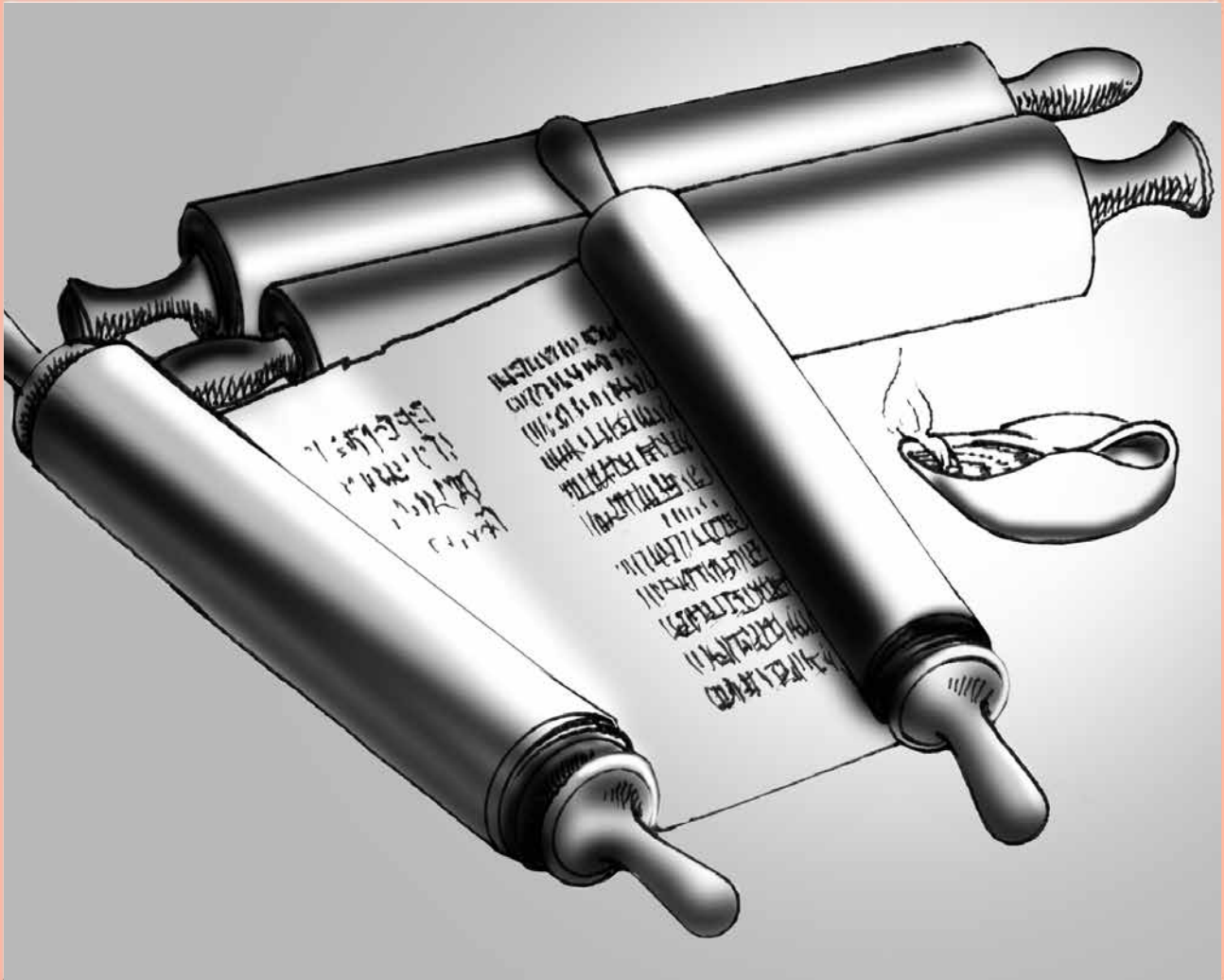
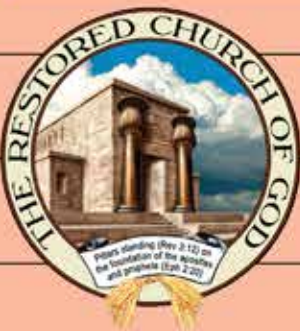


THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD

CHILDREN'S BIBLE LESSONS



The Minor Prophets



LEVEL 6
LESSON 8

The Minor Prophets

In the last Lesson, we studied what can be called the Major Prophets—the large books written by prophets. We discussed the backgrounds of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. We examined some of their messages and to whom they were directed. We further understood the two great sins of Israel: Sabbath-breaking and idolatry. We also learned what was ahead for the modern-day nations of ancient Israel.

In this Lesson, we will learn about the Minor Prophets. They are called “minor” because the books are smaller than those written by the other prophets. We will examine the books of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah (in the next lesson), Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. These are the last 12 books of the Old Testament.

We will focus on what lies ahead for the descendants of Israel, including what will occur when Jesus Christ returns to rule with His saints.

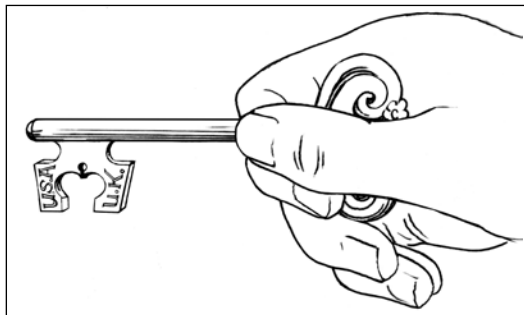
First, a little backdrop is necessary. The prophets that we will examine lived between

900 and 400 B.C. During this time, the northern kingdom (house of Israel) was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 721-718 B.C. The southern kingdom (house of Judah) was taken captive by Babylon in 604-585 B.C.

You will recall from the last Lesson that we discussed the key to understanding the prophecies of the Bible. You can read *America and Britain in Prophecy*, which explains the Bible truths of the identity of the tribes of Israel. In summary, the book explains that the peoples of the United

States, the United Kingdom, and many other Western and European nations constitute the “house of Israel” in Bible prophecies. Other terms for these peoples are “Jacob,” “Ephraim,”

“Isaac” and “Samaria.”



Hosea

We will first study the book of Hosea. The prophet Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (kings of Judah), and Jeroboam II (king of Israel).

God had made a marriage covenant with the people of Israel. However, when they were turning to false gods, they were committing spiritual adultery. This is a grave sin. Because of this, God wanted Hosea to marry a prostitute. Married to someone who was unfaithful, Hosea's circumstances symbolized what the people of Israel had done to God.

Hosea's wife was named Gomer. They had three children, and it is important that we examine all three. The first was a son. God instructed his name to be *Jezreel*, which means "God will disperse." This meant that God would quickly bring an end to the house of Israel. This came to pass when Assyria defeated Israel.

God instructed that Hosea's second child with Gomer be named *Loruhamah*, which means "no mercy." God would have no mercy upon the people of Israel because of their grievous and ongoing sins.

The third child was a boy, whom God instructed to be named *Loammi*. This name means "not my people." The people of Israel turned away from God—they wanted nothing to do with Him. Because of this, God turned away from them.

Chapter 2 of Hosea discusses a woman who went after "other lovers." This is actually describing the nation of Israel, who went after other gods. It explains that God will punish them for what they have done. But, in the end, God will bring them back, and things will turn for the better (Hosea 2:23).

Hosea 3:5 speaks of the latter days. This is talking about the time in which we now live, and what lies just ahead. Notice what will soon happen: "Afterward the

_____ shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall _____ the LORD their God and His _____ in _____."

Throughout the study of the prophets, a picture is painted of today's society. For example, read Hosea 4:1 and explain what the world is lacking: _____

Now read verse 2 and write out what society is filled with: _____

Verse 6 of Chapter 4 reveals an important point: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Without God's knowledge, without access to God, people will inevitably be destroyed.

Hosea 5:7 talks about a type of generation that will be born at the end of the age. What is the word that describes these children? _____

This is true of people today. As a young person in God's Church, you must be aware of the types of people that are around you and avoid those who are "strange," in any form.

Hosea 7:7 says that "none among them calls upon Me." Nobody looks to God for the right answers. Every decision is based upon feelings and personal opinions, not God's Law. The rest of the chapter describes what will befall Israel.

Several more chapters in Hosea explain Israel's sins and what will happen because of them. However, there is *good news* after this time of punishment. Chapter 14 talks about repentance (turning around and changing) and how Israel will ultimately thrive. Notice: "I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his

roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon” (vs. 5-6).

Joel

The book of Joel paints a very grave picture. It describes the destruction of Israel. Chapter 1 describes a drought: “He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white” (vs. 7). Also read verse 10: “The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails.”

The world is already experiencing unusual weather. Various areas are experiencing severe drought. But, if you continue to read Chapter 1, you will see that the worst drought lies ahead.

Entire lands will be bare. The lush green crops to which many in the world are accustomed will not be here much longer.

Joel 2 talks about the “day of the Lord,” the time of punishment right before the return of Jesus Christ: “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the

land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations” (vs. 1-2). Verses 3-5 further describe

this great army, which will ultimately fight Jesus Christ at His Return!

What are some other signs? Read Joel 2:10: “The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness.” This will all happen before Christ returns. There will be enormous earthquakes and signs in the skies.

Joel 2:11 summarizes how bad this time will be: “For the day of the LORD is great and very terri-

ble. Who can endure it?”

There is a way of escape, and it is found in the next verse: “‘Now, therefore,’ says the LORD, ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.’ So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and



of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.” God will protect and deliver those who turn to Him and obey Him.

And again, like the other prophets, the good news of God’s coming kingdom is described. (Read Joel 2:21-29.)

Amos

We will now look at the prophet Amos, who prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel. Amos was alive at the same time as Hosea.

Amos 2:4-5 describes the judgment of the nation of Judah: “Thus says the LORD: ‘For three _____ of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its _____, because they have _____ LORD, and have _____ commandments. Their lies lead them astray, lies which their fathers followed. But I will send a _____ upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.’”

When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, captured the city of Jerusalem, the palaces in the city were destroyed. This prophecy did come to pass. However, as is often the case, there is duality in this scripture, which means it had an application then *and* in the latter days—today. (Remember that Judah was allowed to return to its homeland, and is the physical nation called “Israel” today.)

The rest of the book of Amos deals with prophecies for Israel. In Amos 2:14-16, God says that strength will not make a difference: “Therefore flight shall perish from the _____, the _____ shall _____, nor shall the _____; he shall not stand who handles the bow, the swift of foot _____,

nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself. The most _____ shall _____ naked in that day.”

Turn to Amos 3:3 and write out the scripture: _____

The nation of Israel was disobeying God—they were not in agreement with Him. This scripture, however, has application throughout life. In any type of organization (a company, a sports team, a family) there needs to be unity. If unity is not present, then no group can succeed. Remember this important lesson. Amos 5:3 reveals how many among the tribes of Israel will survive the Tribulation and Day of the Lord: “For thus says the LORD God: The city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel.” One out of ten will survive this terrible time.

God also references the religion of today. He talks about so-called “Christianity”: “‘I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings’” (Amos 5:21-22).

God hates the pagan keeping of man’s feasts (holidays). Though many people go to church on Sunday, their “religion” is not accepted by God, because it is false.

God sometimes showed the prophets visions to further understand what would befall Israel. Amos received a vision where God was standing on top of a wall, holding a plumbline (Amos 7:7-8). Why? A plumbline is used to test the straightness of a

wall. God was symbolically measuring the straightness—or righteousness—of Israel. But, they were unrighteous; therefore “Israel shall be laid waste” (Amos 7:9).

Obadiah

We now turn to the book of Obadiah, which is the smallest in the Old Testament. In this book, Obadiah prophesies against the people of Edom. They are the descendants of Esau. You will recall that Esau was Jacob’s older twin brother who sold his birthright to Jacob. He became a large nation, in fact, a group of nations today. These people have always had a large feud with their brothers (Jacob’s descendants).

The people of Edom have a pride problem (Obadiah 3). But notice God’s response: “‘Though you _____ as _____ as the _____, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there _____ _____,’ says the LORD” (vs. 4). Human beings always think higher of themselves than they should. You must always beware of the sin of pride. God does not take it lightly.

Since the Edomites dealt horribly with the Israelites, there were consequences: “For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.” God promises that this people will be blotted out. However, this will not happen until the Day of the Lord, the final year before Jesus Christ returns. Notice Obadiah 15: “For the day of the LORD upon all the _____ is _____; _____ _____, it shall be done to you; _____ shall _____ upon _____.”

Micah

We will continue by studying Micah, as the book of Jonah (next in order of the Old Testament) is the subject of the next Lesson. Micah prophesied during the reign of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. His prophesies were directed toward the capital cities of Israel and Judah, Samaria and Jerusalem. Micah explains that God is coming to tread upon the governments (called mountains in Micah 1:3-4) of men. He will do this by earthquakes and volcanoes (Micah 1:4).

Micah comments on the nature of society today. What two things does this society do? (Read Micah 3:9). _____

Micah 3:11 explains that people will think that God is among them when He is not: “Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, ‘Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us.’” This is the case today. People deceive themselves into thinking that they are fine, and that God is with them.

Chapter 4 of Micah talks about a wonderful world tomorrow: “Now it shall come to pass in the _____ that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be _____ on the top of the mountains, and shall be _____ above the hills; and _____ shall _____ to it. Many _____ shall _____ and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the _____ of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will _____ us _____, And we shall _____ in _____.’ For out of Zion the

law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall _____ between _____, and _____ afar off; they shall _____ their _____ into _____, and their _____ into _____; _____ shall not _____ against _____, neither shall they learn _____. But _____ shall sit under his _____ and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken” (vs. 1-4).

The world to come will be a time of tremendous peace, prosperity and happiness. Nations will not war with each other ever again. Each person will be able to enjoy life and learn God’s Way—the only path to true success.

Micah 5:7-9 describes the descendants of Israel today—the “remnant of Jacob.” This passage describes the blessings that America, Britain and other nations have received because of the promise God made to their forefather Abraham. But God also explains that He will cut off these blessings. (Read Micah 5:10-15 and summarize on a separate sheet of paper what this means.)

Micah 7:1-4 describes the nature of people today: “Woe is me! For I am like those who gather summer fruits, like those who glean vintage grapes; there is no cluster to eat of the first-ripe fruit which my soul desires. The _____ has _____ from the _____, and there is _____ _____. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net. That they may _____—the prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe, and the great man utters his evil desire; so they _____. The _____

_____ _____; the _____ _____; the day of your watchman and your punishment comes; now shall be their perplexity.” This clearly explains why mankind needs to be corrected—punished.

Nahum

Nahum prophesied after Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians. The prophecies of the book of Nahum are, in fact, directed toward the Assyrian capital, Nineveh.

Throughout the three chapters of Nahum, we see that God is appalled at the city of Nineveh. Nahum 3:1-4 describes the city: “Woe to the _____ city! It is all _____ and _____. Its _____ never departs. The noise of a whip and the noise of rattling wheels, of galloping horses, of clattering chariots! Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a _____ of _____, a great number of bodies, _____—they stumble over the corpses—because of the _____ of _____ of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries.”

Nineveh was so evil that God had to destroy it. Nahum’s job was to prophecy to Nineveh of coming punishment. God will always warn somebody before He punishes them. This is the same today. God’s Work, through The Restored Church of God, has a responsibility to warn the nations of coming punishment.

Just as Nahum had prophesied, the city of Nineveh was laid waste. It was conquered by the Babylonian Empire in 612 B.C.

Habakkuk

Habakkuk prophesied around 600 B.C. He saw many sins that Israel and other nations were committing. He was gravely concerned, and took these concerns to God in prayer. Summarize the problems he saw (Habakkuk 1:1-4): _____

God answered Habakkuk's concerns. He told him to write down the vision that he received. God intended this message for today: "For the _____ is yet for an _____; But _____ it will speak, and _____. Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:3).

At the end time, God will punish all unrighteous people. Habakkuk 2:8 and 10 explain that God will punish the nations that conquered Israel and Judah.

God warns all nations that build things with the help of war or sinful actions: "Woe to him who builds a town with _____, who establishes a city by _____!" (Habakkuk 2:12). For the last 6,000 years, human beings have built towns, cities, nations and even empires through war. Also, iniquity in various forms has prevailed in the attainment of power. There is greed, corruption, lawlessness and perversion in almost every organization of men. This is why God is coming to bring His way of life.

Notice Habakkuk 2:14: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." What a positive picture! The world will literally be filled with God's way of life as much as the waters cover the sea. The next time you are near a large lake or an ocean, think to yourself that one day God's knowledge will cover the entire world.

Zephaniah

We will now study the book of Zephaniah. This book focuses on the one-year period (called the Day of the Lord) after the two-and-a-half-year period (the Tribulation). Zephaniah prophesied during the time of Josiah, king of Judah.

Zephaniah 1:7 clearly states what time-frame is being discussed: "Be silent in the presence of the LORD God; for _____ LORD is at hand, for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests."

The Day of the Lord is the final year before Jesus Christ returns. This is a time when God's wrath is poured out on the entire world for mankind's blatant disobedience. Notice the intensity: "I will _____ the _____ of the _____," says the LORD; "I will _____ and _____; I will _____ the _____ of the heavens, the _____ of the _____, and the _____ with the _____. I will _____ from the face of the _____," says the LORD" (Zephaniah 1:2-3).

This time is soon approaching, yet very few understand this. As a youth in God's Church, you will be protected from this terrible time if you continue to obey God.

No nation shall escape this punishment. Zephaniah 1:8 explains that even the leaders of nations will face consequences. Verse 10 and 11 explain that those who have been driven by greed—merchants—will also be punished. The world is truly filled with business that is driven by greed—by “silver” (Zephaniah 1:11). God will no longer tolerate this behavior.

Zephaniah 1:14-18 summarizes the Day of the Lord: “The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is _____; there the _____. That day is a day of _____, a day of _____ and _____, a day of _____ and _____, a day of _____ and _____, a day of _____ and _____, a day of _____ and _____ against the fortified cities and against the high towers. ‘I will bring _____ upon men, and they shall _____, because they have _____; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse.’ Neither their _____ nor their _____ shall be able to _____ them in the day of the LORD’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land.”

How can you be hidden from this terrible day? (Zephaniah 2:3): _____

Chapter 3 of Zephaniah explains that the ministers of this world have done horrible things. They have polluted God’s way of life (vs. 4).

God explains how He will deal with the nations: “‘Therefore wait for Me,’ says the

LORD, ‘Until the day I rise up for plunder; My _____ is to _____ to My assembly of kingdoms, to _____ on them My _____, all My _____; all the earth shall be _____ with the fire of _____” (Zephaniah 3:8). God is jealous because mankind has turned his back on Him and gone after false gods.

But, like every other book that we studied, there is good news. Read Zephaniah 3:14-20 and summarize what will come after the Day of the Lord: _____

Haggai

You will recall that Judah went into captivity, and Daniel was alive during that time. Some decades later, Judah was released from captivity, and returned to Jerusalem to build the temple. The prophet Haggai prophesied after the captivity.

At their return, the plan for Judah was to rebuild the temple that Babylon had destroyed. However, we find that the people were not motivated to do it: “Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: ‘This people says, “The time has not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built”’” (Haggai 1:2). The people were not building the temple as they should have.

The prophet Haggai was bringing a message from God to “consider your ways” (Haggai 1:5, 7). The people were working at

many physical things in their lives, but they were not being blessed. This was because they were not putting their primary focus on God.

Periodically, you should also “consider your ways.” You should be sure that you take time to put God first. Everything else comes second. Notice Matthew 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

The people of Judah were instructed to get supplies and begin building God’s temple (Haggai 1:8). Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, led the people, and they did what God instructed. Because of this turn to obedience, God was with them and blessed them (Haggai 1:13).

God makes an important point in Haggai 2:8. What is it? _____

All of the earth’s possessions are God’s. That is why when we pay our tithes and offerings, we are only doing what is reasonable. God gives us 90 percent of our financial blessings; we should be willing to give back 10 percent, plus offerings.

Zechariah

The prophet Zechariah also prophesied after the return of Judah from captivity. This book is one of the larger books of the Minor Prophets. We will summarize its important points.

Zechariah 6:12-13 is a prophecy of the first coming of Jesus Christ: “Then speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: ‘Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch

out, and He shall _____ the _____ of the LORD; yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall _____ the _____, and shall _____ and _____ on _____; so He shall be a _____ on His throne, and the _____ of _____ shall be between them both.’” Jesus Christ came to build His spiritual temple, which is the Church.

In the world tomorrow, there will be tremendous happiness. Children will have a wonderful time playing in the streets (Zechariah 8:5). People will have access to and understand the true God who created the entire universe.

There are other places in Zechariah that prophesy of Jesus Christ’s first coming. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). Also note Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a first-born.”

Zechariah 14 is the final chapter of the book. It describes Jesus Christ coming to Jerusalem to battle against all nations (Zechariah 14:1-3). Also, Jesus Christ will land on the Mount of Olives, and it will divide into two parts (vs. 4). And, finally, “And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—‘The LORD is one,’ and His name one” (Zechariah 14:9).

At the close of this book, we see that, in the world to come, people all around the

world will keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Today, God’s people keep the Feast as commanded by God. Of course, you look forward every year to these days with your family and Church members. Can you imagine how much fun it will be when the entire earth celebrates this happy time together? That is just a small glimpse of a picture of Christ ruling the earth. Everyone will be unified—and at peace.

Malachi

We are now ready to study the final book of the Old Testament, and the last of the Minor Prophets. Many of the prophecies of Malachi are for the modern-day descendants of Israel.

Chapter 3, verse 1 talks about two different messengers. The first, John the Baptist, would prepare the way for Christ. The second messenger in Malachi 3:1 is Jesus Christ, who would bring the message of the soon coming kingdom of God. This verse explains that Christ will come suddenly to His temple (those in the Church) to set up God’s kingdom.

Verses 3, 4 and 5 describe Christ’s Second Coming. But also note Malachi 3:6. What is the importance of this scripture?

You can always feel good that the God you serve will *never* change. When He promises He will do something for you, He means it—and it will happen!

Malachi 3:8-10 talks about tithes and offerings. God explains that if you do not pay tithes and offerings, you are robbing

Him! He also states that if you give just that little amount of money, you will be blessed with far more than what you originally had. A time may come when you do not think you can afford to tithe. Remember this scripture. God *will* bless you.

Finally, the book of Malachi ends with a prophecy that has already been fulfilled. Turn to Malachi 4:5-6 and write out both scriptures: _____

The word curse means utter destruction. If this prophecy of a man who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah did not take place, the entire world would be destroyed! Yet, this has been fulfilled! The Church understands that Mr. David Pack has come as the final Elijah, restoring all things to the Church (Matthew 17:11). The Church teaches “all things” to the world.

The books that constitute the Minor Prophets describe all sorts of events—past, present and future. You now understand more fully what is soon to come to this world. You also know of the tremendous GOOD NEWS that is just beyond the horizon. Continue to learn through these Lessons, and stay close to God so you can serve in His kingdom!

BIBLE MEMORY: Malachi 3:16-17

MATCHING

___ Haggai	A: Married a harlot whose behavior mirrored that of the people of Israel
___ Joel	B: Foretold of messengers sent before Christ's first and second comings
___ Malachi	C: Prophesied of Nineveh's destruction
___ Obediah	D: Prophesied against Edom because of its pride
___ Micah	E: Spoke of the dishonesty of men's governments, and of the peace coming in the future when they shall beat their swords into plowshares
___ Nahum	F: Prophesied that only 10 out of 100 will survive the Tribulation and Day of the Lord
___ Habakkuk	G: Spoke of the people not building the temple of God, not focusing on and supporting the Work of God
___ Zechariah	H: Wrote of the terrible Day of the Lord
___ Hosea	I: Told of the future time when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God, like the ocean is filled with water
___ Zephaniah	J: Wrote of the "Branch" who shall build His Temple
___ Amos	K: Foretold of droughts and the Day of the Lord