

THE IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE

REVISED STANDARD VERSION  
SECOND CATHOLIC EDITION

# THE MINOR PROPHETS

With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes

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# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Hosea

### Chapter 1

#### *For understanding*

1. **Topical Essay: The Word of the Lord.** Indicating as it does the delivery of a message that God wishes to communicate to man through Israel, how is the content of the revealed message announced, and by whom? Because there is a tight connection between the act of speaking and the content of what is spoken, how is this quite significant when a word comes from God? Besides its power, for what is God's word also revered? In the Old Testament, how does the word of the Lord seem to take on personhood itself, and how is this further developed in the New Testament? How is the analogy between God's word in Scripture and God's Word in the Incarnation made explicit by the Church?
2. **1:2.** Whether Hosea's wife was guilty of sexual sin before or after they were wedded, what kind of action was marrying a woman who gave herself to "lovers" other than her husband, and what did it symbolize? Why did prophets sometimes perform shocking deeds? How do some scholars, ancient as well as modern, prefer to view Hosea's marriage? Nevertheless, what indication does the text give? How do St. Cyril of Alexandria and St. Thomas Aquinas view this issue? As for her great harlotry, what does the sexual promiscuity of Hosea's wife symbolize?
3. **1:10–2:1.** To what does Hosea's perspective shift in these verses? What is the Lord ready to do in the near term, and what will he do after a period of exile? What does the prophet call this time of future restoration?
4. **1:10.** What oath does "like the sand of the sea" recall? If kinship with God is a grace of the covenant that made the Israelites the Lord's adopted "sons", what does the restoration of divine sonship imply? What does Paul quote this verse to claim? Why do many find it odd that he cites Hosea? If Paul, however, has not misread or misapplied the text, what does he recognize about the northern tribes? How is northern Israel's return to sonship thus achieved?

#### *For application*

1. **1:2–3.** What are the limits of your willingness to obey the Lord? While he would never direct you to do anything immoral, if he asked you to do something that appeared imprudent, controversial, or foolish, how would you decide whether or not to obey?
2. **1:4.** The *Catechism* describes one's name as "the icon of the person" (CCC 2158). What does that mean to you? What is the significance of your own name? If you were to name a child, what sort of name would you select, and why?
3. **1:6.** Hosea named his children for a prophetic purpose, even though the name might later prove an embarrassment for the child. Since the name of a person is a "sign of the dignity of the one who bears it" (CCC 2158), why give a child a name that invites disrespect or ridicule? What sort of name should Christians avoid giving their children (CCC 2156)?

### Chapter 2

#### *For understanding*

1. **2:2–23.** On what grounds does the Lord bring charges against unfaithful Israel? What does it mean that the punishments imposed are restorative? Even though Israel has sought the pleasures of other gods (the "lovers" of 2:5, 7) and forgotten her Spouse, what does God plan to do and why?
2. **2:2.** What does the prophet contend has happened to Israel's covenant with God? What does it mean that God divorces the faithless tribes of northern Israel for a time? How is the Israelites giving of themselves to the worship of other gods like harlotry and adultery? To what fact does the use of sexual metaphors for idolatry provide a mirror?
3. **Word Study: Baal (2:8).** As a noun, what does *ba'al* mean? In relation to property and marriage, what sense does it carry? What does the verbal form of the Hebrew root mean? In a cultic context, for whom is the title *Ba'al* frequently used? In Canaanite mythology, what epithet did Baal bear? Being a storm god, for what was he invoked? What did service to this false deity include? How does the OT present Baal? In what ways is the cult of Baal, which ensnared the Israelites at many points in their history, strongly denounced?
4. **2:19.** How is betrothal in ancient Israel unlike the period of engagement before marriage? What were betrothed couples, having given their consent to be wedded, in the eyes of the Mosaic Law, considered to be even though they customarily lived apart for a time before cohabitating and initiating marital relations? What will characterize the new nuptial bond between God and his people? How is the OT image of God and Israel as husband and wife taken up in the NT? Upon what, in part, is this based? To what does the Hebrew *hesed* refer?
5. **2:21–23.** How does Israel's restoration affect the names of Hosea's children? What message does the name of his son Jezreel (meaning "God will sow") announce? What will happen to the names of his daughter Not pitied and his younger son Not my people? What does Paul cite 2:23 to indicate? What does Peter likewise draw from this passage?

#### *For application*

1. **2:6–13.** What is "tough love"? What is the point of making the life of a problem child difficult for a time? How has the Lord used "tough love" to shape up your spiritual life?
2. **2:11.** The note for this verse alludes to the problem of formalism in Israelite worship—that is, going through the motions of religion without serving the Lord in their hearts. How does this observation apply to the way some Christians celebrate feasts like Christmas and Easter? How do some popular customs obscure or obfuscate what these feasts are all about?
3. **2:14.** Why would a person go, as Jesus did, into a waterless desert to seek the Lord? What advantage would such a hostile environment provide? As an image of spiritual purgation, have spiritual deserts—times of dryness or God's seeming absence—ever actually served to draw you toward him? If so, in what way?
4. **2:15.** Think back to a time when you had a conversion experience or a major turning toward the Lord. What happened then? How did it affect your spiritual life? How has your relationship with the Lord developed since then; that is, how have you either grown or fallen back? If you need a renewal of faith, how will you go about obtaining it?

## Study Questions

### Chapter 3

#### *For understanding*

1. **3:1–5.** What does God instruct Hosea to do, and what action does it symbolize? While some think Hosea is told to marry, not Gomer, but another loose woman, why does his marrying a second wife seem unlikely?
2. **3:1.** Who is Hosea's wife's paramour? What kind of love is God's love for his people? With what is God's love contrasted? What is a raisin cake, and to whom was it offered?
3. **3:3.** How will Hosea keep his wife from consorting with other men? Why will the couple not have marital relations for a time? What does this signify about Israel, whom Gomer represents?
4. **3:5.** Who are "the children of Israel"? Why will they seek the Lord? What will the time of restoration see, and what days will it recall? Since the prophesied reunion did not occur before the disappearance of the Davidic monarchy in 586 B.C., who must the figure of David their king be? Who does the NT proclaim him to be? How does the conversion of Samaritans in the early Church fit into this picture? With what kind of fear are the children of Israel to come to the Lord? What are the "latter days"?

#### *For application*

1. **3:1.** Adultery within a marriage does not invalidate the marriage covenant, though it may prompt a separation. What trial does the Lord's command to "love a woman who is beloved of a paramour" mean for the aggrieved spouse? According to the note for this verse, what kind of love would attempt restoration of the marriage?
2. **3:2.** Reclaiming a wandering spouse is not as simple as paying money, but it demonstrates the need to do something concrete. How does one restore trust and fidelity in a broken marriage? What are the options if the spouse refuses to reconcile (cf. CCC 1649–51)?
3. **3:3.** The note for this verse refers to the virtue of chastity. How is chastity to be practiced within a marriage? How do the vows recited at the wedding ceremony suggest ways to practice marital chastity?

### Chapter 4

#### *For understanding*

1. **4:1–19.** What process do these verses initiate? What is the root cause of the corruption of the priests, prophets, and people? What is coming to northern Israel as a result?
2. **4:8.** What were priests given with every sin offering? How could this become a self-interested arrangement? What would corrupt priests be disinclined to do?
3. **4:14.** What did men and women do with priests and priestesses at idol shrines? Though the point is disputed, what do biblical texts read in light of Canaanite mythology suggest to many scholars? What is one reason idolatry is described as harlotry in the Bible?
4. **4:15.** What warning is the prophet giving the Southern Kingdom of Judah? As the location of an unlawful cult shrine, to which town of Gilgal is the prophet referring? How does "Beth-aven" translate? For what town is it a derogatory slur? As an oath formula, what is wrong with invoking the Lord's holy name in the house of an idol?

#### *For application*

1. **4:1–3.** How do environmental problems result from the sins listed in verse 2? How would knowledge of God work to correct such problems?
2. **4:4–6.** How would you rate the level of knowledge of the faith in your parish? What types of catechetical programs are available there for both children and adults? How often do the clergy in your parish (priests and deacons) actually teach catechism? What catechetical responsibilities do they delegate to others? What should they retain for themselves?
3. **4:12.** According to the note for this verse, a "spirit of harlotry" is a "perverse infatuation with idolatry". How does that infatuation manifest itself in our modern era? How might that spirit infect even baptized Christians?
4. **4:14.** As head of his wife and family, what responsibility does the husband have for the spiritual welfare of the household (cf. Eph 5:23–28)? If the men leave that responsibility to their wives and do nothing themselves, how likely is it that the children, especially boys, will retain the faith when they become adults?

### Chapter 5

#### *For understanding*

1. **5:1–15.** What is the Lord ready to do to Ephraim (= northern Israel)? While judgment on Israel in the north has been a recurring theme in previous chapters, what new revelation does the prophet give here? How did Judah respond to Hosea's warning in 4:15?
2. **5:1.** What three groups is the prophet addressing in this verse? What does the mention of a hunting trap suggest about the locations mentioned in this verse? To what towns does the name "Mizpah" refer? What is "Tabor", and how does Christian tradition identify it?
3. **5:7.** Why does the prophet call the Northern Israelites "alien children"? In the words of Deuteronomy, why are they no longer God's children? What time does the new moon normally indicate?
4. **5:10.** How is the dishonest practice of stealing a neighbor's property done? How does the Mosaic Law address this problem? What territory do scholars think it likely that Judah was claiming? How will the Lord pour out his wrath on Judah?

#### *For application*

1. **5:4.** What kind of deed would not permit one to return to God? How can a "spirit of harlotry" reinforce such a deed? What deed would be necessary to enable a return to God after all?
2. **5:5.** How are pride and arrogance related? How are they different? What obstacles do these vices place in the way of effective repentance? What is their antidote?

3. **5:12.** What does a moth do to clothes? What does dry rot do to wood? How do these figures describe the state of a soul habituated to patterns of sin?

## Chapter 6

### *For understanding*

1. **6:1–3.** What has happened to Israel, who is being called to repentance? What does Hosea reveal is needed for national restoration? What ancient belief does the language of the passage presuppose? What song does the picture of God reviving his people after a time of judgment and death recall?
2. **6:2.** Why is the third day after death significant? When was a corpse thought to decompose in earnest? What does the hope of Israel's resurrection "on the third day" anticipate? As the Messiah, how does Jesus fulfill this hope? According to St. Jerome, how does the Lord not only heal but revive the entire human race? According to St. Augustine, when did Hosea foretell that Christ's Resurrection would occur?
3. **6:6.** What does the Lord want more than animal sacrifices? What is the contrast between what God does and does not desire a Semitic way of stressing? How are life and liturgy meant to form a unity? Why did Jesus cite Hosea's words against the Pharisees? According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, how is knowledge of God better than sacrifices and burnt offerings when attained in Christ? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, although God does not need external sacrifices, why does he wish them to be offered?
4. **6:8.** Where is Ramoth Gilead? Why was bloodshed in Gilead especially disturbing?

### *For application*

1. **6:4.** If you make New Year's resolutions, how many of them do you keep? If, during your morning prayer, you resolve to do a religious act such as to pray a daily Rosary, how long does the resolution last? How like wishful thinking is your determination to know the Lord?
2. **6:5.** How many examples can you think of for words or expressions that actually change reality (e.g., "You're fired!")? Which words in the liturgy have the same effect? For what does the symbolism of a sharp sword coming from the mouth of the rider in Rev 19:15 stand?
3. **6:6.** In the play *Fiddler on the Roof*, when his wife protests that she prepares his food and mends his clothes, Tevye repeatedly asks, "But do you love me?" How might his question address the tendency to substitute doing things for God in place of loving him? How can serving God from a sense of obligation be transformed into a service of love?

## Chapter 7

### *For understanding*

1. **7:1–16.** Of the abominations of northern Israel that Hosea continues to rail against, which are the deeds singled out for condemnation? What period is the background of these evils, and with what did it end?
2. **7:8.** How does Ephraim mix himself with the peoples, and with what result? To what does reliance on foreign powers for military help and maintenance of power amount?
3. **7:14.** What is Israel's devotion to the Lord like? For what was self-laceration used? What did the Mosaic Law say about it?
4. **7:16.** To what is the scattering of rebellious Israel to distant nations compared? What did Moses declare that, when sinful Israel went into exile, life would be like?

### *For Application*

1. **7:1–7.** What sorts of moral corruption lead to the fall of a nation? How do these vices sap the nation's moral strength? How do such considerations apply to the moral health of our country?
2. **7:8.** If, according to the note for this verse, the alliances of Israel with Assyria and Egypt amount to spurning the Lord, what do modern alliances mean for us? What modern nation would rely on the Lord in preference to forming military alliances? What does the answer say about where we place our faith?
3. **7:9.** How would military alliances with foreign countries actually threaten the security of ancient Israel? What, for example, would be the interests of Assyria and Egypt in making an alliance with a small nation like Israel? How do the alliances we make potentially threaten our own national security?

## Chapter 8

### *For understanding*

1. **8:1–14.** Why is doom pronounced on Israel? Though the northern tribes claim to know God, of what are they guilty? If judgment is certain for Israel in the north, what will happen to Judah in the south?
2. **8:4.** What did the final years of the Northern Kingdom of Israel see with regard to its kings? If this was not the tragic result of seeking the Lord's will, of what was it a result? From the perspective of Judah in the south, why were the northern kings illegitimate from the start? What does Hosea prophesy that northern Israel's restoration will include? Who forged calf and goat idols for northern Israel?
3. **8:7.** What does this proverb mean that Israel will get? Had Israel sown righteousness, what would it have reaped?
4. **8:8.** Why does Hosea describe the exile of Israel's northern tribes and their absorption into foreign nations as an accomplished fact? Indeed, when did the process begin?

### *For application*

1. **8:1.** When you see vultures circling overhead, for what do you think are they looking? What does the image of the vulture suggest about the condition of ancient Israel? What are some indications that a person's spiritual life is nearly dead?

## Study Questions

2. **8:2.** Jesus warned that some who say to him "Lord, Lord" will hear him reply to them, "I never knew you" (Mt 7:22–23). How does Jesus recognize those who are genuine disciples?
3. **8:6.** Is the destruction of idols that Hosea threatens here nothing more than iconoclastic vandalism? How is destruction of idols different from the defacement of statues and images of Jesus and the saints (CCC 2129, 2132)?
4. **8:13.** What sorts of prayer is the Lord most likely to answer? What sorts is he more likely to ignore?

## Chapter 9

### *For understanding*

1. **9:1–17.** What do these verses describe? Having become "deeply corrupted", what are the northern tribes about to face? How will the pain of exile be increased?
2. **9:4.** What are libations? How will the obligations of divine worship be unfulfillable for Israel in exile? What is mourner's bread? What will the exiles have to eat?
3. **9:8.** How does Hosea describe himself? What is a true prophet like?
4. **9:10.** What is Baal-peor? What does the apostasy that Israel committed at Peor in Num 25:1–5 show? How offensive to God did Israel become? Contrary to the claim that the good or evil of an action is not related to its object, how does a person become abominable to God? According to Thomas Aquinas, to what is the evil of his action thus related?

### *For application*

1. **9:1.** Our nation is accustomed to abundant harvests. To what do we attribute them? What do we do with them? According to the note for this verse, who deserves the thanks for them?
2. **9:3.** The Mosaic Law distinguished between clean and unclean foods because the Israelites were to be holy as God is holy (Lev 11:44–45). How would being forced to eat unclean food in Assyria have made them unholy or defiled? What did Jesus say defiles a person (Mt 15:16–18)?
3. **9:8.** The note for this verse refers to the prophet's duty as a watchman in times of danger. Who are the prophetic watchmen in today's Church? If clergy have the threefold office of priest, prophet, and king, what should their prophetic role be? What of the prophetic role of the laity?
4. **9:15.** For certain grave sins, the Church attaches the canonical penalty of excommunication. What is its purpose? What is the excommunicated person not allowed to do (CCC 1463)? What concern should the Church have for the excommunicated person? Under what conditions would this person be received back?

## Chapter 10

### *For understanding*

1. **10:1.** What is a traditional image for Israel? Although God blessed his people with prosperity, how did they misuse their abundance? Besides forbidding the service of idols, what else does the Torah forbid? What are the pillars mentioned here, and what was Israel forbidden to do with them?
2. **10:8.** What are high places? What does the Hebrew word "Aven" mean? To what town do some see a reference? What will happen to the idol shrines of northern Israel? Overwhelmed with suffering, for what will the people beg? When Jesus cites these words in a prediction of doom on Jerusalem, what is he telling the women who weep over his Passion? Where does a similar scene appear in Revelation?
3. **10:11.** How were oxen used in threshing grain? What did the process do? Because it was not a particularly laborious task for the animal, what could it do freely? Since these days of ease are over, what does Hosea insist that Israel and Judah, because of their sin, will do?

### *For application*

1. **10:1.** In Deuteronomy, Moses warns the people of the pitfalls of material prosperity (Deut 8:11–17). Why would prosperity tempt the chosen people to forget their God? How has our enjoyment of material prosperity drawn us away from him?
2. **10:4.** Suppose a couple at a wedding ceremony were to treat the marriage vows as a mere formula and the ceremony as just a hoop to jump through. What poisonous weeds are likely to sprout in that relationship? How might that marriage come under judgment?
3. **10:8.** What is the most frightening experience you can remember, especially if you thought your life was in danger? To where did you want to fly, or where did you wish to hide? What, if any, thoughts about God came to mind then? What impact did the experience have on your later life?
4. **10:12.** What is fallow ground? How would a farmer prepare it for sowing? How does Hosea's metaphor apply to seeking the Lord?

## Chapter 11

### *For understanding*

1. **11:1–11.** With what do these verses deal? With tender affection, what did God do for Israel? But like many adolescents, when Israel grew stubborn and disobedient along the way, what did God have to do? Even then, what was God's attitude toward his rebellious son? In which of his parables did Jesus tell a similar story about the merciful Fatherhood of God?
2. **11:8.** What are "Admah" and "Zeboiim"? What is the point here?
3. **11:9.** Unlike men, who show no restraint when thrown into a violent rage, how does the Lord temper his wrath? How will God stop short of obliterating Israel's northern tribes? Since, in strict theological terms, God is unchangeable and has no emotions, what are biblical descriptions of God being moved by emotions called, and how should they be taken?

*For application*

1. **11:1.** Through the Gospel, God calls each of us out of our own personal Egypt, our own "house of bondage". If you have had an experience that led you to conversion, from what were you led out? If you cannot recall a distinct conversion experience, how have you grown more and more detached from sin, especially the sins of your youth? Either way, into what relationship with himself has the Lord led you?
2. **11:3.** The expression "teach . . . how to walk" can have multiple meanings. How do toddlers learn to walk? What is the role of the parents in this process? How does God teach us to walk? What is our role in this?
3. **11:7.** At certain points in their lives, usually during adolescence, children rebel against their parents. Why do they rebel? How can parents affirm their authority without alienating their children? If the rebellion becomes obstinate to the point of breaking off relations with the family, what should loving parents do?
4. **11:9.** The note for this verse reminds readers that God has no emotions, yet Scripture proclaims his compassion. When did the incarnate Son of God show emotion? How did he demonstrate compassion? How has this divine compassion manifested itself in your life?

## Chapter 12

*For understanding*

1. **12:1.** To what does herding the wind amount? What are treaty alliances with Egypt and Assyria denounced as?
2. **12:2–6.** As Hosea recalls it, how does the personal history of Jacob foreshadow the national history of Israel? What is the implied message?
3. **12:7.** To what do false balances refer?
4. **12:9.** How does the Greek LXX read for this verse? What is "the appointed feast"? What do the people of Israel do during this feast?

*For application*

1. **12:3.** In some ways, the spiritual life can be described as a continual striving with God. What is this wrestling match all about? Just as Jacob refused to give up the fight until God blessed him (Gen 32:26), how determined are you to cling to God until he blesses you?
2. **12:6.** Psalm 27 encourages us to "wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD." Why does waiting for the Lord require strength and courage? With what obstacles do we contend? Whose help do we need?
3. **12:9.** What was the point of dwelling in makeshift booths for a week during the Feast of Tabernacles? How does the symbolism of that activity contrast with the false confidence in riches of the previous verse? On whom must we depend for everything we have?
4. **12:13.** Read the note for this verse. What does a prophet do? In what way was Moses a prophet? Why is Jesus referred to in the NT as a prophet (e.g., Lk 24:19; Jn 9:17)? As a member of the Body of Christ, what makes you a prophet?

## Chapter 13

*For understanding*

1. **13:1.** What accounts in part for Ephraim becoming the largest and strongest of the northern tribes of Israel? From which tribe was Jeroboam I, the first king of northern Israel? What kind of death did Ephraim die? How is Israel's restoration after judgment thus envisioned? Ironically, what gifts was the god Baal believed to confer?
2. **13:2.** If idols are not actually gods, what are they? To what does men kissing calves refer? Why did bulls represent gods in the iconography of the ancient Near East? Which one do they seem to represent here?
3. **13:13.** What do the pangs of childbirth represent? To what is Ephraim, who refuses to repent, compared? In the ancient world, in what did this typically result?
4. **13:14.** How can the Hebrew also be translated? Literally, how do these lines read? To what does this passage, which promises hope and restoration after a time of judgment, amount? What forces are taunted like defeated enemies? How do others interpret these questions? Citing a Greek version of this passage in 1 Cor 15:55, in terms of what does Paul see its fulfillment? According to this reading, what does Hosea announce? According to St. Jerome, how did Jesus bring about the death of death and its realm?

*For application*

1. **13:1–2.** What happens spiritually to the person who commits mortal sin (CCC 1856–61)? How is the condition of that person exacerbated by repeated mortal sin? What makes repentance so difficult in that latter case?
2. **13:4.** In Acts 4, Peter testifies before the Sanhedrin that "there is salvation in no one else [than Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven . . . by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Why do people take offense at a statement like this? Despite their objections, why does the Church insist that Jesus is the only savior? What does the Church teach about the salvific effectiveness of other religions (CCC 842–45)?
3. **13:14.** What thought have you given to the prospect of your own death? How confident are you in the mercy of God at that moment? What hope do you derive from the Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead?

## Chapter 14

*For understanding*

1. **14:1–9.** To whom is Hosea's final plea for repentance addressed? Since judgment and exile are already certain for the prophet's own generation, what about later generations?

## *Study Questions*

2. **14:2.** By what is the prayer of penitent faith that follows in quotation marks inspired? This verse translates the Greek LXX rather than the Hebrew. How does the Hebrew read? Either way, to what does the text refer? In Heb 13:15, what kind of sacrifice are believers encouraged to offer? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, how is the voice to be considered an act of satisfaction in prayer?
3. **14:4.** How will the Lord heal Israel's faithlessness? In what various ways does Scripture speak of this? What does the same divine love that underlies Israel's election as a chosen people also underlie? How was God's persistent love for his people earlier symbolized by Hosea?
4. **14:9.** What does the closing appeal, written in the style of a biblical wisdom saying, urge hearers (and readers) to do? Why?

### *For application*

1. **14:2.** In your private prayer, how often do you pray aloud? What are some advantages of praying spontaneously and vocally? If you have ever overheard someone praying aloud, what was your impression? How, for example, might overhearing someone pray aloud encourage you in your prayer?
2. **14:3.** Why do spiritual writers, such as John of the Cross, stress the need for detachment from material things? What is the spiritual danger in having material resources? Ultimately, where should one's resources lie?
3. **14:5-7.** Healthy plants, such as the lily, often emit a pleasant fragrance. What is the "odor of sanctity"? What sort of fragrance does holiness produce?

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Joel

### Chapter 1

#### *For understanding*

1. **1:2–12.** What had recently devastated the countryside of Judah? What had been devoured, and what made the crisis worse? How does Joel view this calamity? What thus follows the prophet's description of the devastation?
2. **1:6.** To what are the locust hordes likened? What image represents the locusts' capacity to devour and destroy? What does the Book of Revelation, drawing from this passage, describe? According to St. John Chrysostom, what will kill us in the life to come? How are these things more fierce than lions' teeth?
3. **1:9.** What did the food shortage in Judah disrupt? Besides the threat of hunger facing the people, what supplies were lacking? What would failure to worship the Lord as mandated in the Torah cause? To what is "the house of the LORD" probably referred here?
4. **1:14.** What are the aims and benefits of abstaining from food? For what special day does Joel call? What are the days of prescribed fasting? Although Jesus affirms the importance of fasting, what does he criticize about it? When is fasting commended by the Catholic Church? When is it required? According to St. Leo the Great, for what is devout fasting valuable, and how do we know this?
5. **Word Study: The Day of the LORD (1:15).** As a traditional concept in the OT and the unifying theme of the Book of Joel, what is the "day of the LORD"? Why does it melt the hearts of all? What will happen on the day of the Lord? What do the days of the Lord that punctuate the history of Israel ultimately foreshadow? How does this prophetic theme appear in the NT? What will happen on this day?

#### *For application*

1. **1:2–4.** What stories of hard times have your grandparents or older relatives passed down in your family? In your experience, what sorts of economic or material disaster would you want to tell your descendants about? Why do families pass such stories down from one generation to the next?
2. **1:13.** What is sackcloth, and why would one wear it at a time of tribulation or mourning? In stories of the saints, why do some of them wear uncomfortable clothing like hair shirts even when times are good? What would prompt you to consider wearing such garments?
3. **1:14.** Most Christian communions require periods of fasting, especially before major feasts or holy days. What purposes do such periods serve? In your Catholic ritual church (e.g., Roman, Byzantine, Maronite, etc.), what are the major periods of fasting? What guidelines or regulations govern such fasts?
4. **1:19–20.** Joel imagines not only people but also animals praying for relief from natural disasters such as wildfires and pest infestations. About which environmental crises are you most concerned? What recourse to prayer do you have in the face of such conditions?

### Chapter 2

#### *For understanding*

1. **2:1–11.** What do Judah and Jerusalem, already devastated by locusts, face, and why is its precise nature disputed? Either way, who is behind the coming chastisement? For what is this section of the book noted, literarily? Where else does the apocalyptic literary form appear in the OT and the NT?
2. **2:12–18.** Who is to participate in the national act of repentance for which Joel calls? When are these verses, which call God's people to contrition and conversion, read and for what purpose? What are we to note carefully about Lent and Easter? Just as we observe Lent with a kind of sadness before rejoicing at Easter, why should we do penance in this life, according to St. Caesarius of Arles?
3. **2:13.** What makes outward signs of repentance meaningful? To what is tearing one's garments a response? When were the unchanging attributes of God, his graciousness and mercy, revealed, and to whom? What did God postpone in the aftermath of Israel's apostasy in worshipping the golden calf? Of what kind of evil does this verse say God repents? In this context, what does God have the sovereign authority to do?
4. **2:28.** On whom will the mighty presence of God descend, and what will it make of them? To what is the Spirit of the Lord implicitly compared? What wish of Moses will this event fulfill? According to St. Cyril of Jerusalem, how does God give the Spirit? How was prophecy manifested in the early Church among women? What do dreams and visions serve as?
5. **2:32.** What power does the name YHWH, revealed to Moses in the burning bush, have the power to do, and why? To whom does Paul, who quotes from Joel's prophecy, apply this promise? According to St. Augustine, why did the apostle cite this testimony? What happens to those who call on the Lord's name following his Resurrection? Who are the "remnant" who will be saved?

#### *For application*

1. **2:1–11.** The "day of the LORD" is mentioned twice in these verses. What kind of "day of the Lord" does our civilization face? What kind of imagery would you use to describe it? How dire is it? What role do you think the Lord plays in it?
2. **2:12–13.** Read the notes for these two verses. What moral responsibility do we have for the environmental crises we face? What acts of repentance can we make that would appeal to God's mercy to avert these chastisements?
3. **2:15–16.** What is your practice with respect to fasting? If you never or seldom fast, why do you avoid doing it? Do you fast mainly at liturgically mandated times, or do you fast privately? If you fast regularly, what motivates you?
4. **2:28–29.** Joel prophesies that the Holy Spirit will be poured out on everyone. In Christian sacramental experience, when does that outpouring typically occur? How might the outpouring of the Spirit occur outside of reception of the sacraments? What indications would you expect to see that such an outpouring has occurred?



## Study Questions

### Chapter 3

#### *For understanding*

1. **3:1–16.** To what kind of war does the Lord summon all nations? For whom will it be a day of vindication? Why is the defeat of the nations assured?
2. **3:2.** With what valley is the valley of Jehoshaphat sometimes identified? Since the name Jehoshaphat translates “the LORD has judged”, what reference is more likely? How is the vision often read in Christian tradition? According to St. Francis de Sales, what will happen after the history of the world comes to an end?
3. **3:13.** Of what is the harvest a prophetic image? To what is the separation of the righteous and the wicked likened? Since the wine press is another image of judgment, what happens to clusters of grapes?
4. **3:17–21.** With what do these verses deal? What will happen once the nations are punished for their crimes? Beginning in the NT, how does Christian tradition read oracles about the future Jerusalem? How do the final visions of Joel underlie the final visions of the Book of Revelation? According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, although those who fight against Zion will come to utter ruin, which place will be neither conquered nor burned?

#### *For application*

1. **3:2–3.** Why is human trafficking so heinous a crime? How serious a problem is it in our own country? Compare these verses with the Judgment of the Nations parable in Matthew 25. Even if you are not involved in actively combating human trafficking, what corporal or spiritual works of mercy can you do to aid its victims?
2. **3:10.** Read the note for this verse. In what kind of warfare are Christians engaged? Though military imagery in spiritual matters is sometimes alien to the modern mind, why is it critical that you consider yourself a warrior? According to Eph 6:10ff., what weapons do you have?
3. **3:13.** If you are a farmer or a gardener, how do you know when the produce you planted is ripe for harvest? What conditions does Joel see that indicate the time is right for judgment? What conditions exist in our own time that suggest a time for judgment may be imminent? With whom would judgment begin (see 1 Pet 4:17)?

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Amos

### Chapter 1

#### *For understanding*

1. **1:3–2:16.** Against which specific nations are these oracles directed? With what crimes are these neighboring nations charged? To what is the latter crime related? Against whom are the final two oracles spoken, and with what are they charged?
2. **1:3.** To what does the Hebrew of this verse refer? As a type of progressive parallelism using successive numbers in parallel lines of poetry, where is the rhetorical emphasis placed? To what does the number four refer here? Where is Damascus in relation to the Sea of Galilee? Where is Gilead? What are threshing sledges, and of what is threshing an image?
3. **Essay: Oracles against the Nations in the Minor Prophets.** Since the Minor Prophets often announce God's displeasure with specific Gentile nations, how might a superficial reading of these passages lead to an inaccurate assessment; in other words, for what are these nations actually faulted? How do these prophetic "oracles against the nations" show us a God whose concern for righteousness is universal? What theological claim, then, do these prophetic "oracles against the nations" establish?
4. **1:13.** Where was Ammon, and how does Scripture identify the Ammonites? In what does the barbaric practice of "ripping up women" consist, and what was the purpose of this wartime tactic? According to St. Gregory the Great, how is the Church as a witness to the truth represented by Gilead in the face of false teachers?

#### *For application*

1. **1:3.** Threshing is sometimes used as an analogy for spiritual purification. Based on the physical process of threshing grain, what is supposed to happen spiritually? How has the threshing action of the Holy Spirit taken place in your spiritual life?
2. **1:6–8.** The note for v. 6 refers to the ancient slave trade. How is slavery practiced today? How endemic is it in our own country? How would you recognize that a person you meet is actually in bondage to someone else, and what might you do about it?
3. **1:13.** In the comment by Pope St. Gregory the Great, quoted in the note for this verse, the pope describes how false teachers cut out the conception of truth from the minds of the faithful. How does false propaganda try to convince people that its message is true? For example, how would an attorney for a clearly guilty defendant try to "frame the narrative" in his client's favor? How does a person interested in the truth counter such tactics?

### Chapter 2

#### *For understanding*

1. **2:6–16.** Why does this last and longest oracle of judgment come upon Israel as a rhetorical bombshell? What was the sequence of divine rebukes, moving from neighboring pagans (Syria, Philistia, Tyre) to neighboring cousins (Edom, Ammon, Moab) to neighboring brothers (Judah), designed to produce?
2. **2:8.** What setting does "beside every altar" suggest? Of what are "garments taken in pledge" a form? Why does the Mosaic Law stipulate that an article of clothing given as a pledge must be returned before sundown? Why does Amos allude here to Bethel, which translates "house of God"? Why was wine taken from the common people?
3. **2:11.** Who become prophets? Of what was northern Israel guilty concerning them? Who are Nazirites? Of what was northern Israel guilty in their regard?
4. **2:13–16.** What does this announcement of the coming judgment say Israel will face? Historically, when was this carried out?

#### *For application*

1. **2:4.** What makes lies so malicious? How do lies work so as to lead hearers astray? How much of the truth needs to be contained in a lie so as to convince the hearer?
2. **2:6.** What would you call the practice of raising the price of a product seen as necessary for life, such as a medication, to where buyers can only pay for it with difficulty? What are some motives behind this form of extortion? Which commandment does it violate?
3. **2:12.** What happens within a community of strict observance when, either in response to complaints or out of an ideology, the leadership begins to relax the rules? How long will that community continue to respect the original rule? What often happens when the Church relaxes disciplines such as fasting or attendance at liturgy? What happens to virtue when its practice is no longer seen as necessary?

### Chapter 3

#### *For understanding*

1. **3:1.** Although his indictment targets the Northern Kingdom of Israel specifically, to whom does Amos address himself inclusively? What is the purpose of speaking to the whole covenant community?
2. **3:2.** How does this oracle point to Israel's special relationship with the Lord? While Israel's election is not just a privilege, with what responsibility does it come? When Israel fails in national obedience, as in Amos' day, what must it face? How do the words of Jesus apply here?
3. **3:6.** What does the Hebrew *rā' āh* mean here? If Amos is not making a general statement that God is the cause of every misfortune that cities face, what is his point? What does Amos want Israel to understand? According to St. John of Damascus, what two meanings does evil have? Why does the second of these two seem to be evil when, in fact, it is good? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, in what sense is God the author of evil?

## Study Questions

4. **3:14.** Where is Bethel? For what was it known? What would the altars of Bethel have functioned as? How does Amos view Bethel? What feature did many altars in biblical Israel have?

### For Application

1. **3:2.** The note for this verse refers to the responsibilities Israel had to keep the covenant. What rights does a person have who has been validly baptized? What responsibilities go along with those rights?
2. **3:6.** Sin has consequences, some of which may be years in coming. What consequences might reasonably be expected from certain addictions, such as to alcohol, drugs, or pornography? How might their consequences affect persons not directly involved in those addictions? What role does God have in causing such consequences?
3. **3:8.** What is the role of a prophet? How does one distinguish a true prophet from a false one? If a prophet is proved to be true, why is he so often disbelieved?
4. **3:14.** If the horn signifies strength or power, and four of them are placed on an altar of sacrifice, what is the significance of having them cut off? For a Christian, who provides the "horn of salvation"?

## Chapter 4

### For understanding

1. **4:1.** Why are the wealthy matrons of Samaria compared to well-fed cattle? What is the prophet implying? What is Samaria? How does Amos describe Samaria's affluent women as reveling in luxuries furnished by unjustly obtained wealth? What were they accused of drinking?
2. **4:4-5.** How does the prophet employ sarcasm in these verses? Why is northern Israel's worship unacceptable to God?
3. **4:6-11.** In what way are the five instances in which the Lord chastised sinful Israel in these verses not signs of rejection but appeals for repentance? What was the refrain that indicates that these warnings tragically went unheeded?
4. **4:12.** What is so terrifying about the announcement of divine confrontation here?

### For application

1. **4:1.** In our culture, who are the poor and needy? How are the wealthy pampered at their expense? What moral judgment attaches to the wealthy who claim to be unaware of the needy in their midst or who believe that the poor are responsible for their own poverty?
2. **4:5.** What are some examples of false spirituality in our time? What does a person mean who claims to be spiritual but not religious? Bearing in mind Amos' sarcasm in this verse, what encouragement if any should be given to those who pursue "non-religious" spirituality?
3. **4:6-11.** Read the note for these verses. Has the Lord ever used hard times and negative experiences as a way of getting you to pay attention to him? If so, how long did it take you to realize his purpose in these events? When was your moment of turning?
4. **4:12.** How prepared are you to meet your God? What form should your preparation take? For example, what relationships should you repair, what offenses should you forgive, what goods or even attitudes should you eliminate?

## Chapter 5

### For understanding

1. **5:8.** To what are the constellations Pleiades and Orion related? To what do the luminaries in the day and night sky bear witness, and what was Israel forbidden to do toward them?
2. **5:12.** What makes taking a bribe immoral for judges? In the words of the Torah, what does a bribe do? What was the importance of the city gate?
3. **5:18.** What purpose do the three funeral dirges introduced here serve? What is "the day of the LORD"? What did the northern Israelites wrongly suppose? Not exempted from the dreaded day of the Lord, when do the covenant people make themselves a target? Who is the first of Israel's prophets to mention the "day of the LORD"?
4. **5:21-24.** With what are these verses concerned? If this oracle is not an attack on ritual or sacrificial worship per se, what is the real problem? According to Scripture, what things are more pleasing to God than ritual sacrifice?
5. **5:26.** What are Sakkuth and Kaiwan? To what do they refer? What will these idols, venerated in northern Israel, be powerless to do? Though the names of the deities appear differently in the Greek version the deacon Stephen cites before his martyrdom, how is his rhetorical purpose the same as that of Amos? With what does Stephen fault his Jewish hearers?

### For application

1. **5:4.** According to the note for this verse, what is included in the call to seek the Lord? How often do you seek him this way?
2. **5:10.** When you were a child, how did you respond emotionally to your parents' corrections? As an adult, how do you regard a peer who corrects you, especially on a moral issue? Why is correction so hard to take and so easy to avoid?
3. **5:13.** In an age where anything posted on social media is seen by the world, what often happens to a person who states a moral opinion on the Internet? What does prudence counsel when responses are hostile or inflammatory?
4. **5:14-15.** In an age when good and evil are reversed, where evil is considered good and good evil (cf. Is 5:20), how does one distinguish right from wrong? What does the person who seeks the true good become for the age in which he lives?

## Chapter 6

### For understanding

1. **6:4-7.** Why is doom pronounced on the wealthy aristocrats of Israel? Distracted by a life of self-indulgence, to what were they oblivious? Of what does Amos warn them?
2. **6:5.** How is David remembered in Scripture? What contrast does his mention imply?

3. **6:13.** What were Lo-debar and Karnaim? While Israelites viewed this recovery of territory as proof of their political and military strength, to what does Amos point?
4. **6:14.** As the northern and southern boundaries of the Promised Land, with what modern city is Hamath identified, and where is the Brook of the Arabah? How will the Assyrian invaders wreak havoc throughout the land?

*For application*

1. **6:1.** Why do some say that a totalitarian regime, like that of Communist Russia, cannot take over this country? What explains their confidence that such a thing is impossible? How confident are you in the inviolability of our country?
2. **6:3.** What is a Ponzi scheme? How long do those who organize and recruit "investors" hope their pyramid scheme will last? What happens to everyone involved on the day of reckoning when the scheme disintegrates?
3. **6:6.** Assuming you live a fairly comfortable life, what thought have you given to the homeless and hungry of your own environment? Assuming you live a virtuous life, what grief have you felt over the moral disintegration of the country? To what concrete actions have your thoughts and feelings led you?

## Chapter 7

*For understanding*

1. **7:3.** What does it mean to say that "the LORD repented"? Why does the language of repentance applied to God have nothing to do with the Almighty ceasing from moral evil? Why does Scripture often describe the Lord in human terms?
2. **7:7-9.** What does Amos' third vision of the plumb line indicate regarding northern Israel? Because the prophet does not intercede for Israel after this vision, what does this suggest that he realizes? As indicated earlier, when does punishment come?
3. **7:10-17.** In this narrative interlude, of what has Amaziah falsely accused Amos? What does Amos insist about himself? Why is this story placed here?
4. **7:14.** What does Amos' denial that he is a prophet by profession mean? How does he thus counter Amaziah's insinuation that financial opportunity is the motive behind his ministry? Why does he deny that he is a prophet's son? What is involved in dressing sycamores? What does the fact that trees grew in low-lying regions such as Jericho and the Shephelah but not in Amos' home of Tekoa imply about how the prophet divided his time?

*For application*

1. **7:2-6.** What is your experience of intercessory prayer? For whom or what do you typically intercede? According to 1 Jn 5:14-15, when is intercessory prayer most effective?
2. **7:7-9.** Read the note for these verses. If you were to intercede regularly for the resolution of a difficult situation, what conditions might prompt you to stop praying for it? How long would you persevere in praying for the conversion of a person who shows no signs of changing?
3. **7:12-13.** How welcome is the Christian gospel in today's public square? What penalties have some businesses and universities imposed on Christian employees and faculty members whose comments cross their "core values"? How confident are you that your own Christian beliefs are safe from attack?
4. **7:15.** What should hinder you from witnessing to your faith in the public square? What mandate do you have to do so (Mt 28:19-20)?

## Chapter 8

*For understanding*

1. **8:1-3.** In his fourth vision of the basket of summer fruit, what does Amos learn? How is this indicated through the word-play and symbolic association? What does the harvesting of summer fruits symbolize about Israel's time of growth?
2. **8:5.** How important are the new moon and the Sabbath? When was conducting business forbidden? What is an ephah? A shekel? What are false balances? What do the Torah and the Book of Proverbs say about balances? According to Catholic teaching, which commandment do business fraud and price gouging violate?
3. **8:9.** What is "that day"? How does the sun go down at noon? What Gospel account does Amos' vision stand behind? According to St. Irenaeus, what did the one who spoke these words clearly announce? According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, what did the darkening of the sun at the Crucifixion signify?
4. **8:11.** For what is a famine of the word of God a just punishment? What does Amos appear to say about rebellious Israel? What is the idea behind this?

*For application*

1. **8:4-6.** What are some economic opportunities that are either denied to or restricted for certain racial, ethnic, or religious minorities? Who manipulates the law to give the appearance of legality to these restrictions? How might these injustices have affected you or your family?
2. **8:9.** What is the modern attitude toward a total eclipse of the sun? What are some differences between our view of such events and the view suggested in this verse? If moderns do not regard eclipses as omens of divine judgment, what *would* become such an omen for us?
3. **8:11-12.** What famine of hearing the words of the Lord does our culture experience today? How is it manifested? What may be the causes of such a famine?

## Chapter 9

*For understanding*

1. **9:1-10.** In his fifth vision, what does Amos see the Lord doing and hear him saying? What does he learn about the coming disaster? What is the only glimmer of hope? What forms an interlude to the divine speech?

### *Study Questions*

2. **9:11–15.** How does the book conclude? What does the Lord declare as his intention? To whom do many scholars attribute these final verses? What do other scholars find that dates the book to the time of Amos in the eighth century B.C.?
3. **9:11.** What is the “booth” of David? What does it mean that the booth of David has fallen? What did the Lord will that David and his successors would do? How long did this arrangement actually hold, and when did it fall apart? From Amos’ perspective in the eighth century B.C., what had already happened to the kingdom of David? What did the destruction and exile of northern Israel create? What was Israel’s messianic hope? On what is the future kingdom modeled? On what premise do the apostles see the upbuilding of the Church as the rebuilding of David’s kingdom?
4. **9:13.** Of what are the visions of the plowman, the reaper, and the treader of grapes the signs? When were grains and vintage crops harvested and plowing and seed planting done? Of what are mountains flowing with wine a sign?

#### *For application*

1. **9:2–3.** According to Ps 139, how far does God’s knowledge of you extend? If you wished to hide from him because of your sins, how would you do it? With what invitation to the Lord does the psalm end, and how might it apply to you?
2. **9:9.** Why would a gardener shake a substance such as rocky soil through a sieve? When a marriage is shaken as with a sieve, what ideally should remain and what should fall away? How might the Lord be shaking the Church in these days, and what hope should come from that process?
3. **9:11.** Read the note for this verse, particularly the last two sentences. Has the upbuilding of the Church completed the rebuilding of the Davidic kingdom? If not, what remains to be done?
4. **9:14.** How does this verse affect your vision of what heaven is like? If a person is judged on the basis of his works, what works are most suited to the attainment of heaven? How will heaven include enjoyment of the fruit of those works?

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Obadiah

#### *For understanding*

1. **1:** How did the Lord sometimes communicate with the prophets? How does Obadiah's name translate in Hebrew? What is known about this prophet? Although the words of the book in vv. 2–21 are delivered through the prophet, from where do they ultimately come? Where is Edom, and how does the Bible identify the Edomites? To what Hebrew words is the name Edom related? In Hellenistic times, which includes the NT period, how did the territory of Edom become known? Who do the unidentified speakers seem to be?
2. **3:** Perched high in their mountain strongholds, of what do the Edomites boast? What do they forget? To what is the Hebrew word for "rock" probably an allusion?
3. **10–14:** In general, for what are the Edomites indicted? Specifically, with what are they charged? Why is this treachery all the more inexcusable?
4. **15:** What is "the day of the LORD"? What will the wicked, including the Edomites, face, and what will happen to the Lord's afflicted people? At another level, what does Edom exemplify, and what purpose will its downfall serve? In Rabbinic Judaism, what does Edom become? In what way is the Lord's punitive justice a proportionate justice?
5. **17:** Who are "those that escape"? How shall Jerusalem's defilement by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. be reversed? According to St. Augustine, if Edom is a figure for the Gentiles, how can we see a prophecy about Christ?

#### *For application*

1. **3:** We are often encouraged to take pride in things that foster a positive attitude toward ourselves, such as our accomplishments or our family. Yet pride is considered one of the seven capital sins. What is the "pride of heart" that Obadiah condemns in this verse? How is it different from a merely positive self-image? How does a wrongful pride impede a relationship with God?
2. **4:** How does God often deal with prideful people, who "soar aloft like the eagle"? What is the difference between humility and humiliation, and from where does each originate? In your experience, has humiliation ever served as a remedy for your pride?
3. **7:** Have you ever felt betrayed by a friend, coworker, or ally? What were the consequences? How did you deal with them? In light of how Jesus forgave those who betrayed him, what do you owe your betrayer?
4. **11–13:** When you learn that this same betrayer has suffered a major disaster through his own fault, such as loss of his livelihood or reputation, how might you be tempted to react? What are some ways you as a Christian might respond?

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Jonah

### Chapter 1

#### *For understanding*

1. **1:3.** What are the stages of Jonah's steady descent toward death? Where is Jonah's motive for running away from his divine calling revealed, and what was his motive? How is Tarshish usually identified, and why is that destination significant? Where is Joppa in relation to Jonah's hometown of Gath-hepher?
2. **1:9.** Who is a Hebrew? Why did Israelites sometimes use this term of themselves? How does Jonah indicate his religious affiliation? Ironically, how is his claim contradicted? What adds to the irony? How is saying that God is the one who made the sea still another irony?
3. **1:14.** To whom do even the pagan sailors pray? What is Jonah conspicuous for not doing? For what do the mariners not wish to be punished? What is the irony between the pagan sailors' concern for the life of a single Israelite and Jonah's apparent attitude?
4. **1:17.** What does the expression "the Lord appointed" show? Where else is the same expression used in this book? Of what does the great fish serve as an instrument? What in terms of the fish is the Hebrew nonspecific about? How does the Greek LXX translate the Hebrew? How long did journeys to the underworld often last in ancient Near Eastern literature? As what does Jesus view Jonah's three days in the fish? What does St. Cyril of Jerusalem say about the believability of Jesus' Resurrection from the tomb and Jonah's escape from the fish?

#### *For application*

1. **1:3.** Almost everyone tries at some point to evade a calling that the Lord has given him. Have you ever tried to avoid such a calling? If so, how aware were you that you did not do what the Lord asked of you? What form did your avoidance take?
2. **1:4.** If the Lord has given you a vocation that you have resisted, what winds of circumstance have opposed the decisions you have made? In other words, what plans, life directions, relationships, and so on have either not materialized or have failed? How have circumstances influenced your understanding of the Lord's will for you?
3. **1:5b-6.** To what extent do your responsibilities at home or in your career affect the welfare of others? How diligent are you in carrying out those duties? How have you sought the Lord regarding the performance of your work?
4. **1:9-10.** Among your friends and acquaintances, who knows that you describe yourself as a Catholic? What difference does your Catholicism make to them? What would they say about your practice of the faith?

### Chapter 2

#### *For understanding*

1. **2:1-9.** With what are these verses concerned? When Jonah remembers praying to God as he was sinking in the sea, what type of experience might he actually have experienced? At any rate, how did the Lord save him? What does Jonah vow to do? What are we to notice about Jonah's prayer? Where else are several expressions and images of Jonah's prayer found?
2. **2:6.** How is the netherworld of Sheol pictured? What is another biblical name for the place of the dead?
3. **2:8.** When Jonah mentions "those who pay regard to vain idols", to whom is he referring? Although Jonah had a strong disdain for idolaters, who acted more admirably than he did, despite his claim to fear the Lord?

#### *For application*

1. **2:4.** Have you ever felt cast out of God's presence? How would you identify the cause of this feeling, such as a sense of your sinfulness or because of God's apparent silence? What spiritual steps have you taken to return to God's presence?
2. **2:6.** What has been the lowest time in your spiritual life? What was it like, and how long did it last? How did you maintain hope that the desolation would end? How did the Lord bring you out of it? What did you learn from the experience?
3. **2:9.** Jonah offers his prayer of thanksgiving while still in the belly of the fish. How can praying prayers of thanks while in the midst of suffering help with the suffering itself? How does thanksgiving strengthen faith? At such a time, for what would you give thanks?

### Chapter 3

#### *For understanding*

1. **3:3.** Of what is the word "was" in this verse sometimes cited as proof? Why is the argument inconclusive? Of what is "a three days' journey" not a measure? Rather, what might the author be intending to stress, or else what is the point of the statement? At the time of the story, how large was the walled city of Nineveh?
2. **3:4.** What is a conditional prophecy? What will happen if Nineveh repents or if it ignores the warning?
3. **3:5.** In their stunning response to divine grace, what do the people do? Why does Jesus cite the repentance of the Ninevites in reference to his own generation? In their public act of penitence, what do the people do, and for how long? How is sackcloth made and worn? Why do fasting and wearing sackcloth go together?
4. **3:10.** How do we understand the description of God repenting here? What is the point? What does the example illustrate? How does St. Thomas Aquinas explain the saying of Jonah that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days?

#### *For application*

1. **3:4.** The wording of this verse suggests that Jonah never completed the three days' journey into Nineveh, that he only went a day's journey into it. What does that suggest about his eagerness to spread God's warning? Have you ever begun an unpleasant spiritual task, such as a fast or a discipline, and failed to complete it?

2. **3:5.** Some religious movements spread like wildfire. What Christian movements can you think of that have spread quickly across this country? Whom did they affect? What long-term impact did they have on Christian life and practice? If you were involved in such a movement, how did it change your faith?
3. **3:6–9.** Religious leaders are often the last to get involved in the spread of a movement. Judging from the response of the king of Nineveh, who published supporting regulations, what is the role of the leader in addressing people's fervid excitement?

## Chapter 4

### *For understanding*

1. **4:1.** How is the "evil" of the repentance of Nineveh the subject of a wordplay in connection with the previous verse? What is the irony in Jonah's "exceedingly" strong reactions to God's behavior? Why is Jonah resentful? What does his desire to see Nineveh perish explain? What does Jonah forget?
2. **4:5.** What kind of booth does Jonah build? As soon as its leaves wither, what will happen? What does Jonah want to see?
3. **4:10–11.** How does God try to reason with Jonah? Because this final question is not answered by Jonah, what is left to the reader to do?
4. **4:11.** What do the Ninevites lack? Nevertheless, what mitigates their culpability for sin? What does the detail about the Lord's providential care for animals expose regarding Jonah's hypocrisy?

### *For application*

1. **4:2.** Have you ever tried to convince God that your disobedience was not wrong or that his will for your life is mistaken? How do you recognize the point at which explaining your motives becomes mere rationalizing? When you understand what God's will is, how does resistance to it harm you?
2. **4:4.** St. Paul, quoting Ps 4, says, "Be angry, but sin not" (Eph 4:26; Ps 4:4). When does the emotion of anger become sinful? If you get angry at God, how do you avoid sinning against him?
3. **4:6–8.** The word "appointed" appears three times in these verses. According to the note for v. 6, what does this repetition stress about God's sovereignty? How does Jonah react to the changes in his circumstances? How does your behavior compare with his when your circumstances change in one direction or another?
4. **4:9.** In this verse, Jonah persists in his anger. If you met with such persistence in a child, how would you deal with it? If you met with it in an adult, what would you do? How have you learned or been taught to let your anger go?



## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Micah

#### Chapter 1

##### *For understanding*

1. **1:2-16.** In these oracles, since Samaria and Jerusalem have become strongholds of iniquity, how does the Lord plan to punish their sins? Historically, who carried out these judgments? Though Jerusalem was not taken in 701, what do the surviving *Annals of Sennecharib* state did happen?
2. **1:2.** To what is the world summoned to listen? How is the Lord's holy Temple in heaven indicated? To what is this celestial sanctuary the unseen counterpart?
3. **1:8-16.** In this funeral lament over Judah and Jerusalem, what route does the list of towns probably mark? What technique does the text display?
4. **1:10.** To whom is the saying "tell it not in Gath" attributed? Why should news of Assyria's capture of Judahite towns not be publicized in the Philistine city of Gath? What is the translation for the name Beth-le-aphrah?

##### *For application*

1. **1:2.** Why do human beings tend to ignore prophets who warn that God is not pleased with their conduct? Which modern prophets have been warning about the moral condition of society? Who is paying attention?
2. **1:5.** If Micah were prophesying today, which cities do you think he would indict as representing the sins of the country? The note for this verse singles out corrupt worship. What might he say corrupts our worship?
3. **1:7.** According to St. Paul in 1 Cor 3:10-15, what workmanship must those who preach the gospel employ to build upon the foundation of the faith? How will it be tested? How do his words apply to the preaching of the gospel today?
4. **1:10.** When the sins of Church ministers are publicly revealed, who rejoices? What benefits do such revelations provide for the Church as a whole?

#### Chapter 2

##### *For understanding*

1. **2:2.** Why is woe invoked on those who covet fields and houses? What is the inheritance to which the verse refers?
2. **2:6-11.** With whom is Micah contending? Who are the real "enemy" of God's people, and why?
3. **2:12-13.** With what is this prophecy concerned? How will the Lord regather the exiles of Israel from foreign lands? What does the context suggest that Micah envisions? How does Jesus seem to allude to this passage in Jn 10:1-18? How does St. Thomas Aquinas apply this passage to our hope of heaven?
4. **2:13.** Though "their king" is here identified as the Lord God, which ruler does Micah later describe? In a similar way, what does Ezekiel promise? What conjunction of the ruler's divine and human roles in the Incarnation does Christian faith see?

##### *For application*

1. **2:2.** If the desires for possessions is good in itself (CCC 2535), what makes coveting a neighbor's property a grave (i.e., mortal) sin? To what virtue does it stand in opposition?
2. **2:6.** When is the last time you heard a homily or sermon in which the preacher corrected his congregation for an abuse? If you have heard such a correction, how did the congregation receive it? In a Catholic parish, what would happen if the congregation rebelled against its pastor on account of such preaching?
3. **2:11.** For what qualities should a parish hope in a good preacher? What may be the spiritual fate of a parish whose pastor preaches only what his congregation wants to hear?
4. **2:12.** Read the note for this verse. In John 10:7-9, Jesus identifies himself as the gate of the fold. Why should there be only one gate? Why is Jesus the gate rather than someone else?

#### Chapter 3

##### *For understanding*

1. **3:5.** To which prophets is Micah referring? Of what does he accuse them? How will the Lord judge them? Why is "Peace" the signature message of these prophets? From what do true prophets not shy away?
2. **3:8.** What is Micah supernaturally empowered to proclaim? What did the divine Spirit thus enable his words to accomplish? Which other prophets were similarly conscious of prophesying by the Spirit? In the Nicene Creed, how is the Spirit identified?
3. **3:11.** Why is bribery in the courts condemned? What remuneration were priests commissioned to teach the Torah to the people supposed to receive? Where does Jerusalem's protection lie? How might the belief that Zion was inviolable have arisen?
4. **3:12.** What picture does Micah present of Jerusalem in the aftermath of divine judgment? Judging from the citation and interpretation of this passage in Jer 26:18-19, what kind of prophecy was this, and why? If the Lord's judgment against the city was not cancelled, what came of it? To what house is the reference?

##### *For application*

1. **3:1-3.** Why does the prophet use such graphic hyperbole in his message? Can you think of some examples when Jesus used hyperbole in his preaching? What message is the audience supposed to get from this technique?

- 3:4. How often have you prayed and received no answer from the Lord? According to the note for this verse, what is an obstacle to effective prayer? What are some other obstacles? If you do not detect an answer from the Lord, does that mean he is keeping silent?
- 3:8. According to 1 Cor 14:23–33, what is the context in which prophecy is normally exercised? For whom is prophecy intended? How would a prophet know that he is being inspired to prophesy? How would others present know that the prophecy is from the Lord (cf. v. 29)?
- 3:11. Although Jesus is always present in his Church, what danger does she face from a smug complacency that no evil will happen to her? What protection does she have from the kinds of punishment threatened against Jerusalem here?

## Chapter 4

### For understanding

- 4:1. To what does the expression “the latter days” refer? Where was the Temple built? In the biblical world, how were mountains viewed? How is the mountain of the Lord’s house to be considered the highest despite being lower in elevation than Mt. Scopus and the Mount of Olives?
- 4:2. When will peoples throughout the world converge on the Temple? To what did the name Zion originally refer? According to the NT, of what is the elevation of Zion, crowned with the city of Jerusalem, a historical sign? How can the Hebrew word *tôrāh* be translated? How is the going forth of God’s instruction from Jerusalem fulfilled? According to St. Justin Martyr, who prophesied these things to come, and with what result?
- 4:9–5:1. With what are these prophecies concerned? What do the oracles marked by “Now” forecast, and to what does the vision of Daughter Zion’s labor look ahead?
- 4:13. What does the process of threshing accomplish, and how is it done? What does the Hebrew for “devote” mean, and how does it apply to the wealth of nations?

### For application

- 4:1–2. What is the purpose of a religious pilgrimage? If you have ever made such a pilgrimage, what was its effect on your spiritual life? If you have never gone on a pilgrimage, even to a site near you, what is to prevent you from making one?
- 4:5. How determined are you and your household to serve the Lord (cf. Josh 24:15)? How explicit is that determination? What does that service involve?
- 4:12. In Eph 1:3–14, St. Paul summarizes God’s plan of salvation. To whom does it apply? As you look back on your life, what pattern can you trace of the Lord’s plan for you? How does it seem to be unfolding for you? Where is it leading?
- 4:13. Threshing is sometimes used as an image of purification through suffering. How might it apply to the purification of the Church? How might it apply to one’s personal life?

## Chapter 5

### For understanding

- 5:2. Where is Bethlehem, and what was its significance? What ruler does Micah see coming from Bethlehem? Where is Ephrathah? In the Gospel of Matthew, when did the chief priests cite this passage, and what happened as a result? What expectation did other Jews of the NT period share? What could it mean that Israel’s future ruler comes from the distant past? However, what does the text seem to assert? How does Christian faith find the solution to this mystery in the Incarnation?
- 5:3. Since the Lord gave David’s kingdom over to destruction in 586 B.C., whose coming did its restoration await? Who is “she who has labor pains”? At what does Micah’s depiction of her hint? What does the Book of Revelation use the language of birth pangs to depict? On what is this based in part?
- 5:7. Who are the remnant of Jacob? What does Micah insist about them? To what is God’s rescue of the remnant compared?
- 5:13. To what pillars is Micah referring? What did the Torah command about these pillars?

### For application

- 5:2. How does Mary’s Magnificat reflect the Lord’s tendency to use small and insignificant things, people, and places to accomplish great things, while ignoring more “important” ones? What unimportant person or event has exercised the most influence on your life?
- 5:4. In Jn 10:1ff., Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd and also the gate of the sheepfold. What does he say about the security of his flock? How far is he willing to go to ensure their security? For whose security are you responsible? How would you imitate the Good Shepherd?
- 5:10–15. Why does Jesus expect his followers to renounce all their possessions to follow him (cf. Mk 10:23–31)? What benefit is there in the spiritual life for the Lord to cut off from us the resources we have or on which we rely?
- 5:13. Against what kind of images is Micah prophesying here? Why is the Christian veneration of images not forbidden? What does the *Catechism* have to say about veneration of images of Jesus, Mary, and the saints (CCC 2129–32)?

## Chapter 6

### For understanding

- Essay: Covenant Lawsuit.** What does the covenant regarding the relationship between the Lord and Israel spell out? What is one way that God brings charges against violators of the covenant? In these and similar texts, how does the Lord initiate legal action through his prophet and press the case against his disobedient people? In biblical examples, what are some of the features of the prophetic lawsuit?

## Study Questions

2. **6:6–8.** As Micah instructs Israel on God's priorities for his people, what does he say a relationship with the Lord demands? How do the rhetorical questions in 6:6–7 escalate? For what is the liturgy no substitute?
3. **6:8.** In a legal context, what does justice mean? In a personal context, what does it mean? What is expected in a covenant relationship? What is humility, and what is its opposite? As such, of what is humility the foundation?
4. **6:9–16.** To what is the city sentenced? Which city does the prophet target? How do both cities fit the prophecy?

### For application

1. **6:3.** This verse is the basis of the list of reproaches sung during the Good Friday liturgy. What reproach would the Lord level against his people today? What return to the Lord have you made for all the good he has done for you?
2. **6:6–8.** Would your spiritual life improve if you multiplied devotional practices and penances? What problem in your relationship with the Lord would piling on more commitments solve? What instead would be a better solution? How would you implement Micah's recommendation in v. 8?
3. **6:14–15.** Which of your devotional practices seem to amount to fruitless effort? As you examine your conscience, what might the Lord be telling you through this lack of fruit? For example, whom have you refused to forgive? What other faults lie hidden that you have not addressed?

## Chapter 7

### For understanding

1. **7:2.** What is "there is none upright" a way of saying? When does Paul cite similar passages of Scripture?
2. **7:6.** What does strife within families, which are typically bound together with the strongest ties of loyalty, show? How does Jesus draw from Micah's words? Because he demands a personal commitment that takes precedence over kinship ties, what can adherence to the gospel do?
3. **7:7.** What does Micah refuse to do? Why does he cling to the Lord?
4. **7:8–10.** Whom does an individual speaking in the first person (I, me, my) address here? What does his speech announce? Who do the speaker and the enemy appear to be?
5. **7:18.** How does the Lord, the God of Israel, surpass all and show that he has no rival or equal? What wordplay does Micah's question involve? With the expression taken from Ex 34:7, translated "forgiving iniquity", what does the Lord reveal about himself to Moses? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, how does God show mercy? To what does the concept of a remnant refer? To what does the Hebrew term *hesed*, here translated mercy, refer?

### For application

1. **7:2.** What evils in society most concern you? How often do they prompt you to utter cynical remarks in front of your family or neighbors? If you voice cynicism frequently, what hope do you bring others? If it is true that the mouth speaks what is in the heart (Lk 6:45), what is in yours?
2. **7:6.** Read the note for this verse. How have varying commitments to the faith caused strife within your family? How have you taken sides in the midst of such division? If speaking about religion at home seems counterproductive, what does refusing to speak of it solve? How do you resolve this dilemma?
3. **7:8.** How upset do you become with yourself when you sin? When you do fall, how quickly do you arise? What steps do you take to recover, especially if your fault is public?
4. **7:18.** How has God shown mercy toward you, especially in the face of all your sins? If he has been so merciful in the past, how will he regard you in the future? How has God shown delight in loving you?

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Nahum

#### Chapter 1

##### *For understanding*

1. **1:2–8.** As a victory hymn to the Lord, the Divine Warrior, in what role is he hailed? Although the Assyrians were “strong and many” at the time of writing, of what was the prophet so certain that he did years in advance? How does Nahum depict the coming judgment? What does this way of speaking recall? Although literally, the hymn may be a partial acrostic poem, what conflicting evidence does the text as it stands present?
2. **1:3.** What does God’s slowness to anger mean? How is the phrase “and of great might” a striking departure from an OT pattern? In this case, with what is the expected reference to divine mercy replaced? While the mercy of God is limitless in itself, what can put limits on its reception? As part of the Sinai revelation where the Lord made known his patience and mercy to Moses, what was equally affirmed there?
3. **1:7.** As reassurance for all who trust in God and his lordship over the world, what is Nahum’s message? For what does this general truth set the stage and what will it bring?
4. **Word Study: Peace (1:15).** How many times does the Hebrew word *shālôm* appear in the Old Testament? With its rich depth of meaning and a broad range of usage, how is it spoken? In other contexts, with what is it closely connected? What is it to have *shālôm*, and for whom does it apply? When does the benefit of peace come? What do prophecies of the messianic age thus foresee? Who is the bringer of this eschatological peace?

##### *For application*

1. **1:3.** What happens within you when you become angry? Does your anger rise quickly and subside slowly, or does it ignite slowly and subside quickly? When you do get angry, what sorts of damage are you capable of causing? Why is the slowness of God’s “anger” measured in years or centuries? How does his might manifest itself then?
2. **1:7.** According to the note for this verse, how is the goodness of God compatible with his punishments? Why does God impose discipline on his children (Prov 3:11–12, Heb 12:5)? How might his discipline of yourself even be considered a way of leading you to take refuge within him?
3. **1:15.** According to the word study on the word *shālôm*, “The Lord has plans for the welfare or peace of the entire People of God”, citing Jer 29:11. According to subsequent verses in that chapter of Jeremiah (i.e., vv. 11–14), how do you discover what those plans are? How have you experienced his plans for your welfare?

#### Chapter 2

##### *For understanding*

1. **2:1–10.** Of what are these verses a poetical description? What is Nahum’s message here? According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, how is Satan, too, plundered by Christ and then by the holy apostles?
2. **2:1.** Who is “the shatterer”? What do historical sources indicate about how the city was taken? As a sarcastic use of battle commands, what does the prophet order Assyrian soldiers to do?
3. **2:6.** What were the river gates? How may attackers have used them?
4. **2:11–13.** As the den of Assyria, what will happen to Nineveh? Why will its conquerors triumph? How many different words are used in this passage for lions?

##### *For application*

1. **2:3.** Read the note for this verse. Modern armies try to develop weapons that disorient, confuse, or frighten their enemies. What are some examples of such weapons? What are some of the ways Satan can disorient or frighten you? How do you resist his tactics?
2. **2:9.** Jesus said that where your treasure is, there will your heart be (Lk 12:34). What is your treasure? What treasure have you stored up for heaven? How vulnerable is it to attack from either the devil or the world?
3. **2:10.** Imagine yourself in a game, such as soccer, where your team is playing all-out for a title and you realize that crushing defeat is looming. How would you resist the dread of defeat? How would you try to keep the team in the game? In the spiritual life, when failure looms, how do you stir up hope in yourself and encourage it in others?

#### Chapter 3

##### *For understanding*

1. **3:7.** With what does the word in Hebrew for “comforters” share the same root? To what contrast does this point?
2. **3:8.** For what city is Thebes the Greek name? Where was it located, and to whom was it dedicated? Why was it thought to be unconquerable, and nonetheless what happened to it? Why does Nahum put this incident forward? Of what were the water canals around Thebes a part?
3. **3:15–17.** What two analogies based on locust infestations does the prophet employ? How many words for “locust” are used in this passage?
4. **3:19.** Why do people clap their hands at the destruction of Nineveh? In biblical times, of what was clapping an expression?

##### *For application*

1. **3:4–7.** After the fall of the Nazi empire in 1945, the atrocities of that regime were revealed to the world. How would the nations who were victimized by Germany most likely have regarded it as a nation? How was the effort to create a plan for

Germany's relief and restoration in the best interests of the victorious Allies? Why should a former victim choose to come to the aid of a defeated tormentor?

2. **3:10.** In describing the future destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans, why did Jesus express sorrow for pregnant women and nursing mothers (Mt 24:19)? What is often the fate of women and children at the hands of an invading army? What has the Church in your area done for refugees and other victims of war and violence?
3. **3:12–15.** Since modern cities cannot rely on defensive walls, what defenses do they have against attack? How reliable are they? What defenses do most citizens have in the event of a natural disaster, such as a flood or forest fire? How reliable are they?
4. **3:19.** The words of this verse can apply to the defeat of the devil and of Death and Hades in Rev 20:10–14. What form does gloating over their defeat take among the saints (cf. Rev 19:1–8)? When you experience victory over the devil and his temptations, what form does your celebration take?

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Habakkuk

### Chapter 1

#### *For understanding*

1. **1:1–4:** What does Habakkuk lament? Troubled by God's inaction, what does he question? When will his concern be addressed? Thus, how is the first part of the book presented?
2. **1:1:** To what does the Hebrew term *massā'* refer? What is the meaning of Habakkuk's name? How does God impart revelation to prophets?
3. **1:4:** What did the Torah or Law of Moses codify? What was transgressing the Law tantamount to doing? What does the Hebrew word *mishpaṭ* mean? Of what is lawless corruption in Judah the evidence? Who are the righteous?
4. **1:5:** Just as Habakkuk could "see" and "look upon" the problem of evil in Judah, what are he and his fellow Judahites invited to do? When did this most likely occur? Because it was unclear before 605 B.C. that the Babylonians were destined to become an imperial superpower who could pose an existential threat to Judah, what were few people likely to believe would happen? Why does Paul cite the Greek LXX version of this passage in Acts 13:41?
5. **1:6:** Who were the Chaldeans, and when did they seize the throne of Babylon? Who were key figures in the reemergence of Babylonian power? For what does the prophet learn that God intends to use Babylonia? What role would Nebuchadnezzar in particular play?

#### *For application*

1. **1:4:** What makes enforcement of a law credible to those it addresses? When should a strict law be relaxed? On the other hand, what problems arise from relaxing a law that is strict but fair?
2. **1:5:** The note for this verse refers to Acts 13:41. In Paul's sermon to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–41), how does he use OT history to show that the message of salvation has actually been sent to them (v. 38)? What Scriptures does he cite to prove his point? Why does he end with the warning from Habakkuk?
3. **1:13:** How would you answer Habakkuk's complaint that the Lord uses bad people to chastise others more righteous than they? Why do bad things happen to good people?

### Chapter 2

#### *For understanding*

1. **2:2:** What vision does the Lord want Habakkuk to write down? Why must the prophecy be written legibly and displayed publicly? What can the Hebrew term for tables indicate? Who else was similarly told to write on a display placard?
2. **2:4:** Who is the person whose soul is not upright? Who is the righteous person, and what will happen to him in the judgment coming upon Judah? What points does Paul make by citing this passage in Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11? What does the fuller citation of the passage appearing in Heb 10:37–38 urge believers to do? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, how does Baptism, which initiates a new life of righteousness and enlightenment of faith, accord with the words of Habakkuk?
3. **Word Study: Faith (2:4):** What does the Hebrew noun *'emūnāh* typically denote? How does the Lord show himself pre-eminently a "God of faithfulness" to the covenant people? How do the people show their faithfulness? At other times, to what does the term specifically refer? Why does the English word "faith" that appears in Hab 2:4 only capture its meaning imperfectly? What does it mean doing over the long haul? What did Isaiah expect of the Davidic Messiah?
4. **2:17:** For what were the majestic cedars of Lebanon, flourishing north of Israel, coveted? What were the Babylonians, in their greed, guilty of doing?

#### *For application*

1. **2:1:** Describe a time when you and the Lord had a dialogue going during prayer, where one initiated the dialogue and the other responded. Have you ever argued with the Lord over an issue? If so, how did he respond and how did you receive his answer?
2. **2:4:** Heb 10:38 quotes this verse in the context of the need for endurance. How challenging has living the life of faith been for you? In times of difficulty or personal loss, what have you done to retain and build up your faith in God's good will toward you?
3. **2:7:** How do you feel about the pricing policies of drug manufacturers? How able are you to pay for medications you need? If your medications are too expensive, what recourse do you have to obtain lower prices? What group efforts are being made to challenge the manufacturers?
4. **2:14:** Compare this verse in its context with that of Is 11:9 in its context. What are the main similarities and differences? To what fulfillment is each prophet looking forward?

### Chapter 3

#### *For understanding*

1. **3:1–19:** How does the book close? What kind of psalm does it resemble? Between these endpoints, what does Habakkuk describe?
2. **3:3:** Where are "Teman" and "Mt. Paran"? From where was Israel originally commanded to invade the land of Canaan? How was God's glory manifested on Mt. Sinai? What does "selah" mean, and where does it occur? What do scholars speculate it calls for from the congregation?
3. **3:11:** Of what is "the sun and moon stood still" reminiscent? How does the Psalmist picture God warring against adversaries? Of what is upheaval in the heavens a traditional feature?

4. **3:16–19:** Before what power is Habakkuk trembling, and yet what does he trust that God will do? What is he also prepared to face?

*For application*

1. **3:2:** At the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, Pope St. John XXIII prayed for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. How has that prayer been answered? What problems in the Church remain? What work of the Lord would you most like him to renew in our day?
2. **3:16:** What prospect for the future most terrifies you? For example, how concerned are you that death and judgment are both imminent? How quiet is your waiting for that day to arrive?
3. **3:17–18:** Since times will not always be good, have you tested the limits of your trust in the Lord's provision for you? How willing are you to rejoice in him if the economy should fail and the stores run out of supplies?

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Zephaniah

#### Chapter 1

##### *For understanding*

1. **1:4.** What does it mean that God stretches out his hand? To which place does the prophet refer? Who promoted the worship of Baal, the storm and fertility god of Canaanite religion, that had been firmly established in Judah? Who is the remnant of Baal, and what may its mention suggest about when Zephaniah ministered? Who are the idolatrous priests?
2. **1:7.** If one cannot protest when the Lord acts as judge, what is the only possible response? What is "the day of the LORD"? What does the prophet foresee? What will happen when this day of reckoning arrives? What sacrifice has the Lord prepared?
3. **1:12.** How are the men of Jerusalem like wine? What does Zephaniah's generation no longer believe? To what does denial of God's lordship over his people and their history amount?
4. **1:14.** Lest any mistake what is coming for good news, what does the prophet stress that Judah (including Jerusalem) is about to face? What sense does the expression "near and hastening fast" add to the prophet's message?

##### *For application*

1. **1:5.** What is a "divided heart" when it comes to things of God? How do you think God responds to the prayers of those whose hearts are divided?
2. **1:7.** What does the command to be silent in a courtroom call upon those present to do besides stop talking? What attitudes of attention and respect are indicated? Why is silence before the Lord appropriate?
3. **1:12.** What is your view of the Lord's role in everyday life? How do you answer someone who maintains that "the LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill"—that God is absent or is unconcerned with how people behave?
4. **1:15.** The hymn "Dies Irae" was once sung at funeral liturgies. What do the words mean? To what do they refer? Why do you think this sequence is no longer sung at funerals? What view of death has taken its place?

#### Chapter 2

##### *For understanding*

1. **2:3.** In urging his audience to seek the Lord instead of other gods, whom does the prophet address? How do they seek righteousness? How do they seek humility? Why does Zephaniah speak with cautious optimism? If divine mercy is not something upon which to presume, how does one attain it?
2. **2:4–3:7.** Against whom are these oracles addressed? Standing at the center of this regional map, by whom is Judah surrounded?
3. **Word study: Remnant (2:7).** To what does the Hebrew noun *she'ērīt* meaning "what is left" refer? What theological significance does the notion of a remnant bear in the Bible? Even though the Assyrians and Babylonians carried thousands of Israelites into exile, what did God do with the remnants? In several places in the Minor Prophets, which was the remnant blessed by God?
4. **2:8.** Who were the Moabites and the Ammonites? For what are they mainly faulted? According to Genesis, how were both peoples born? While, ironically, they escaped the fate of these cities at the time of their conception, what will happen to them now?

##### *For application*

1. **2:3.** In an unsettled time such as this, for what might observant Catholics pray by seeking the Lord through prayer and fasting? From what wrath would they hope to be hidden?
2. **2:7.** Given that large numbers of people have been abandoning the faith as the world and even the Church become secularized, what hope do Christians have if only a small remnant is left? What will this remnant be like?
3. **2:9.** Zephaniah predicts that the remnant of Judah will possess the lands of Moab and Ammon. How does the possibility of a declining Christian population accord with Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations? How might this remnant renew the Church?

#### Chapter 3

##### *For understanding*

1. **3:1–7.** At whom is Zephaniah's final oracle of judgment aimed? Although the Lord who dwells in the city is righteous, what is nearly everyone else like? Because God is no longer trusted or approached in faith, what do Jerusalem's civil and religious leaders do? Instead of repenting, what does the city do?
2. **3:9–10.** With what are these verses concerned? If the negative side of judgment is bitterness, grief, and destruction, what is the positive side? What does Zephaniah foresee that survivors among the Gentiles will be doing? According to Vatican II, what day known to God alone does the Church still await?
3. **3:13.** Who are "those who are left"? How is this passage referenced in the Book of Revelation?
4. **3:14–17.** What does this oracle that celebrates God's restoration of Jerusalem predict about the city? In the midst of "those who are left", who will reign? What will happen to the humble community on Zion? At the Annunciation, how does Gabriel's greeting to Mary resemble Zephaniah's language? Owing in part to this prophecy, how has Catholic tradition thus come to view Mary?



## *Study Questions*

### *For application*

1. **3:4–5.** How valid are the sacraments if they are administered by priests who do not believe the gospel they preach? For example, how valid is a Mass if a priest does not believe that the Consecration of the elements confects anything (CCC 1128, 1550, 1584)?
2. **3:8.** According to the note for this verse, what does it mean to wait for the Lord? How do you wait for the Lord to act in your own life? In the lives of those whom you love or for whom you pray?
3. **3:9.** What do you think Zephaniah means by a “pure speech”? What kind of purity is involved here?
4. **3:17.** The note for this verse says that this is the only passage in Scripture that depicts the Lord singing. When Jesus rejoiced, how did he act (Lk 10:21)? About what did he rejoice? For what does Jesus encourage his disciples to rejoice (e.g., Mt 5:12; Lk 10:20; Jn 14:28, 16:22)?

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Haggai

#### Chapter 1

##### *For understanding*

1. **1:2.** What does the title "LORD of hosts" mean as a title for the Lord? How often does Haggai use it in this short book? What excuse do people make that the right time has not yet come? What is the central problem addressed by Haggai? What time has now come?
2. **1:4.** What were Judeans investing time, energy, and resources in doing? For what does Haggai rebuke them? To what may he also be alluding?
3. **1:12.** Who are the remnant of the people? How will this remnant give evidence of their repentance? What does fear of the Lord mean?
4. **1:15.** When is the people's response dated? How was this time presumably spent?

##### *For application*

1. **1:2.** Have you delayed building in your heart—or even your family home—a house for the Lord? If you have delayed, when will a more opportune time come? What does building that house entail for you?
2. **1:5–6.** What efforts have you made to improve your spiritual life, even if you seem to have few positive results to show for it? What have you considered to be potential obstacles? In what ways have you avoided surrendering yourself to Jesus?
3. **1:9.** If the Lord were to charge you with paying more attention to your own needs than to him, to what in your conduct could he point? What excuses would you make for yourself? If you accepted the correction, what changes do you think you would have to make?
4. **1:13.** Look up passages in Scripture where an emissary of the Lord announces that the Lord is with a person or group (e.g., Judg 6:12; Lk 1:28). Why is this reassurance being given? When the celebrant at the liturgy says "the Lord be with you", what does that statement usually preface? Why is the Lord's presence in a task so important?

#### Chapter 2

##### *For understanding*

1. **2:4.** How did David encourage Solomon to build the first Temple? How is the expression "people of the land" used in preexilic times? In the postexilic period? What does it seem to mean here?
2. **2:5–9.** About what does Haggai prophesy? When this day comes, to what will the Second Temple, small and unimpressive, give way? On what events are these future events patterned?
3. **2:20–23.** How is Haggai's fourth prophetic address, dated December 18, 520 B.C., unlike the first three? What does it promise? For what is Zerubbabel, from the royal line of David, chosen? Although he never becomes king himself, what does God's favor toward him signify? What does Zerubbabel's appearance in the Matthean genealogy of Jesus verify about Jesus' identity?
4. **2:23.** For what is a signet ring used? To what was its impression equivalent? What does it signify here? What words of Jeremiah does Haggai's message to Zerubbabel echo? How was Jehoiachin likened to a "signet ring"? How is the sign of the ring reversed here?

##### *For application*

1. **2:3.** What is your opinion of the state of the Church today? How do you think it compares with previous ages? How do the problems you perceive in the Church affect your faith?
2. **2:5–9.** What activity of the Holy Spirit do you see going on in the Church now? Where does the Church seem to be thriving? What renewal movements are making a significant impact? How are you called to participate in Church renewal?
3. **2:11–14.** The note for v. 11 refers to spiritual apathy, or lack of concern for spiritual things. According to the *Catechism*, how do acedia, or spiritual sloth, and related problems impede growth in charity (CCC 2094)? How does acedia interfere with prayer (CCC 2733)? Has this problem affected your spiritual development? If so, in what ways?
4. **2:15–19.** How would you describe your vocation in life? Was there ever a time when you resisted it? If so, how happy were you? How has obedience to your vocation resulted in a blessing?

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Zechariah

### Chapter 1

#### *For understanding*

1. **1:3.** Whom is the Lord addressing, and what are they urged to learn? What does the language of repentance include? With what will the Lord of Hosts return to his people? According to St. Augustine, how are free will and divine grace simultaneously affirmed? What did the Council of Trent cite this passage to affirm and, at the same time, acknowledge?
2. **1:7–17.** In this first vision, what does Zechariah see, and what do they report? What is the message?
3. **1:8.** How is the man riding a red horse identified in 1:11? What is his role, and what presumably are the other three riders? To what does “he was standing” refer? What color is sorrel?
4. **1:12.** As a round number, what period does seventy years approximate? What was happening during this period? How do the seventy years of Zechariah’s vision coincide with the “seventy years” of Judah’s subjugation to Babylon that Jeremiah prophesied?
5. **1:18–21.** What does the second vision, where Zechariah sees four horns toppled by four smiths, signify? Whom does the prophet have in mind? Of what are horns the symbols in the Bible, and what does the number four signify?

#### *For application*

1. **1:3.** While it is possible for the Lord to “return” to a person who does not return to him, what usual condition must be met before the Lord acts? Why must the penitent first return to the Lord?
2. **1:11.** Read the note for this verse. What is the best time to seek the Lord? Is there a time limit on seeking him (cf. Is 55:6) or a time when it is too late?
3. **1:14.** Skip ahead to the note for 8:2 regarding the meaning of God’s jealousy. How jealous is he for your salvation? What do you think he will do to ensure it? What is the only thing that could prevent it?
4. **1:18–19.** As symbols of strength, what horns threaten God’s people today? How might the prayer to St. Michael serve as an effective intercessory prayer? What does the prayer say that St. Michael’s role is, and with what power does he operate?

### Chapter 2

#### *For understanding*

1. **2:1–5.** In this third vision, what does the man whom Zechariah sees set out to do? What three things, however, does Zechariah learn? What is the message?
2. **2:6–13.** Whom does Zechariah address? What are they urged to do? What will the regathering of exiles to Zion also be for the Gentiles?
3. **2:11.** What does the invitation to the nations to join themselves to the Lord imply? What will the Gentiles become? Although prior to messianic times, only Israel was called the Lord’s special people, what did the prophets foresee? What oath will this fulfill? How does Paul picture the Gentiles entering the Lord’s covenant? What will fulfillment of the prophecy verify?
4. **2:13.** While silence is an act of reverential awe and adoration, what sense or anticipation can it also indicate? What is the Lord’s holy dwelling, and of what is it the unseen counterpart?

#### *For application*

1. **2:4–5.** In ancient times, what defenses did a village without walls have? When you face temptation, what defenses do you have? In times of doubt or temptation, how quickly do you remember to take advantage of those defenses?
2. **2:8.** What does this verse imply about how precious you are to the Lord? As for yourself, what does it mean for you to regard the Lord’s teaching as the apple of your eye (cf. Prov 7:2)? What is the connection between these two viewpoints?
3. **2:10.** Rev 21:3 says that the dwelling of God is among mankind. In how many ways is God present among his people? What practical difference does it make that God dwells in you?

### Chapter 3

#### *For understanding*

1. **3:1–10.** In this fourth vision, whom does Zechariah see standing trial in the heavenly court? By whom is he being prosecuted, and by whom defended? Following the removal of his filthy garments, for what does the prophet then call? What does the redressing of the high priest, who represents his people before the Lord, reveal? What does purification from the defilements of the past create?
2. **3:1.** Who is Joshua? Through whom is his priestly line traced? How did early Christians often view him? On whose behalf does the angel of the Lord speak? What does the title Satan mean? What does the heavenly trial scene suggest about him, and what does he appear to be? How does Christian tradition identify this figure? Of what does Satan accuse Joshua? When does the Book of Revelation allude to this vision?
3. **3:4.** What passage does the reclothing of Joshua signify? What is the “clean turban”? According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, how does Zechariah prophesy clearly of Jesus, and what does his prophecy teach us? According to St. Justin Martyr, why was this revelation given to believers in Christ the high priest?
4. **3:8.** For whom is “my servant” an honorary epithet? Who is the Branch, and what will he do? With whom is he often identified? However, why does he not fit the description of a coming one who will rule upon a “throne”? How is Zerubbabel better viewed? How will the Branch be like Solomon?

## Study Questions

### For application

1. **3:1.** According to Rev 12:10, the “accuser of our brethren” accuses them “day and night before our God”. Of what does he accuse them? Of what does he typically accuse you, and how often? How do you resist him?
2. **3:5.** What are some of the vestments that priests wear when celebrating Mass or the Divine Liturgy? How are the vestments worn by a bishop different from those of a priest? Why is the bishop’s miter removed when he prays (cf. 1 Cor 11:14) but worn when he preaches?
3. **3:7.** Read the note for this verse. In a modern church building, what does the sanctuary area represent, especially if emphasized by the presence of an iconostasis? During liturgies, who has access to that area? What attitude toward the sanctuary is most appropriate for the rest of the congregation?
4. **3:9.** Why is Jesus called the cornerstone, and of what (cf. Eph 2:20)? According to Rev 21, what forms the foundations of the new Jerusalem? What is written on them, and how are they decorated? What do these metaphors signify about the Church?

## Chapter 4

### For understanding

1. **4:1–14.** In this fifth vision, what does Zechariah see? What do the lampstand, its supply of oil, and the seven flames represent? With the help of the angel to interpret its meaning, what is the message?
2. **4:3.** What do the two olive trees represent? What work did these two persons oversee years earlier? Because olive oil was used to anoint Israel’s kings and priests, what else do the olive trees represent? How does the Book of Revelation use this image of two olive trees?
3. **4:6.** Who was Zerubbabel? Why did Zerubbabel need the source of divine wisdom and strength, the Spirit? When else were the abilities required for building the Tabernacle and its furnishings likewise supplied by “the Spirit of God”?
4. **4:7.** What will God enable Zerubbabel to do? In what way, perhaps, are these challenges to rebuilding pictured? What does the top stone appear to be, and what does it represent?

### For application

1. **4:6.** Why cannot a person lift himself from the ground by his own bootstrap? What is the gravity that holds the human race to this life only? What abilities are necessary for grace and salvation to come, and who provides them?
2. **4:9.** Which is harder, to begin a project or to complete it? What did St. Paul mean when he accused the Galatian church of beginning in the Spirit but ending in the flesh (Gal 3:3)? How should one complete the Christian life?
3. **4:10.** Read the note for this verse, particularly the last sentence. How does the eye function as the “lamp of the body” (Mt 6:22)? How does the health of the eye affect how one experiences the world? In other words, how does what comes from within the self illuminate the way one sees reality?

## Chapter 5

### For understanding

1. **5:1–4.** In this sixth vision, what does the giant flying scroll bring that Zechariah sees? How big is it? What is the scroll? Who are cut off from the land, and what happens to their homes? What is the message for the postexilic community?
2. **5:3.** Of which commandment is theft a violation? How is one cut off? How is taking false oaths a violation of the second commandment? What do the two transgressions noted in this verse stand for?
3. **5:5–11.** In this seventh vision, what does Zechariah see? What does the woman represent? How is she now being sent back to Babylon? Since an ephah is too small to contain a living person, what may the woman be? Again, what is the message?
4. **5:9.** What is the wind? What does the wording seem to recall? What class of animal is the stork?

### For application

1. **5:4.** According to the note for vv. 1–4, how does the curse from covenant violations abide in a house and cause its decay? If a family is trained, by example or intent, to steal or lie even under oath, what are the prospects for its members’ growth in virtue? Instead, what is more likely to happen?
2. **5:8.** If you had to draw an image of Wickedness, what would it look like? If you had to draw one of Virtue, what would it look like? Which images in Christian art most represent these two figures to you? Why?

## Chapter 6

### For understanding

1. **6:1–8.** In this eighth vision, what does Zechariah see? How are the chariots drawn, and what directions do they take? Who are the charioteers, and what is the patrolling assignment of the chariot with red horses? What is the message? What parallels do Zechariah’s first and last visions, which form a bracket around the rest, exhibit?
2. **6:2–3.** What do the four colors of the horses distinguish, and what is their symbolism? When and how does the Book of Revelation draw from this vision?
3. **6:11.** To what does the term for crown in question refer? On whose head is one crown placed? Where is the other placed, and until when? What crown is Joshua, who already wore a priestly crown on his linen turban, now given? Wearing two crowns, whom does he prefigure? How is this expectation fulfilled in Jesus? How is the link with Joshua strengthened?
4. **6:12.** By whom is the Branch also foreshadowed? When would Zerubbabel, who laid the foundations of the Temple years earlier, complete it? What role would the governorship of Zerubbabel prefigure, and what would his work on the Temple also prefigure?

*For application*

1. **6:5.** Read the note for this verse. Assuming the four winds, or spirits, are angels, which angels are given most responsibility for human beings? What does the Church teach about “guardian angels” (CCC 336)? What relationship might such angels have with unbelievers?
2. **6:8.** The note for this verse says that the Hebrew word for “spirit” can also mean anger. What is the connection between spirit and anger? What, for example, would make anger turn hot or cold? What would set one’s anger at rest?
3. **6:13.** What was the relationship between the civil and the religious authorities in ancient times? What is the relationship between church and state in our country now? What do you think would be the ideal relationship between the two?
4. **6:15.** How is diversity understood in the popular culture? What is the Christian understanding of diversity as it applies to the kingdom of God?

## Chapter 7

*For understanding*

1. **7:3.** Where were the priests being consulted, and in what “house of the Lord” were they located? What is the fifth month of the calendar, and when does it occur? What was significant about this month? Why did surviving Jews establish an annual tradition of fasting in the fifth month? What question is the delegation now asking?
2. **7:5.** What is the seventh month of the calendar, and when does it occur? What did fasting in the seventh month (besides the Day of Atonement) commemorate? Why is fasting in remembrance of Jerusalem’s demise criticized, and what was the real problem?
3. **7:8–14.** With what is this oracle concerned? What has the Lord expected of his covenant people, both before the Exile and afterward? What is more important than fasting to commemorate tragic events? What was it that led to the desolation and dispersion of Judah in the first place? According to St. John Chrysostom, if those addressed by the prophet acquired no benefit from fasting without doing other good works or driving evil intentions against their neighbor out of their hearts, what is expected of Christians?
4. **7:11.** What does turning a stubborn shoulder mean?

*For application*

1. **7:3.** Suppose you once committed yourself to a regimen of self-discipline but now feel disappointed in the results. According to the rules of Ignatian discernment, should you give it up or hold to it? What considerations should go into making a decision?
2. **7:5.** People fast for many reasons. What are some of them? When fasting is done following a religious calendar, what are some selfish motives for keeping to the practice? What are some better motives for fasting, whether according to a calendar or voluntarily?
3. **7:9–10.** How can the actions commanded in this verse equate to a type of fast? As promised in Is 58:6–9, what will be the results?
4. **7:11.** How do small children use body language to signal that they do not want to listen to correction? What about adults? What bodily signals might indicate willingness to receive correction, even if it is not welcome? What bodily movements can signal humility before the Lord?

## Chapter 8

*For understanding*

1. **8:1–23.** Regarding the question about fasting in 7:3, what will become of times of fasting and mourning that memorialize the fall of Jerusalem? How does the Lord plan to reverse this national disaster by doing “good” to Judah and Jerusalem in place of the “evil” he sent in the past? At one level, what does the restoration of Zion signal; and at another, what new chapter does it open?
2. **8:16.** How does the Greek LXX translate this verse? From whom does Zechariah likewise call for truthful speech? Why does Paul cite a Greek translation of this passage? What takes place at the city gates?
3. **8:20–23.** With what is this vision concerned? In an earlier vision, what did Zechariah see Gentiles doing? In a later one, how does he picture them?
4. **8:23.** What are “those days”? What does this oracle envision? What will the nations come to see, and what will it prompt them to do? With what affirmation did Jesus likely have this passage in mind?

*For application*

1. **8:6.** How often has it seemed impossible to you that the Lord should come into your life? What did you think was the chief obstacle preventing him? If that impossibility has been removed, how did it come about?
2. **8:8.** The note for this verse indicates that the “covenant formula” is repeated often in Scripture. What makes it more than just a formula? How often do you repeat it (or its equivalent) to yourself?
3. **8:9–13.** In your service to the Church, what need of encouragement do you have that your “hands be strong”? What challenges do you face? What resources do you have? How would reflecting on Ps 127:1–2 provide encouragement?
4. **8:23.** Who is your spiritual role model? What inspires you to imitate—or at least spiritually accompany—him? What would inspire others to use you as a spiritual role model?

## Chapter 9

*For understanding*

1. **9:1–8.** With what are these verses concerned? In which direction does the path of conquest move? Within which territory did these cities and nations lie? What allusion do some detect, and how certain is it?

## Study Questions

2. **9:9–10.** With what event is the coming of the Davidic Messiah, who rides into Jerusalem on a young donkey, compared? What does he bring to Israel, and how far does his dominion extend? What hope does it fulfill? What rebirth does this event signal?
3. **9:9.** Who is the daughter of Zion? To which king does this verse refer? How does the picture of the messianic king mounted on a donkey contrast with that of a typical conqueror? In what do the evangelists Matthew and John both see a fulfillment of this prophecy? According to St. Caesarius of Arles, who are the donkey and its colt?
4. **9:11.** Who is addressed by the feminine singular pronoun “you” in the oracle? What is the “blood of my covenant”? What reference do some detect? What is “the waterless pit”? By contrast, how is the land of Israel watered? What promise has Christian tradition seen in this verse?

### For application

1. **9:9.** The poet John Donne once complained that he could not remain faithful to God unless God did him violence. How does Jesus normally conquer the human heart? What tactics would he most likely use to ensure its fidelity?
2. **9:10.** St. Paul proclaimed that Jesus’ coming brought peace to “you who were far off” and to those who were near (Eph 2:17). Who is the “you” in that passage, and who are those who were near? What did that peace accomplish? How does it affect you, personally?
3. **9:11.** What does the blood of the new covenant accomplish? What release does it promise?

## Chapter 10

### For understanding

1. **10:1.** When were prayers for abundant rainfall before the next harvest season typically made? What do the rains symbolize here? What does the Lord promise? When did spring rains shower the land?
2. **10:2.** What are teraphim? Who are the diviners? Who are the dreamers? To what does the want of a shepherd refer? To what need is the prophet pointing? When do the Gospels echo the language of this and similar passages?
3. **10:3.** Which shepherds are referred to here? During what period did Jeremiah and Ezekiel also pronounce God’s judgment on the wicked shepherds of Judah? To what animal does the word “leaders” literally refer?
4. **10:6–11:3.** What does the Lord pledge to do? To what regions did he scatter the northern and the southern tribes? What will he do with them in the future?

### For application

1. **10:3.** What is a bellwether? Who are the leaders who act as bellwethers for our culture? To what ideals are they leading us? By contrast, who should be the bellwethers for the Christian people? How do the saints fill that role for believers?
2. **10:5.** In Revelation, Jesus is pictured as a warrior king (Rev 19:11–16). Against what enemy is he leading the fight? If he is a warrior in battle, what are his followers supposed to be? How does the battle affect you?
3. **10:11.** Why is the Exodus event so often alluded to in psalms, prophecies, and other writings in the OT? To which event is the NT equivalent? What promise does it hold out to mankind?

## Chapter 11

### For understanding

1. **11:4–17.** Although this is one of the most difficult sections of Zechariah to interpret, what is the basic storyline? What do the two staffs represent? Although he is a good and reforming shepherd, how do the sheep regard him, and what do the sheep merchants pay him? What does the prophet do with the money? How does he signify that God’s blessings have been nullified toward his rebellious people? Finally, whom does the Lord recruit the prophet a second time to prefigure? How do many scholars read the episode?
2. **11:7.** Given the names of the two staffs, what does each signify? In what may the symbolism be rooted? After the Lord made a covenant of kingship with David (2 Sam 7:12–19), giving him dominion over the tribes of Israel and even over neighboring peoples in the region, what happened?
3. **11:12.** Of what is thirty shekels of silver the price? What does casting away the coins signify? When does Matthew see a messianic fulfillment of this episode? For the evangelist, how does the prophet prefigure Jesus and foreshadow Judas?
4. **11:16.** For whom is the shepherd who does not care for the sheep a fitting punishment? What is the identity of this figure? Who do some view him to be?

### For application

1. **11:7–10, 14.** Consider the unity among Christians that Jesus desired for his Church (Jn 17:11). How did it come to be broken? How can reunion come about? When do you think unity will be achieved?
2. **11:8.** Why are reforming leaders often detested by those whom they lead, even when they recognize that conditions need reform? In the lives of the saints, how many examples can you think of where their efforts at reform were rejected? If a bishop or pope wanted to restore strict adherence to the ascetic disciplines formerly required by Church law, how would you respond?
3. **11:16.** In the three letters of John in the NT, how often is the Antichrist mentioned? Who did John think the Antichrist is? How would the worthless shepherd in this verse, if active today, qualify as an Antichrist?

## Chapter 12

### For understanding

1. **12:1–14:21.** What kind of visions are these? What will be the scope of the kingdom of God? Where will its epicenter be?
2. **12:2.** With what is the cup of reeling filled? Of what is the drunken stupor that results from drinking it a form? What is envisioned as happening to Jerusalem? According to the Book of Revelation, which draws from this and similar oracles

(especially Ezek 38–39), when will history near its end? What do “the camp of the saints and the beloved city” appear to be?

3. **12:10.** For what do the prophets use the language of pouring out, as of a liquid? What is a “spirit of compassion” or “of grace”? What is a spirit of supplication? Who is the “one whom they have pierced”? Either way, what will happen when the city realizes its mistake? To what did some ancient Jews connect this verse? According to the NT, what messianic fulfillment does the oracle have? What did a first-born son stand to inherit? In the NT, of whom is Jesus the first-born, and what does he inherit? According to St. Augustine, how will those on both the right and the left view Christ’s risen body?
4. **12:11.** Where is Hadadrimmon? How did Josiah die, and how was his untimely death lamented? To what do others relate the name Hadadrimmon? What is Megiddo, and of what is it the scene in biblical times?

*For application*

1. **12:2–3.** When has the Church ever been at peace? Who are some of the major persecutors, and what has their rate of success been in destroying her? Which global forces are now arrayed against her? How should the Church prepare for whatever onslaught is coming?
2. **12:5.** From where does the Church derive her strength? How does she communicate that strength to her members?
3. **12:8.** When David encountered Goliath, by what armor was he protected (1 Sam 17:38–40)? When you encounter the forces of evil in the world, by what armor are you protected? Of the cardinal virtues, which is most needed when you confront spiritual and other enemies?
4. **12:10.** Of the four narratives of Jesus’ Passion in the NT, which elicits the greatest response from you? What is the nature of that response? How often does contemplation of a crucifix move you to mourn over sins, especially your own?

## Chapter 13

*For understanding*

1. **13:1.** What is “that day”? What does the opened fountain signify? According to St. Jerome, to what does this fountain refer?
2. **Word Study: Pierce (13:3).** What is the meaning of the Hebrew verb *dāqar*, and how often does it appear in the Hebrew OT? Though in one case it is used metaphorically for a person who is stricken with sharp pangs of hunger, what does it otherwise indicate? What is envisioned when the parents of a false prophet put him to death by piercing him through? What two interpretations are provided for the use of this verb when the Book of Zechariah foresees the inhabitants of Jerusalem mourning a figure “they have pierced”? Which one is followed by the NT?
3. **13:7.** How is the sword personified? How is “my shepherd” often identified, and what weighs against this interpretation? Insofar as kings are regularly portrayed as shepherds in the Bible, what is a better way to view this figure? How will the shepherd-king be struck down, and with what result? With what intent did Jesus cite this passage? While he thus appears to have read this verse as a messianic prophecy, how do some maintain that Jesus invoked the passage as a proverb or maxim?
4. **13:9.** For what are refining fires of trial and suffering intended? What does the variation on the traditional “covenant formula” reaffirm?

*For application*

1. **13:2–6.** What is the role of a prophet? What kinds of false prophecy arise within the Church? What did Paul recommend regarding the charism of prophecy (1 Cor 14:1–5)? From where does genuine prophecy come (2 Pet 1:21)?
2. **13:7.** What efforts have been made in recent years to undermine faith in the divinity of Jesus? What has caused many who profess Christianity to doubt or even deny Jesus’ divinity? How can this shattering of faith be reversed?
3. **13:8–9.** How does persecution of the Church function like a refining process? What should be the outcome? If the Lord allows persecution to refine the faith of the small number of those whose faith stands the test, what hope do those majority have whose faith fails it?

## Chapter 14

*For understanding*

1. **14:1–21.** On which city is this apocalyptic vision of the coming kingdom of God centered? How does the sequence of the prophecy move? What does this vision have to do with Jesus’ Olivet Discourse in the Synoptic Gospels? How does its picture of the new Jerusalem also influence John’s description of the heavenly Jerusalem in Rev 21–22?
2. **14:2.** Of what event is a future conquest of Jerusalem reminiscent? What conquest of the city seems to be in view? According to Eusebius of Caesarea, what did Zechariah, writing after the return from Babylon, prophesy?
3. **14:6.** What does “neither cold nor frost” promise? What does “not day and not night” mean? As Isaiah describes it, from where will this endless light come?
4. **14:8.** How will living water flow from the fountain that the Lord will open in Jerusalem? Who else witnesses these life-giving waters gushing out from the Lord’s Temple? When does Jesus evoke this prophetic hope? What are the eastern and the western seas? Unlike what will the water continue to flow in summer? According to St. Ephrem the Syrian, how does the law of salvation flow, and what are the living waters?
5. **14:16.** How are “all the nations” identified earlier in the book? Rendering the “obedience of faith”, what will they do? What is the “feast of booths”, and what did it commemorate? How was it also known? During the festival, for what did participants pray? How is Gentile observance of Tabernacles a fulfillment of its deepest meaning?

*For application*

1. **14:5.** In times of active persecution, Jesus recommended flight, if possible (Mt 10:23). To what parts of the world have refugees from religious persecution, such as Iraqi Christians, fled? Where would you go, if the need of escape arose?
2. **14:8.** Why is desire for God compared to water in the desert (e.g., Ps 63:1)? How is a person like a tree growing near a constantly flowing river (cf. Ps 1:3)? How has your thirst for God been slaked by the Holy Spirit?

### *Study Questions*

3. **14:6–11.** Here and elsewhere (e.g., Rev 21:10–26), Scripture depicts heaven as a city. If your experience of cities is less than positive, what alternative image would you prefer? What features would make you want to go there? How would the promise of God's immediate presence complete the image?
4. **14:21.** In Mark's account of the cleansing of the Temple (Mk 11:15–17), after Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers, why does he forbid anyone to carry anything through the Temple area? Applying this text spiritually, what stuff do you tend to carry with you through the house of God? Of what does he want you to let go?



# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Malachi

### Chapter 1

#### *For understanding*

1. **1:2.** Why do the people of Judah doubt the love of God? What is the basis of God's election of Israel as a chosen people? Quoting this passage in Rom 9:13 as a witness to God's sovereign freedom, what does Paul conclude from Malachi's words?
2. **1:3.** As a Semitic figure of speech, what does "hated" mean? How is it possible to say that Esau's descendants, the Edomites, were not loved? In this context, to what are love and hate not primarily related? When was Edom laid waste? Where did the Edomites live? Of what is Edom's judgment in history not regarded as a sign? Why does the Catholic Church teach that God predestines no one to hell?
3. **1:7.** About what polluted food is the Lord speaking? What is the Lord's table? Why was it called his "table"? Even so, what was Israel cautioned against thinking? Speaking of the Eucharistic altar as "the table of the Lord", what does Paul's language indicate?
4. **1:8.** What kind of animal does the Mosaic Law forbid to be used for sacrifice? Who would inspect the people's offerings to determine if they were suitable for sacrifice? Since God is worthy of our best gifts and presenting him with defective gifts is an offense to him, what attitude does withholding our best from the Lord reveal? If an earthly ruler is displeased by his subjects offering damaged goods as tribute, what does that say about the Lord?

#### *For application*

1. **1:2–3.** Have you ever questioned God's love for you? For example, how do you respond when you notice that a fellow Catholic has more spiritual gifts than you do? Or when your prayers seem to go unanswered? Or when you sin grievously and feel that you are too wicked to be forgiven? How have you resolved such questions?
2. **1:6a.** How have you showed honor to your biological father? Whether your relationship with your father was excellent or difficult, or even nonexistent, how have those circumstances colored your relationship with persons in authority over you? How do they affect your relationship with God the Father?
3. **1:7b.** In 1 Cor 11:17–22, Paul lists several abuses around the table of the Lord and recommends solutions in vv. 27–34. How would you apply these verses to respect for the Eucharist as practiced in your parish? In your family? Within your own heart? Of what do you need to repent, and how can you model true respect?
4. **1:11.** As stated in the note for this verse, the Mass is a sacrifice. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, what is offered? How is it offered? Who participates in this offering? Who benefits by it (cf. CCC 1362–72)?

### Chapter 2

#### *For understanding*

1. **2:4.** What is the Lord's covenant with Levi? What gift does it include? Where else is this arrangement of priestly mediation in worship called a "covenant"?
2. **2:9.** What is partiality? In what activity was it forbidden by the Law of Moses? Who is the perfect standard of impartiality?
3. **2:14.** If marriage is not a civil contract devised by human authorities, what is it? What does it mean for spouses to be bound together by a matrimonial covenant? In the OT, of what covenant is marriage a reflection? In the NT, of what is it a sacramental sign? What does the faithlessness of Israelite men suggest? What does the role of the wife as "your companion" suggest about marriage?
4. **2:16.** What is the literal wording of the translation "I hate divorce"? In Deuteronomic law, when were marriages terminated? What does Malachi assert, however? Although the standard for marriage at creation was lifelong monogamy, when was divorce permitted, and how was it regulated? How did Jesus restore marriage to God's original intent? Why was divorce and remarriage, disallowed under the New Covenant, allowed under the Old Covenant? To what is divorce equivalent?

#### *For application*

1. **2:5–7.** Whom would you consider your favorite preacher or religious teacher? What impresses you about him? How does that person's instruction build and confirm your faith? What would you like to imitate as you provide instruction?
2. **2:11.** Read the note for this verse. What advice does Paul give to Christians who are married to unbaptized spouses (1 Cor 7:12–14)? What is religious indifference? Why is religious indifference spiritually dangerous within a marriage between baptized and unbaptized persons? In granting a dispensation for such a marriage, what stipulations might a bishop place on the Catholic partner?
3. **2:15.** What does Malachi state as a reason for marital fidelity? According to the *Catechism*, what is the twofold end of marriage (CCC 2363)? Why can these ends not be separated?
4. **2:17.** Who nowadays says that "everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them"? What possible truth might there be in that assertion? How do you answer a person who says that a loving God would never consign anyone to eternal punishment?

### Chapter 3

#### *For understanding*

1. **3:1.** With whom is "my messenger" identified? What is his mission? Whom does Jesus identify as the messenger of Malachi's prophecy? How did John signal his acceptance of this role? What does Jesus' interpretation of the prophecy indicate? How does the messenger prepare the way? Who is the "Lord whom you seek"?

2. **3:6.** How is the immutability of God manifested? Even when his people are unfaithful, why does God continue to be faithful? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, why is God entirely immutable? Why are the Israelites not consumed as a result?
3. **3:8.** By what means does one rob God? What is a tithe? What did the Mosaic Law decree about one's yearly harvest and livestock, and for what was it used?
4. **3:10.** What is "the storehouse"? Although testing the Lord is generally forbidden, how might it be allowed? What was the challenge put to Malachi's generation? What does obedience to the covenant unleash? What are the "windows of heaven"?

*For application*

1. **3:2–3.** What might these verses have to do with the doctrine of Purgatory? What is the purpose of Purgatory? What sin might someone be committing who is content with going to Purgatory rather than preparing in advance for heaven?
2. **3:8.** What are the precepts of the Church (CCC 2041–43)? Why does the Church impose these precepts? Although the Church has no positive stipulation about tithing, what does the fifth precept state Catholics are obliged to do?
3. **3:10.** How much of your annual income do you give to the Church? If you do not tithe a full ten percent, what prevents you? How willing would you be to take up Malachi's wager?
4. **3:14–15.** How do the psalms address the objection of Malachi's audience (e.g., Ps 37)? What solution do they recommend for the devout Christian? Why does Jesus say that those who mourn are blessed (Mt 5:4)?

## Chapter 4

*For understanding*

1. **4:2.** What does the dawning of the sun of righteousness signal? In Near Eastern iconography, of what is the winged sun a symbol? According to St. Hippolytus quoting this verse, how does Jesus act as that sun? What healing is offered? What does the image of calves leaping from the stall suggest?
2. **4:4.** How had the community in Judah been violating the Torah? With what mountain is Horeb associated?
3. **4:5.** With whom is Elijah the prophet identified? To what Jewish belief did his departure from the world and assumption into heaven give rise? According to Jesus, how is the prophecy of Elijah's coming fulfilled? How did the angel Gabriel announce that Elijah would come?
4. **4:6.** As translated, what does the expression "turn the hearts" denote? But if the preposition "to" is rendered "together with", then what does the expression indicate? To what "land" does the text refer?

*For application*

1. **4:2.** How might the rising of the "sun of righteousness" refer to the action of the Holy Spirit? When people pray for the Spirit to "set their hearts on fire", for what are they praying? What changes should they begin to notice in their lives?
2. **4:4.** What does the word "remember" in this verse call on you to do? Can you list the Ten Commandments from memory? Which of these did Jesus remind the rich young man to keep (Mk 10:19)? Why do you think Jesus did not mention the first three commandments?
3. **4:6.** In our culture, what happens when fathers abandon their children and children despise their fathers? How does the turning of the hearts of fathers and children toward each other signify the beginning of a new creation?

## BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

### THE OLD TESTAMENT (OT)

Gen	Genesis
Ex	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
1 Kings	1 Kings
2 Kings	2 Kings
1 Chron	1 Chronicles
2 Chron	2 Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Tob	Tobit
Jud	Judith
Esther	Esther
Job	Job
Psalms	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Eccles	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Solomon
Wis	Wisdom
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
Is	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Bar	Baruch
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad	Obadiah
Jon	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nahum	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi
1 Mac	1 Maccabees
2 Mac	2 Maccabees

### THE NEW TESTAMENT (NT)

Mt	Matthew
Mk	Mark
Lk	Luke
Jn	John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Romans
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
1 Tim	1 Timothy
2 Tim	2 Timothy
Tit	Titus
Philem	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
1 Pet	1 Peter
2 Pet	2 Peter
1 Jn	1 John
2 Jn	2 John
3 Jn	3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev	Revelation (Apocalypse)