many people as gentle blessings from God, like the dew, doing His bidding, and not waiting for approval from men (5:7), some of the time – but they are also as a young lion among sheep; when they seek to destroy there is no one to rescue those they attack (5:8).

Note: This portrayal of God's special Ruler's people – those who do always and promptly what He wills – as acting dual parts – on the one hand being as gentle as the dew, and on the other hand being like a hungry lion among a flock of sheep, tearing whoever he will, is very interesting in the light of the New Testament passages where Jesus is called the Lamb of God.

As the Amnos Lamb He gives His life to suffer and die, but as the Arnion Lamb He manifests the qualities of the lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5). The Arnion is here a composite symbol – suffering Amnos plus mighty lion.

Mrs. White resolved these two apparently contradictory qualities when she wrote that Jesus was the Lamb to the saved and the Lion to the lost. An exegetical study of the New Testament lamb passages shows this to be a very precise summary of the significance of the Lamb title as applied to Jesus in the New Testament. (For supporting evidence see Bernard Spencer, a thesis (M.TH.; Andrews University) entitled Jesus As the Lamb.).

Micah 5:9

- a. The hand of God's special ruler and His obedient subjects.
- b. The message of 5:9b is that God is against the adversaries of His people; when His people follow faithfully His plan for them, all their enemies will be destroyed.

Note: This work of God's people will be in fulfillment of 5:8b, where God's people are likened to a lion among sheep – not in fulfillment of 5:8a where they are likened to dew and a gentle rain; as such it parallels exactly the New Testament teaching of Jesus as the Arnion Lamb with a dual nature – savior and destroyer.

Micah 5:10-14

- a. "The day" is the time when God's special ruler of 5:2 and God's faithful people are either a blessing, gentle as the dew, or a terror to their adversaries, as a young lion; which qualities being displayed depending on the expression of His will that God communicates.
- b. Israel's horses, chariots, etc., are the ones being destroyed in 5:10-14.
- c. The Lord (Jehovah) who is served by the special Ruler of 5:2.
- d. The function of the destruction prophesied in these verses is to take away from Israel her obvious source of strength and the remnants of false worship, making it obvious that any future strength manifested by Israel as a nation is solely due to God's power – He being the only deity they have left.

Micah 5:15

- a. The Lord, Jehovah, is the destroyer of the nations who are disobedient to Him.
- b. The conflict in 5:9-15 makes Israel dependent on her only God, and makes the earth to be territory owned by God.

The earlier conflict in 5:5b and 6 made the land of Israel God's land, while verses 7-8 foretold Israel's becoming God's useful people; His hold in a revolted world.

Micah 5:1-15

- a. The message of this chapter is that God is good to His errant people, for the prophecies of doom were accompanied by promises of restoration and prophecies of the advent of the Messiah. This chapter also portrays that the sore chastisements of the earlier chapters, grievous though they might have seemed at the time, “would be used by a merciful Providence as a means of salvation.” Ellen G. White in Present Truth and Review & Herald Articles. Vol.6, p. 481.

Through His grace the curse works out blessing.

- b. The setting of Micah 5 is Old Testament eschatology (compare Micah 4:10 and 5:3-5 for the approximate time of the prophesied restoration). (You may want to read again SDABC 25-39.)

LESSON 9

Micah

Chapter 6

Assignment Questions

Read chapter 6 through, then respond to the following:

Micah 6:1, 2

What is happening in these verses?

Micah 6:3

Who is speaking?

Micah 6:4

What is the question behind the deeds listed?

Micah 6:5

What is the message of this verse? In your answer be sure to include the relationship between the "counsel of Balak," the "answer of Balaam," and "the righteous acts of the Lord."

Micah 6:6, 7

- a. Who is the "I" of 6:6a? Is it the same "I" as in 6:3?
- b. In your own words, re-state the question of 6:6, 7?
- c. What is the soul that can sin a sin for which the fruit of the body is inadequate?

Micah 6:8

- a. Why does verse 8 follow verses 6 and 7?
- b. What is the connection between the rejected sacrifices (sacrifices were ordered by God), and the admonition to do justly and love mercy?
- c. What is the message of 6:6-8?

Micah 6:9-12

What is the message here?

Micah 6:13-15

- a. Who causes the troubles listed in verses 13-15 directly, and indirectly?

Micah 6:16

- a. Who is addressed in verse 16d – “Therefore . . . you will bear the reproach of my people”? (to find the answer check the antecedent to each pronoun in the chapter.)
- b. What is the message of this verse?

LESSON 9

Micah

Chapter 6

Assignment Answers

Micah 6:1, 2

Micah is inviting the Lord to present His case against His people to the Mountains and hills, because the Lord has a case against His people, and they are acting as if they had become weary of listening to Him.

Micah 6:3

God speaks, not to the hills, but to His people, and invites them to reply. His question – How did I weary you?

Micah 6:4

Are these the kind of activities that weary you?

Micah 6:5

The message of this verse is that God's people should be remembering to compare what Balak wanted Balaam to say, and what Balaam wanted to say, with what Balaam actually said, because the difference reveals the right doingness of the Lord, in behalf of Israel; the ones who are complaining of Him by way of not listening to His counsel.

Micah 6:6, 7

- a. Those who wished to respond to God after hearing His appeal, in 6:1-5, are the "I" of 6:6a. The "I" of 6:3 is the Lord.
- b. The question of 6:6, 7 is capable of being re-phrased into the New Testament formula, "what must I do to be saved?"

It is possible that the description of what a leper was to bring to the cleansing ritual which followed his having been healed of leprosy (see Lev. 14:10), was the

cause of this question.

The cleansing ritual of a healing leper included two separate services; to the one service, the leper to be pronounced clean, had to bring certain supplies which were used in the ritual of the service. If the leper did not bring the prescribed materials, there was no service – he could not be pronounced clean.

But to the other segment of the cleansing ritual, the leper was to take nothing (see Lev. 14:1-7).

It is of great interest to note that the two services parallel the objective and subjective portions of the atonement; the work of Christ on our behalf, to which we can add nothing, and the work of Christ on our behalf which is only effective after we respond to His working in our lives.

With this understanding of this one portion of the sanctuary ritual, we recognize that it is not necessary to assume the question, “what shall we bring” is based in total unawareness of God’s will as it has been revealed in the past.

- c. What is the soul that can sin a sin for which the fruit of the body, and prescribed offerings, are inadequate?

The answer to this question is academically seen differently by various schools of thought. To point to our answer to the question “what is the soul,” we will therefore simply quote from the Spirit of Prophecy materials. Make a list of Mrs. White’s points in the quotations below and add your own favorite quote on this topic.

“Adam was a noble being, which a powerful mind, a will in harmony with the will of God, and affections that centered upon heaven. He possessed a body heir to no disease, and a soul bearing the impress of Deity.” The Youth’s Instructor Articles, p. 562 (Mar. 5, 1903).

“The entire being, body, soul, and spirit, must be brought into subjection to God, to be used by Him as an instrument of righteousness.” The Youth’s Instructor Articles, p. 486 (Nov. 8, 1900).

“By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied. Of ourselves we are no more capable of living a holy life than was the impotent man capable of walking.” The Desire of Ages, p. 203.

“When the soul has been cleansed, it is the duty of the Christian to keep it undefiled.” The Youth’s Instructor Articles, p. 562 (Mar. 5, 1903).

“You must not imperil your soul by sowing wild oats.” The Youth’s Instructor Articles, p. 415 (July 27, 1899).

“By giving his only begotten son to die on the cross, God has shown us the estimate He places on the human soul.” The Youth’s Instructor Articles, p. 414 (July 20, 1899).

“Christ healed the man, both soul and body, showing that he had power to pardon sins, and bring peace and righteousness to the conscience-stricken soul.” The Youth’s Instructor Articles, p. 369 (Sept. 11, 1898).

“We are to ask ourselves the question ‘How is it with my soul? A healthy soul in a healthy body makes a man or woman more precious than silver or gold, . . .’” Pacific Union Recorder Articles, p. 1 (Arg. 1, 1901).

“Yes, the Word of God is the bread of life. Eat of it daily. IT will infuse immortal vigor into your soul, perfecting your experience, and bringing you those joys that abide forever.” Pacific Union Recorder Articles, p. 164 (Dec. 22, 1904).

“When the grace of God reigns within, the soul will be surrounded with an atmosphere of faith and courage and Christlike love, an atmosphere invigorating to the spiritual life of all who inhale it.” Pacific Union Recorder Articles, p. 188 (Apr. 13, 1905).

“The Spirit of God, received into the soul, quickens all its faculties.” Gospel Workers, p. 285.

“When man sinned, his nature became evil, and he was in harmony and not at variance with Satan. . . . It is the grace that Christ implants in the soul that creates the enmity against Satan.” Present Truth and Review & Herald Articles, vol. 1, p. 329 (cf. G.C. 506).

“The baleful influence of sin poisons the life of the soul.” Present Truth and Review & Herald Articles, vol.1, p. 339.

“If to save the body from death, the foot or the hand should be cut off, or even the eye plucked out, how much more earnest should the Christian be to put away sin, which brings death to the soul.” The Acts of the Apostles, p. 313.

“The grace of God comes to the soul through the channel of living faith, and that, faith it is in our power to exercise.” Messages to Young People, p. 72.

“Then let us not be satisfied with only a little of this blessing, only that amount which will keep us from the slumber of death.” Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles, vol. 2, p. 555 (Mar. 29, 1892).

“When truth becomes an abiding principle in the life, the soul is ‘born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.’” The Acts of the Apostles, p. 520.

“In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.” Steps to Christ, p. 68.

“When he suffers death for Christ’s sake, the Saviour says to him, They may kill the body, but they cannot hurt the soul.” The Acts of the Apostles, p. 85.

“The soul that God has created and Christ has redeemed is of great value because of the possibilities before it, the spiritual advantages that have been granted it, the capabilities that it may possess if vitalized by the word of God, and the immortality it may gain through the hope presented in the gospel.” The Acts of the Apostles, p. 370.

“The good resolutions made in one’s own strength avail nothing. Not all the pledges in the world will break the power of evil habit. Never will men practice temperance in all things until their hearts are renewed by divine grace. We cannot keep ourselves from sin for one moment. Every moments we are dependent upon God.

“True reformation begins with soul cleansing. Our work for the fallen will achieve real success only as the grace of Christ reshapes the character and the soul is brought into living connections with God.” Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing, pp. 179, 180.

Micah 6:8

- a. Micah in 6:8 answers the question Israel asked in 6:6, 7 by saying, He has told you what He cares about from you – doing justice and loving godly deeds, and living modestly while walking with your God.
- b. The connection is found in the focal-point of the server-of-God; a commitment to God accompanied by obedience to God’s expressed will causes the obedient one to follow where ever God leads, while a commitment to that which is commanded by God results in disobedience at the point that the requirement is changed. The Jews killed Jesus and the apostles for several reasons, one of which was to preserve the sacrificial system they “obeyed.”
- c. The message of 6:6-8 is that to come before the Lord I must bring right acts done to my neighbor, while I was walking with God – being easy to guide. Such a process – obedience to the commandments of God – results in the reproduction in the individual of the character of the One he is obeying.

Micah 6:9-12

After what the Lord has done for Israel listed in 6:1-5, and after Israel’s inquiries and God’s answer in 6:6-8, the questions in 6:9-12 are, Is wickedness yet retained by God’s people in their midst, and, can God justify wickedness while it is retained?

The message of 6:9-12 is that in spite of what God has done for His people and their professions to be seeking His will, there is no justification for them while they retain wickedness in their midst.

Micah 6:13-15

The troubles coming on Israel are directly caused by God (He is the "I" in 6:13), but indirectly these troubles only come because of Israel's evil deeds; they bring the troubles on themselves.

Micah 6:16

- a. The Interlinear Bible (gen. ed. & translators Jay P. Green sr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), translates Micah 6:16 as follows:

"And (one) has kept himself (as to) the statues of Omri, and all the work of the house of Ahab, and you walk in their counsels, so that I may give you for a horror, and her inhabitants for a hissing; and the disgrace of My people you shall bear."

(The Hebrew of the first phrase is unusual but not grammatically incorrect; the form is third person masculine and can, of course, be translated "he," but it is also proper to translate it by the impersonal form, "and one." The context seems to require this impersonal form, which the Interlinear Bible uses. Where the verse is translated this way, it has an interesting message.)

To determine who is addressed in the last phrase of the chapter, we will check the antecedent to each of the pronouns in the chapter, watching for the story they develop.

In verses 3-5 "you" is in reference to "my people" – God being the spokesman.

In verse 8 "You" is the violent rich men of the city and its lying residents.

In verses 14 and 15 the same group of people is the topic. In verse 16 there are several pronouns, as follows:

In the first phrase, "and (one) has kept himself (as to) the statues of Omri, and all the work of the house of Ahab," (one) refers to an unfaithful leader.

In verse 16b "and you walk in their counsels," "you" refers to the people of the Lord who follow the false leader or leaders, while "their" refers to the statues of Omri, and the house of Ahab.

In verse 16c, "so that I may give you for a horror," "I" is, of course, a reference to God, the spokesman here, while "you" refers to the false leader of leaders of 16a, who is to be treated in such a way as will result in his situation and experience causing others to be horrified.

In verse 16d, “and her inhabitants for a hissing,” “her” refers to the inhabitants of the city God is bringing judgments on.

In verse 16e, “and the disgrace of My people you shall bear,” “My” is a reference to God, and “you” (Heb: 2 m pl) is the leaders who brought on the state of affairs which call forth God’s judgments.

(Note there are other translations and accompanying messages to parts of the verse. The Hebrew is difficult.)

The message of these verses, as translated, is that when God’s leaders and people go astray both will suffer; and people will not go unpunished because they were lead into error by following apostate leaders, but there is a special responsibility the false leader has to meet at God’s hand.

For more information on this concept of leader accountability see, for example:

1. Ellen G. White, the Great Controversy, pp. 598-599, 654-657.
2. Jeremiah 28:15-17.

LESSON 10

Micah

Chapter 7 Assignment Questions

Micah 7:1

- a. Who is the "I" of 7:1?
- b. What is the message of the phrase, "Like the fruit pickers and the grape gatherers"? Note: the Hebrew reads, "I am as the harvests of summer (fruit), as gleaners of vintage."
- c. What is the message of the phrase, "Or a first-ripe fig which I crave"? Note: the Hebrew reads, "there is no cluster for eating, early figs she craved, my soul."
- d. What is the cause of the messages occurring in the phrases referred to in b and c?

Micah 7:2-6

What is the message of the phrase in verse 4b which the NASB translates, "The day when you post a watchman, your punishment will come. Then there confusing will occur"?

Micah 7:7

Who is the "I" of this verse?

Micah 7:5-8

What is the message of these verses? What is God here like?

Micah 7:7-9

- a. Who is the sufferer? Primary application? Secondary application? Is there a third application?
- b. Why does he suffer?
- c. What brings an end to his suffering?

Micah 7:10-13

- a. Who is "your" in verse 11, and "you" in verse 12?
- b. Why is there desolation in verse 13 and growth in verses 11 and 12?
- c. Do these verses set forth the eschatology of the Old Testament or of the New Testament?
- d. What is the message of these verses?

Micah 7:14

Who is the spokesman in this verse?

Micah 7:15-17a

Who is speaking?

Micah 7:17b-20

- a. Who is talking?
- b. What message is being given?

Micah 7:1-20

In a couple of sentences, in your own words, summarize the message of this chapter.

LESSON 10

Micah

Chapter 7 Assignment Answers

Micah 7:1

- a. Micah is the “I” of 7:1, in the primary application.
- b. He is one of very few left.
- c. He desired companionship in his life with God – in his innermost life – and there was none.
- d. The cause of the messages occurring in these verses is the lack which Micah is experiencing; which lack is due to God’s predicted future acts in response to the sins of the people, on the one hand (cf.6:13-16), acts which cause him to feel separated from God, and it is due to the continuing sins of the people in the present, on the other hand (cf. 7:2-6).

Micah 7:2-6

The Hebrew of 4b can be translated, “(the) day of your watching, your visitation (or appointment), she is coming. Now will be their confusion.”

The message of this phrase is that in spite of the present successes and the large extensiveness of evil, judgment will come; and its coming will bring confusion to those who were living as if God was no longer going to do anything – either good or bad.

Micah 7:5-8

Micah’s experience of God is modulated through the nation’s relation to God in these verses. Micah encounters God in these verses as a member of that nation against whom God is bringing evil because of the nation’s identification of themselves with evil acts and policies. But while Micah recognizes that in times of retributive acts of judgment by God against His people the righteous suffer with the wicked, nevertheless he declares that the end of the righteous and the end of wicked is not the same. He states that he “will watch, I will stand waiting for (the) God of my salvation. He will harken to me, my God.

“Do not rejoice my enemies to me because he has fallen me, I will stand up.

“When I sit in darkness, the Lord is a light to me.”

In these verses God is the One who in spite of appearances and/or circumstances never is failing those whose trust is in Him.

Micah 7:7-9

- a. In the primary application Micah is the sufferer. (For the other applications, see the rest of the notes on this chapter.)
- b. He suffers because he is a part of Israel in a time of evil (7:9b). (It should be noted that the part of suffering he experienced by being a part of Israel he could have avoided by simply disassociating himself with Israel.)
- c. That which brings about an end to his suffering is the character of God. In these verses the One who brings an end to suffering is the same One who afflicts the people for their sins when they follow evil (6:16). The Source of Salvation acts on their behalf when they wait on Him (7:7-9). Here He again reveals Himself as the Lion to the rebellious, the Lamb to the righteous.

Note the qualities to which God is responding in these verses:

Watch expectantly	- verse 7a
Wait	- verse 7b
(Speak) He will hear	- verse 7c
(Faith) I will arise	- verse 8b
(Letting God lead and believing in His goodness).	
Bear the indignation of the Lord	- verse 9a
(confession of sin) I have sinned	- verse 9b

Note God's response:

Pleads my case	- verse 9c
Brings me out to the light	- verse 9d
(Changes my viewpoint) I will see his right doing or,	
(Reward) I will see His right doing	- verse 9e

Micah 7:10-13

- a. Israel
- b. There is desolation in verse 13 because the fruit of the deeds being rewarded is evil; in verses 11 and 12 the growth is the result of cooperation with God.
- c. They set forth Old Testament eschatology.
- d. There will come a time when the righteous will see evil suffer, and righteousness will increase and be appreciated.

Micah 7:14

The primary application is Micah speaking

Micah 7:15-17a

God is speaking – in response to the words spoken in verse 14.

Micah 7:17b-20

- a. The primary application is to Micah.
- b. The message is that people who come to God in fear find in Him a wonderful friend – because that is the kind of person He *is*; and has always planned on being (v.20c).

Micah 7:1-20

Though Micah lived in a time of apostasy by God’s people and retributive judgments by God, though his fellowmen were not to be trusted, and he himself experienced the correction of God, he found in God hope for the future, for himself and for the nation.

This hope was based in a knowledge of the character of God he had acquired as he sought the Lord for himself and his nation in a troubled time.

Note: “Bid the tempted to look not to circumstances, to the weakness of self, or to the power of temptation, but to the power of God’s word. All its strength is ours. . . .”

“Talk courage to the people; . . . He who is faithful and just will forgive their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

“Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. By prayer, by study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold him by the hand that will never let go.

“These precious words every soul that abides in Christ may make his own. He may say:

‘I will look unto the Lord;
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
My God will hear me.
Rejoice not against me, O my enemy;
When I fall, I shall arise;
When I sit in darkness,
The Lord shall be a light unto me.’ Micah 7:7,8.

‘He will again have compassion on us,
iniquities;
Yea, Thou wilt cast all our sins
of the sea! Micah 7:19 Noyes.”

He will blot out our

Into the depths

Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing, pp 181-182.

Supplement to Micah chapter 7 Notes

In Isaiah 7 we read of a prophet of God making a prediction to a king; the prophecy, when it was fulfilled, was a sign to the king whom the prophet made the prediction to.

This prophecy by Isaiah to Ahaz, with a primary application to their time, is picked up by Matthew and revealed to be a prophecy of the Savior of the world and the manner of His birth.

This may at first seem strange to us; but then we realize that the Bible is the story of God in relation to His creatures. I have often wished to have been on the Emmaus walk when “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke 24:27.

Different commentaries have noted that in Micah 7 the pronoun “I” sometimes seems to carry more than the weight of a Micah. It is sometimes suggested that the spokesman is therefore a collective unit such as the community of Israel.

This writer also feels there is more weight than just the prophet Micah riding on the pronoun “I” in this chapter. It is the opinion of this writer that with the exception of the phrase, “I have sinned against the Lord,” (7:9b), that the passage is a messianic prophecy; that while the primary application of the pronoun – the spokesman is Micah – is to Micah, that the secondary application is to the Savior (the third application being to us).

When read this way the dialogue is by Christ about Himself, His work, and His experiences as a redeemer living here on earth, including Calvary.

When viewed this way

7:1-13	Is Christ speaking to whoever will listen;
7:14	Christ to the Father, or the Father to Christ;
7:15	the Father speaking
7:16-18	Christ speaking
7:19a	Israel responds
7:19b	Christ speaking
7:20	Israel responds

(Reread the chapter watching for this dimension and see if you agree.)

Maybe this is one of the passages Christ opened to the disciples on the way to Emmaus.

INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH

“During the reign of Josiah the word of the Lord came to Zephaniah, specifying plainly the results of continued apostasy, and calling the attention of the true church to the glorious prospect beyond. His prophecies of impending judgment upon Judah apply with equal force to the judgments that are to fall upon the impenitent world at the time of the second advent of Christ.” Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 389.

The reason Zephaniah’s material is relevant to our time is, of course, because he speaks much about the day of the Lord, but it is also because God’s method of resolving the issues of good versus evil are unchanging.

Notice:

“With unerring accuracy the Infinite One still keeps account with the nations. While His mercy is tendered, with calls to repentance, this account remains open; but when the figures reach a certain amount which God has fixed, the ministry of wrath begins. The account is closed; Divine patience ceases. Mercy no longer pleads in their behalf.” Ibid, p. 364.

The Principle of limited mercy has been active throughout salvation history. Speaking of the time when Israel was about to go beyond the limits of mercy, again, Mrs. White writes, in connection with the Jew’s rejection of Christ during the triumphal entry, “The angel of mercy was then folding her wings to step down from the golden throne to give place to justice and swift-coming judgment.” Ellen G. White, in The Desire of Ages p. 578.

This principle, that God keeps an account with nations, is also true with individuals in their treatment of one another. Notice the following story:

“Many of the officers in charge of steamers and other vessels place themselves under the control of Satan by liquor drinking. A continuance of this indulgence destroys the brain nerve power, and they become incapable of doing their work. We know not how many times God has interposed to save a whole ship’s company from destruction because there were some on board who loved and feared Him. For their sake He has wrought wondrously. But there comes a time when the line of forbearance is passed. Mercy steps down from her golden throne, and, folding her wings, departs, Then the enemy is permitted to do that which he longs to do.” Ellen G. White in Signs of the times, vol 4, p. 128.

“The voice of mercy is now sounding in warnings and entreaties, but that voice will not always be heard if you continue to resist, and still choose your own way.” Ellen G. White in the Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles, vol 3, p. 83.

LESSON 11

Zephaniah

Assignment Questions

Chapter 1

Read Zephaniah chapter one.

Zephaniah 1:1

- a. When did Zephaniah work?
- b. Is Zephaniah a member of royalty?

Zephaniah 1:2-6

- a. Who is the spokesman in these verses?
- b. What place is "this place" in verse 4c?
- c. What is the message of these verses?

Zephaniah 1:7

What is the message of this verse?

What is the meaning of each of its phrases? (Omit the phrase, "for the day of the Lord is near.")

Zephaniah 1:8-13

- a. Why does punishment come in the day of the Lord's sacrifice?
- b. What is the message of verses 12 and 13

Zephaniah 1:14-18

- a. What is the character of the great day of the Lord in verses 14-16?
- b. Who brings the day of the Lord, and why, in verse 17?
- c. Is there any hope for salvation offered in verse 18?
- d. Is there any hope for salvation offered in chapter 17?
- e. According to Zephaniah 2:2, what is chapter 1?
- f. In light of the answer to question e, what is the function of chapter 1?
- g. Against what nation is chapter 1 aimed?

LESSON 11

Zephaniah

Assignment Answers

Chapter 1

Zephaniah 1:1

- a. In the days of Josiah, king of Judah; or approximately 600 years before Jesus was born. He may have know Nahum, Habakkuk, Joel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel who also predicted the fall of Nineveh (P.K. 365).
- b. Zephaniah may have been a member of the royal line, as he appears to trace his ancestry back to King Hezekiah.

Zephaniah 1:2-6

- a. God is the spokesman in these verses.
- b. Jerusalem and Judah.
- c. These verses tell us that God, in judgment, is going to destroy all of the wicked – even if they profess to serve Him; or if they are acting as His priests.

Zephaniah 1:7

To arrive at the message of this verse we will examine its phrases separately – omitting the phrase, “for the day of the Lord is near.”

Zeph. 1:7a

“Be silent before the Lord God. “ – This phrase literally means ‘to be silent,’ but the significance of the phrase here may be to stop sinning. (This Hebrew word also occurs in Hab. 2:20 and Judges 3:10 as “be silent” and “keep silence!”.)

To be actually silent for a duration of time, as is implied in Zeph. 1:7a, would indicate a cessation of activity; a cessation of doing one’s own way. This concept may be seen as having a parallel in ‘to Sabbath’, where Sabbath has in the Hebrew the primary meaning of stopping.

The historical significance of the Sabbath is to be found in the fact that it is God’s act of stopping. Consequently, in the existential observing of the Sabbath, we are expected to cease from our own activities as God ceased from His. Therefore, we are not surprised to find Ellen White writing that in the Sabbath the work that earns a living must cease.

“Be silent before the Lord God” can, therefore, be seen as meaning to cease from the doing of the evil that is part of life to those who do not have before them the nearness of the day of the Lord.

Zeph. 1:7c

The phrase “For the Lord has prepared a sacrifice,” is telling us the Lord has fixed, so as to be ready, a sacrifice. The Lord has made ready a sacrifice as one might make ready a road (BDB466.) The work is presented as having been accomplished.

“A sacrifice” : There are five words in the Hebrew that we might try to distinguish as we look at this concept. The first one has the general meaning of offering a gift or tribute. The second refers to an offering which is wholly burnt; while the third word is sometimes translated as “sin” and sometimes as “sin offering.” There is not always evidence of a special ritual being associated with this type of offering to God; sometimes no blood is involved even, as in 2 Kings 12:15, where the sin offering is money.

The fourth term in the Hebrew carries the meaning of compensation. This sacrifice is a guilt offering, a gift of restitution, as in 1 Samuel 6:3,4, by the Philistines in connection with their returning of the captured ark. This concept also occurs in Isaiah 53:10 where Christ is said to be the One who puts His soul as a guilt offering – which will produce results. This offering seems to have been the appropriate one where offenses against God or one’s neighbor could be estimated and therefore compensation could be paid (BDB79).

The last of our five words is the Hebrew word which is the general name for all sacrifices eaten at feasts.

The slaughter of hostile nations is this kind of sacrifice, except that it is then offered by God Himself. In this case the sacrifice is not only offered by God Himself, but He is also the One who prepares it; and sometimes the animals of prey devour the victims.

This concept occurs in the Old Testament in Isa. 34:6; Jer. 46:10; Eze. 39:17,19, and in our text, Zeph. 1:7, 8.

Note: the idea of God offering a sacrifice is a strange one to this writer.

When I sacrifice for the lord, I give up something I have and want or need to the Lord in exchange for something He has that I want or need. This exchange seems to be the basic element common to all five sacrifice-dimensions we have just reviewed as we surveyed the Hebrew words employed by the Bible writers to portray the Scriptural pictures regarding the offering of sacrifices.

Therefore, one feels the need to ask what God might be contemplating when He inspires a prophet to write that “the Lord has prepared a sacrifice.”

One element seems clear; a sacrifice by the Lord means that He is giving up something He has and wants in exchange for something He does not have, but wants.

In Eze. 39 we find information that helps us to define what it is that causes God to offer a sacrifice – what it is that He is giving up, and what it is that He will get in exchange.

God's sacrifice (vss. 17, 19) is acts of judgment, in verse 21, that serve to establish God's glory among the nations, and result in Israel knowing that Jehovah is her God (v. 22,) while the nations learn from God's sacrifice that Israel was exiled for her sins (v. 23). When Israel and the nations learn the lessons God is trying to teach them, He restores them and has mercy on them (v. 27); the nations then see God as sanctified in His people (v. 27). The concluding results are that God's people know that He is the Lord their God because He corrected them and then restored them (v. 28) so securely that no one makes them afraid (v. 26). Israel is then the possessor of the poured-out Spirit of God, and God says that He will no longer hide His face from them (v. 29).

Zeph, 1; 7d

"He has consecrated His guests."

In this phrase, "He" is, of course, the Lord. "To consecrate" is a reference to God's act of setting something, or someone, as sacred for Himself (Hifil), while "His guests" is linguistically His called ones.

Zephaniah 1:7 - Summary

In studying the phrases which occur in this verse, we have found the prophet to say that we should be silent, or stop doing our own works, for the day of the Lord is near.

Zephaniah then tells us why we should obey God – the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the obedient is certain, for God has already prepared a sacrifice (of evil nations), and He has set apart as sacred His guests, the ones He has called.

The day of vengeance – the day of the Lord's sacrifice, therefore, is a day in which God avenges Himself and His people of His and their foes.

The contextual message of chapter 1:7 seems to be that people should hush before the Lord, rather than complaining about the information given in Zeph. 1:1-6.

The reason for being silent, for ceasing from ones own acts, is because God has already worked out the punishment of the wicked, against whom the righteous might wish to complain, and because God has also already worked out the reward of the righteous – His called ones whom He has set apart as sacred.

Consequently, the fate of the wicked is sure, as is the reward of the righteous; though in daily life now this fact is not always obvious.

Zephaniah 1:7 – Conclusion

The picture in this verse is that of an individual act of judgment by God against apostate Israelites – an act which is directed at Israel’s leaders who worship false Gods (1:4-6). God is here effecting the slaughter of His adversaries in Israel.

It is now clear that the people God offers as a sacrifice are not the people who are His guests.

That which God wants, that for which He sacrifices, is the salvation of His elect; while that which He has and would like to keep (guard), but gives up, are those people who won’t respond within the limits of His mercy; and mercy is limited to the ability of grace to restore? Cf. Ellen White, Steps to Christ, p. 68.

Zephaniah 1:8-13

- a. Because the punishment of the wicked is the Lord’s sacrifice – a destruction of the wicked.
- b. The judgment will be thorough; the result will be based on the individual’s works; the reward will be permanent. Worldly success does not stop God’s judgments.

Zephaniah 1:14-18

- a. In these verses its character is to destroy.
- b. The Lord Himself brings on the day of the Lord, because of the sins of the people. Here God’s love is based on a condition and has a fixed limit.
- c. Yes; in verse 7d where it is said God has sanctified His called ones – “consecrated His guests.”
- d. A decree, not yet in effect.
- e. To scare the people badly enough that they will prepare for the day of the Lord; that they might be ‘the called’ and not ‘the prepared sacrifice’.
- f. Chapter one is aimed at Judah (especially Jerusalem), as verses 4 and 12 state, but it also applies to the whole earth (1:18).

LESSON 12

Zephaniah

Assignment Questions

Chapter 2

Zephaniah 2:1

- a. What nation is addressed in this verse?
- b. For what purpose are they called together? See verses 2, 3.

Zephaniah 2:2

What decree is the subject of this verse?

Zephaniah 2:3

- a. What are those addressed in this verse to “seek”?
- b. Where are the seekers to be hidden? See Isa. 26:20; see also the E.G. White comments in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary on Isa. 26:20, 19. Are both living righteous and dead righteous in need of protection?

Zephaniah 2:4-7

- a. When does this threatened judgment become reality?
- b. Why does verse 4 follow verse 3?
- c. Who are the remnant of verse 7b?
- d. When does the Lord do the restoring predicted in verse 7d?

Zephaniah 2:8-11

- a. Who is “my people” in verse 8c?
- b. Who is the “remnant” and the “remainder” of verse 9?
- c. Who is “they” in verse 10, and “them” in verse 11?
- d. What is unusual about the message of verses 8-11?

Zephaniah 2:4-15

- a. List the nations other than Israel addressed here.
- b. Who is “the exultant city” of verse 15?
- c. Why does God bring judgments on these nations? See verse 11.
- d. What is the message of these verses?

Zephaniah 2:1-15

Summarize the teachings of these verses.

LESSON 12

Zephaniah

Assignment Answers

Chapter 2

Zephaniah 2:1

- a. Judah
- b. To avoid God's anger, to seek the Lord, and to be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger.

Zephaniah 2:2

Chapter one is the decree spoken of in this verse.

Zephaniah 2:3

- a. Before the day of the Lord's anger.
- b. The question of where God's people are to be hidden is directly answered by Scripture and Mrs. White. Note the following:

“when we put away our sins and come to Him in faith, He takes our names on His lips, and presents them to His Father, saying, ‘I have graven them upon the palms of my hands; I know them by name.’ And the command goes forth to the angels to protect them. Then in the day of fierce trial He will say, ‘Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.’ What are the chambers in which they are to hide? They are the protection of Christ and holy angels. The people of God are not to this time all in one place. They are in different companies, and in all parts of the earth; and they will be tried singly, not in groups. Every one must stand the test for himself.” E.G. White, quoted in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 4, p. 1143.

This material answers very well the questions this writer has had about the protection of the living righteous, but it leaves a very interesting question unanswered; are the dead righteous who are sleeping as they wait for Jesus to return in any danger, or are they protected as are the righteous? By being in the grave, are they not in the land of the enemy?

Notice the following concept:

“The Life-giver will call up His purchased possession in the first resurrection, and until that triumphant hour, when the last trump shall sound and the vast army shall come forth to

eternal victory, every sleeping saint will be kept in safety and will be guarded as a precious jewel, who is known to God by name. By the power of the Saviour that dwelt in them while living and because they were partakers of the divine nature, they are brought forth from the dead." Ibid.

Zephaniah 2:4-7

- a. In the day of the Lord's anger.
- b. Because verse 3d gives the timing for the events of verse 4.
- c. Those who responded to the invitation of 2:1, 3.
- d. The Lord restores after He has completed the retributive-judgment destructions of the day of the Lord; after 2:4-6.

Zephaniah 2:8-11

- a. The territory of Israel; note verse 8d.
- b. Those of Israel who responded to the Lords' directions in verse 1 and 3, and made the necessary preparation; those who were hidden in verse 3c.
- c. Those who have coveted God's people's land (v. 8d), and persecuted His followers (v. 8c).
- d. What is unusual in the message presented in these verses is the declaration that goes beyond God's punishing the wicked and rewarding His followers; the statement that God's people will plunder the wicked, and inherit their land (v. 9d). (We also encountered this concept in Micah 5:5b, 6.)

Zephaniah 2:4-15

- a. Verses 4-7 are Philistine cities and people.
Moab and Ammon (verses 8-11)
Ethiopia (verse 12)
Assyria (verses 13-15). (Ninevah was, of course, the capitol city of Assyria.)
- b. Ninevah, the capitol of Assyria.
- c. God's judgments fall on these nations because of their treatment of Israel in part, but most directly because at this point in time it is God's work to "starve all the gods of the earth" (verse 11). Unity of worship will bring about unity of nations, in this writer's opinion.
- d. These verses tell us that those nations who have lived close enough to Israel to know what God has said to His people, and what He has done to His nation, will be judged by the standard Israel is judged by.

Zephaniah 2:1-15

The central teaching of this chapter is that there is a proper time for responding to the invitations and threatenings of God; that there is no place of escape for the wicked when judgment comes, but the righteous will be protected over and over, with each new judgment that is poured out on those who rejected God's threatenings and invitations.

LESSON 13

Zephaniah

Assignment Questions

Chapter 3

Zephaniah 3:1

Who is spoken to in verse 1?

Zephaniah 3:2

Who is “her God” in this verse?

Zephaniah 3:3, 4

What is the message of these verses?

Zephaniah 3:5

- a. Where is God in this verse?
- b. To whom is it that “every morning He brings His justice to light”?

Zephaniah 4:6, 7

- a. What is “I said” in verse 1a?
- b. What “instruction” was expected to be accepted in verse 7b?
- c. What is the message of verses 6 and 7?

Zephaniah 3:8

- a. Who is asked to wait for the lord in verse 8a?
- b. What are they to wait for?
- c. What is meant by “when I rise up to the prey”?
- d. Who is I?
- e. Who is “the prey”?
- f. “Indeed, my decision is to gather nations . . .” Is this gathering for the righteous to receive reward, for the wicked to receive punishment, or for both? Note The Hebrew reads, “For my justice is to gather nations.”

Zephaniah 3:9-12

- a. What is the relationship of the content of verse 9 to verse 8?
- b. To whom are verses 9-12 addressed?
- c. Who is “you” in the phrase, “In that day you will feel no shame . . .” (verse 11a)?
- d. Who are the “proud, exulting ones” in verse 11c?

- e. Who is “you” in “You will never again be haughty on My holy mountain”? Why will they never again be haughty on God’s holy mountain? (verse 11d.)
- f. Who is “you” in verse 12a?
- g. When is verse 12 to be accomplished? What is the message of this verse?

Zephaniah 3:13

- a. In your opinion, does verse 13 go with verse 12 or with verse 14?
- b. Where are the “remnant of Israel” spoken of in verse 13a, if verse 13 goes with verses 1-12? Where are the remnant if verse 13 goes with verses 14-20?

Zephaniah 3:12-15

- a. What is the general time relationship between verses 12 and 14?
- b. Where is God in verse 15? Compare/contrast with where God is in verse 5?
- c. In this context, who is the enemy God has removed?

Zephaniah 3:16

What is the message of this verse?

Zephaniah 3:17

What is the message of this verse? Note especially the last two phrases.

Zephaniah 3:18

What is the message of verse 18?

Zephaniah 3:19

What is the message of this verse?

Zephaniah 3:20

What is the message of this verse?

LESSON 13

Zephaniah

Assignment Answers

Chapter 3

Zephaniah 3:1

Ninevah, the capitol of Assyria – cf. 2:13-15. Note; There are those who believe the city addressed is Jerusalem, in 3:1, but that would make 3:1 stand without context in a passage where Ninevah is being discussed.

Zephaniah 3:2

Nineveh's God is here Jehovah.

Zephaniah 3:3, 4

The leader's lives are a living violation of what is expected from one who has God in their midst. The Hebrew word translated "sanctuary" K.B. translates in our text as "what is holy" (p. 827).

Zephaniah 3:5

- a. In this verse God is dwelling in the city of Nineveh – Assyria's capitol!
- b. To Nineveh's people.

Note; Zephaniah, as other Old Testament prophets, presents God working for the nations – not limiting His interests to Israel and her welfare.

Zephaniah 3:6, 7

- a. The Lord.
- b. The lessons of verse 6.
- c. God is Nineveh's Lord. He has given them examples of the rewards of evil doing in the judgments listed in verse 6. From these the Lord hoped the Ninevites would learn to avoid doing evil (verse 7a), so they would not be destroyed (verse 7c), but they still loved to corrupt the good (verse 7d).

Zephaniah 3:8

- a. All – righteous and wicked.
- b. They are to wait for the judgment; they are not to think God has abdicated.

Note; This is the issue that confronts all people who feel they have been wronged; will we wait for the judgment? Notice the reason for this:

“The Pharisees in their false ideas as to what constituted the keeping of the commandments of God, cherished malice and revenge; but Christ taught that all malice must be expelled from the soul. The evil done to us by another must remain unresented, unavenged.” Ellen G. White in Present Truth and Review & Herald Articles, Vol. 3, p. 29.

“The Lord encourages our confidence; and the great proof of our union with Christ, and the best manifestation of our love to him, is in yielding obedience to his claims. If you have love to Jesus Christ, which is an expression of the life of Christ in the soul, then you will do what he commands you.” Ibid.

- c. “Rise up to the prey” is a phrase that means mercy has ended; justice is taking over. The destruction of the wicked is to begin.
- d. God
- e. The rejecters of His instructions (v. 7) and the justice He daily brings to light (v. 5). Those in whose city He dwells (v. 5), those to whom He has demonstrated His principles (v. 6), those to whom he is “her God” (v. 2), who do not learn by His presence. Those to whom He has given a time of instruction (probation), in verses 6 and 7b, but who still love to corrupt their deeds (v. 7d).
- f. For destruction – justice gives what reward has been earned by one’s works; mercy (available through Christ) gives not what is due by our deeds.

Zephaniah 3:9-12

- a. It is the second half of a judgment scene; the reward of the wicked was presented first in verse 8b, while the reward of the righteous is presented in verses 9, 10 and 11.
- b. Nineveh.
- c. Nineveh, who is not totally evil.
- d. Nineveh’s leaders.
- e. “You” in Nineveh; they will never be haughty on God’s holy mountain again, because their destruction is imminent.
- f. Nineveh’s leaders.
- g. When Nineveh is destroyed.

The message of the verse is that God is in control of even rebellious cities like Nineveh, and that at the proper time He will destroy them – but even in such a retributive act He will not cause to perish any who trust in His name – not even the poor and weak.

Zephaniah 3:13

- a. Verse 13 can go with the first 12 verses or it can go with verses 14-20; which division is correct is not clear to this writer.
- b. The “remnant of Israel” is in Assyria, if verse 13 goes with the first twelve verses; however, they are in Israel if verse 13 is seen as going with verses 14-20. The message of assurance that is

verse 13c would seem to point to the remnant being in Assyria's territory; however, the assurance of verse 15 could have them be in Judah.

Wherever God's people are, the message of verse 14 ties their fidelity to Him to His protection of them.

Zephaniah 3:12-15

- a. The time of the destruction of Nineveh (v. 12) is 612 B.C. The time of the total restoration of Israel (vs. 14-20) has not happened, and due to the change of eschatology that occurs in connection with the death of Jesus, will never happen in the sense of Old Testament eschatology. However, the promises of verses 14-20 realized a limited fulfillment by the events accompanying the fall of Assyria, and the return of the people from the Babylonian captivity.

(In a non-geographical way, verses 13-20 are existentially applicable to all Christians. See Mrs. White's use of these verses as, for example, the material that appears in volume 6 of Testimonies For the Church, pp. 457, 64, quoted below.)

- b. In verse 15, God is in the midst of Israel or Jerusalem, while in verse 5 God is in the midst of Assyria or more specifically, Nineveh.
- c. Nineveh, or Assyria.

Zephaniah 3:16

The message of this verse is don't fail or fall apart when that which has been pressing you is removed; don't "fall limp."

Note; Ellen White points out that this is what happened to Elijah after the great victories involved in the events of Mount Carmel.

"It would seem that after showing courage so undaunted, after triumphing so completely over king and priests and people, Elijah could never afterward have given way to despondence nor been awed into timidity. But he who had been blessed with so many evidences of God's loving care was not above the frailties of mankind, and in this dark hour his faith and courage forsook him. . . . Elijah should not have fled from his post of duty. . . . but a reaction such as frequently follows high faith and glorious success was pressing upon Elijah. . . . While under the inspiration of the Almighty, he had stood in the severest trial of faith; but in this time of discouragement, with Jezebel's threat sounding in his ears, . . . he lost his hold on God." Prophets and Kings, pp. 159-162.

Zephaniah 3:17

This verse builds onto the message of verse 16 by adding the reasons we should not be afraid in the day of trouble – God is in our midst; He will save us.

This verse also tells us that when we trust in God, He rejoices over us with joy, that though He is quiet in His love, He will rejoice over us with singing. (In the context "singing" better portrays

the Hebrew when God has just been said to be silent in His love, than does the NASB phrase, “shouts of joy.” For supporting information to this translation see Harris, Archer, Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, #2179.)

Zephaniah 3:18-20

The message of this paragraph is a promise of blessing to those who were suffering under the events Zephaniah is addressing. In these verses God promises a future that not only appeals to those receiving it, but to those who are not included due to their sins, but who still observe the blessing which comes to God’s previously suffering people. When people see God’s promises fulfilled, all want a part – righteous and wicked (verse 20).

Note:

As we have gone through these studies it has been our intention to make the studier of these lessons aware of the message of the Bible books being studied as having often three different dimensions: The primary application, or the generally Old Testament times understanding and application; the secondary application, or the generally New Testament times understanding and application; and the existential, or “in my own life” application of the passage of Scripture being studied.

In the case of Joel, we found the primary or first message to be that of the end time of our world, an unusual primary application for a complete Old Testament book. While Micah’s first or primary application was to his time - his nation and peoples, an expected primary audience.

In Zephaniah, the last book of this study, we have observed the normal applications occurring. However, in chapter 3:18-20 some material appears which Ellen White quotes and applies after having removed it from its primary or secondary application.

Mrs. White’s use of these verses in the material we are going to quote demonstrates the existential, or “in my life” significance of Biblical material when it is removed from its historical application – either old Testament or New Testament eschatology. While knowing the primary and secondary eschatological applications is important so that we don’t wrest the scripture teachings, the purely existential applications provided by inspired writers are of great value and interest, for they open the door to us which lets us see some of the depth of meaning the Biblical words carry. These purely existential applications as found in inspired writers are also of great value, because they are generally addressed to individual daily life. But we can also find some of these applications ourselves.

For example, the miracle of Jesus in stilling the storm on the sea showed His great power – even the wind and the waves obeyed Him; He is revealed here as the Lord of Nature. And when He speaks to the storm using the same words He has used in speaking to demons in people, we learn that evil is present in many forms to attack God’s people.

But the greatest message of that event is not historical – in the past – but a repeating historic message – He can still the storms in our lives. Today we can pray for peace and know that He can give it, because He has already demonstrated that He can bring instant peace by only speaking a word.

To conclude our study of Zephaniah, we will quote now the passage from Mrs. White where she quotes Zephaniah 3:18-20 in the context of troubles at a Seventh-day Adventist press:

“I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord,’ verses 18-20. Read also the first chapter of Haggai.

“When human agencies, as stewards of God, will unitedly take of the Lord’s own substance and use it to lift the burdens resting on His institutions, the Lord will cooperate with them.”
Testimonies For the Church, vol. 6, p. 458.

Conclusion

It is hoped that you have been blessed as you have read or worked through these studies, in the minor prophets reviewed here.