

OUR KINGDOM MINISTRY

DECEMBER 2012

WEEK STARTING DECEMBER 10

Song 32 and Prayer

□ Congregation Bible Study:

jr chap. 2 ¶14-19, box on p. 25 (30 min.)

□ Theocratic Ministry School:

Bible reading: Zephaniah 1–Haggai 2 (10 min.)

No. 1: Haggai 1:1-13 (4 min. or less)

No. 2: What Is the Origin of Human Philosophies?—*rs* p. 289 ¶3–p. 290 ¶2 (5 min.)

No. 3: By Gaining the Mind of Christ, We Know More About Jehovah—Matt. 11:27 (5 min.)

□ Service Meeting:

Song 107

15 min: The Theocratic Ministry School for 2013. Talk by the school overseer. Using the Theocratic Ministry School instructions for 2013, discuss points needing emphasis locally. Encourage all to be diligent in fulfilling their assignments, in participating in Bible highlights, and in applying the suggestions given weekly from the *Ministry School* book.

15 min: “Be Peaceable With All Men.” Questions and answers. Have a brief two-part demonstration showing first the improper and then the proper way to respond to an irate householder.

Song 39 and Prayer

“Be Peaceable With All Men”

¹ Jehovah’s people are peace-loving, and our ministry is one of peace. (Isa. 52:7) At times, though, we encounter people who are upset because we have called at their door. What will help us to be peaceable in such situations?—Rom. 12:18.

1. What Bible counsel should we apply when encountering householders who are upset?

² **Have Insight:** Although some react angrily because they oppose the truth, others may display irritation for reasons unrelated to our message. Perhaps we called at an inopportune time. The householder may be upset over personal problems. Even if it is the good news that has made him angry, we should remember that his response is likely because he has been misled. (2 Cor. 4:4) Having insight will help us to remain calm and not take his reaction personally.—Prov. 19:11.

³ **Demonstrate Respect:** Many in the territory have strongly held beliefs. (2 Cor. 10:4) They have a right to choose whether they will listen or not. Never would we want to belittle a householder’s beliefs or convey an attitude of superiority. If we are asked to leave, we should respectfully comply.

⁴ **Speak Graciously:** Even if we are verbally abused, our reply should be mild and gracious. (Col. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:23) Rather than being drawn into an argument, try to find common ground. Perhaps we can kindly inquire about the reasons for the householder’s objection. In order to avoid antagonizing him further, however, at times it is best not to try to continue the conversation.—Prov. 9:7; 17:14.

⁵ If we are peaceable, the householder may well remember our reaction and listen the next time someone tries to give him a witness. (Rom. 12:20, 21) Even if he seems firm in his opposition, one day he may become our brother. (Gal. 1:13, 14) Regardless of whether he ever takes an interest in the truth, we will honor Jehovah and adorn our teaching if we maintain our self-control and demonstrate peaceableness.—2 Cor. 6:3.

2. Why is it important for us to have insight?

3. How may we demonstrate respect for the householder?

4. What does it mean to speak graciously?

5. What benefits come from being peaceable in the ministry?

**ZEPHANIAH**

*** jd chap. 2 pp. 23-24 par. 14 Prophets Whose Messages Can Affect Us ***

¹⁴ If you have had to break from family traditions to do Jehovah's will, you can sympathize with **Zephaniah**. It may be that he was a great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah and a relative of King Josiah—thus a member of Judah's royal house. Yet, Zephaniah obediently carried a message of denunciation against the corrupt leadership in Judah. His name means "**Jehovah Has Concealed**." He stressed that only by God's mercy might one "be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger." (**Zephaniah 2:3**) Happily, Zephaniah's courageous proclamation bore fruit. Young King Josiah led a spiritual reform, removing the idols, repairing the temple, and restoring pure worship. (2 Kings, chapters 22-23) Zephaniah and his fellow prophets (Nahum and Jeremiah) must have been instrumental in assisting or advising the king. Sadly, most of the Jews repented only superficially. After Josiah died in battle, they returned to idolatry. Before many years had passed, they were taken into Babylonian captivity.

*** w07 11/15 p. 10 - p. 11 Highlights From the Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and **Zephaniah** ***



"THE DAY OF JEHOVAH IS NEAR"
(**Zephaniah 1:1–3:20**)

Baal worship runs rampant in Judah. Jehovah says through his prophet Zephaniah: "I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Zephaniah warns: "The day of Jehovah is near." (**Zephaniah 1:4, 7, 14**) Only those meeting God's requirements will "be concealed" in that day.—**Zephaniah 2:3**.

"Woe to . . . the oppressive city"—Jerusalem! "Keep yourselves in expectation of me," is the utterance of Jehovah, 'till the day of my rising up to the booty, for my judicial decision is to gather nations . . . in order to pour out upon them my denunciation.'" But God promises: "I shall make you people to be a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I gather back your captive ones before your eyes."—**Zephaniah 3:1, 8, 20**.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

2:13, 14—Whose "voice will keep singing" in completely desolated Nineveh? Since Nineveh was to become a place for wild animals and birds, the voice that would keep singing refers to birdsong and possibly to the sound of the wind in the windows of deserted buildings.

3:9—What is the "pure language," and how is it spoken? It is the truth of God found in his Word, the Bible. It includes all Bible teachings. We speak it by believing the truth, by correctly teaching it to others, and by living in harmony with God's will.

Lessons for Us:

1:8. Some in Zephaniah's day were apparently seeking the acceptance of surrounding nations by "wearing foreign attire." How foolish it would be for Jehovah's worshippers today to try to conform to the world by similar means!

1:12; 3:5, 16. Jehovah kept sending his prophets to warn his people of his judicial decisions. He did so even though—like dregs congealed at the bottom of a wine vat—many Jews had settled down and were apathetic toward the message. As Jehovah's great day nears, instead of allowing the indifferent attitude of people to cause 'our hands to drop down' in slackness, we need to keep on declaring the Kingdom message without letup.

2:3. Only Jehovah can save us in the day of his anger. To remain in his favor, we need to “seek Jehovah” by carefully studying his Word, the Bible; prayerfully asking for his guidance; and drawing close to him. We must “seek righteousness” by living a morally clean life. And we need to “seek meekness” by cultivating a meek and submissive attitude.

2:4-15; 3:1-5. On the day of the execution of Jehovah’s judgment, Christendom and all the nations, which have oppressed God’s people, will meet the same end as did ancient Jerusalem and surrounding nations. (Revelation 16:14, 16; 18:4-8) We should fearlessly continue to declare God’s judgments.

3:8, 9. As we await the day of Jehovah, we prepare for survival by learning to speak the “pure language” and by ‘calling upon God’s name’ by making a personal dedication to him. We also serve Jehovah “shoulder to shoulder” in association with his people and offer him “a sacrifice of praise” as a gift.—Hebrews 13:15.

“There Is a Hurrying of It”

The psalmist sang: “Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be.” (Psalm 37:10) When we reflect upon what was foretold about Nineveh in the book of Nahum and about Babylon and apostate Judah in the book of Habakkuk, we have no doubt that the psalmist’s words will come true. How much longer, though, must we wait?

“The great day of Jehovah is near,” says **Zephaniah 1:14**. “It is near, and there is a hurrying of it very much.” The book of Zephaniah also shows us how we may be concealed in that day and what we must do now to prepare for survival. Indeed, “the word of God is alive and exerts power.”—Hebrews 4:12.

*** w11 1/15 p. 6 pars. 17-18 “Take Refuge in the Name of Jehovah” ***

¹⁷ Think, too, of the encouragement from the faithful slave to follow Jesus’ command to preach the good news of the Kingdom in all the inhabited earth. (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) Zephaniah mentioned a change that would help people to take refuge in God’s name. We read: “Then I shall give to peoples the change to a pure language, in order for them all to call upon the name of Jehovah, in order to serve him shoulder to shoulder.”—**Zeph. 3:9**.

¹⁸ What is this pure language? The pure language is the truth about Jehovah God and his purposes as found in his inspired Word. You are in a sense using that language when you share with others the correct understanding of God’s Kingdom and how it will sanctify his name, when you stress the vindication of God’s sovereignty, and when you happily talk about the everlasting blessings faithful humans will enjoy. As a result of so many speaking this figurative language, a growing number are ‘calling upon the name of Jehovah’ and ‘serving him shoulder to shoulder.’ Yes, millions around the world are now finding refuge in Jehovah.—Ps. 1:1, 3.

*** w10 4/15 p. 26 par. 8 Are You Fully Following the Christ? ***

⁸ If an honest self-examination proves that we have slackened the hand somewhat, we do well to recall the invigorating words spoken by the prophet Zephaniah. He stated: “May your hands not drop down. Jehovah your God is in the midst of you. As a mighty One, he will save. He will exult over you with rejoicing.” (**Zeph. 3:16, 17**) These reassuring words first applied to the Israelites of old who returned to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon. However, this assurance still holds true for God’s people today. Since the work we do is Jehovah’s work, we should keep in mind that both Jehovah and his Son back us up and strengthen us to discharge fully our God-given responsibilities. (Matt. 28:20; Phil. 4:13) If we strive to continue to do God’s work with zeal, he will bless us and help us to go on prospering spiritually.



*** jd chap. 2 p. 26 par. 19 Prophets Whose Messages Can Affect Us ***

¹⁹ **Haggai** is the first of three prophets who served after a faithful remnant returned from Babylonian exile in 537 B.C.E. Haggai may have been in the first group of returnees. With Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua and in cooperation with the prophet Zechariah, Haggai tried to motivate the Jews to overcome external opposition and their own apathy linked to materialism. They needed to accomplish what they had come back for: the rebuilding of Jehovah's temple. Haggai's four straightforward messages, given in 520 B.C.E., emphasized Jehovah's name and sovereignty. As you read the book, you will find the expression "Jehovah of armies" 14 times. Haggai's forceful messages stimulated the people to resume their temple building. Are you not similarly invigorated by knowing that Jehovah has unlimited power as Sovereign Ruler and that he commands vast armies of spirit creatures?—Isaiah 1:24; Jeremiah 32:17, 18.

*** w07 12/1 p. 8 - p. 9 Highlights From the Books of Haggai and Zechariah *** Jehovah's Word Is Alive

THE year is 520 B.C.E. Sixteen years have passed since the Jewish returnees from Babylonian exile laid the foundation of Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem. Yet, the temple is not completed, and the building work is under ban. Jehovah raises up the prophet Haggai and two months later the prophet Zechariah to speak His word.

Haggai and Zechariah have one objective: Stir up the people to resume the work of rebuilding the temple. The efforts of these prophets succeed, and the temple is completed five years later. What Haggai and Zechariah proclaimed is recorded in the Bible books bearing their names. The books of Haggai and Zechariah were completed in 520 B.C.E. and 518 B.C.E. respectively. Like those prophets, we too have a God-given work, which must be brought to completion before the end of the present system of things. It is the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. Let us see what encouragement we can draw from the books of Haggai and Zechariah.

“SET YOUR HEART UPON YOUR WAYS” (Haggai 1:1–2:23)

Within 112 days, Haggai delivers four motivating messages. The first is: “Set your heart upon your ways. Go up to the mountain, and you must bring in lumber. And build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and I may be glorified,” Jehovah has said.” (Haggai 1:7, 8) The people respond favorably. The second message contains the promise: “I [Jehovah] will fill this house with glory.”—Haggai 2:7.

According to the third message, their neglect in the temple rebuilding has made ‘the people and all the work of their hands’ unclean before Jehovah. From the day the repair work begins, however, Jehovah “shall bestow blessing” upon them. As stated in the fourth message, Jehovah shall “annihilate the strength of the kingdoms of the nations” and set Governor Zerubbabel as “a seal ring.”—Haggai 2:14, 19, 22, 23.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

1:6—What is the meaning of the expression “there is a drinking, but not to the point of getting intoxicated”? This expression simply indicates the scarcity of wine. Because of the lack of Jehovah's blessing, the supply of wine would be limited—definitely not sufficient to cause intoxication.

2:6, 7, 21, 22—Who or what is causing the rocking, and with what effect? Jehovah is ‘rocking all the nations’ by means of the worldwide preaching of the Kingdom message. The preaching work also has the effect of bringing “the desirable things of all the nations” into Jehovah's house, thus filling it with glory. In time, “Jehovah of armies” is to rock “the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry ground,” causing the entire present wicked system of things to be shaken out of existence.—Hebrews 12:26, 27.

2:9—In what ways could ‘the glory of the later house become greater than that of the former’? This was to be in at least three ways: the number of years the temple was in existence, who taught there, and who flocked there to worship Jehovah. Although Solomon’s glorious temple stood for 420 years, from 1027 B.C.E. to 607 B.C.E., the “later house” was in use for over 580 years, from its completion in 515 B.C.E. to its destruction in 70 C.E. Moreover, the Messiah—Jesus Christ—taught in the “later house,” and more people came to it than to “the former” in order to worship God.—Acts 2:1-11.

Lessons for Us:

1:2-4. Resistance to our preaching work should not cause us to shift our priorities from “seeking first the kingdom” to seeking first our own interests.—Matthew 6:33.

1:5, 7. It is good for us to ‘set our heart upon our ways’ and reflect on how what we are doing with our life affects our relationship with God.

1:6, 9-11; 2:14-17. The Jews in Haggai’s day were working hard in personal pursuits but not enjoying the fruits of their labor. They were neglecting the temple, so they did not have God’s blessing. We should give priority to spiritual pursuits and render God whole-souled service, remembering that whether we have little or much in a material way, ‘the blessing of Jehovah is what makes rich.’—Proverbs 10:22.

2:15, 18. Jehovah urged the Jews to set their hearts from that day forward, not on their past negligence, but on the rebuilding work. We should likewise strive to be forward-looking as we worship our God.



Haggai and Zechariah urged the Jews to build

*** w11 3/15 p. 3 Do Not Deceive Yourself With False Reasoning ***

About the year 537 B.C.E., Cyrus the Great of Persia issued a decree for the Jews exiled in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. (Ezra 1:1, 2) The following year, in accord with Jehovah’s purpose, the people laid the foundations for a new temple. The returnees rejoiced and praised Jehovah for blessing the initial stage of this important project. (Ezra 3:8, 10, 11) But soon, opposition to their rebuilding arose and the people became disheartened. (Ezra 4:4) About 15 years after their return, the Persian authorities banned all construction work in Jerusalem. To enforce the ban, regional officials arrived in Jerusalem and “stopped [the Jews] by force of arms.”—Ezra 4:21-24.

Faced with this serious obstacle, the Jews deceived themselves with false reasoning. “The time has not come, the time of the house of Jehovah, for it to be built,” they told themselves. (**Hag. 1:2**) They concluded that God did not want the temple built immediately. Instead of seeking a way to do his will, they abandoned their sacred assignment and became absorbed in improving their own homes. God’s prophet Haggai pointedly asked them: “Is it the time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house [Jehovah’s temple] is waste?”—**Hag. 1:4**.

Do you see a lesson in this example? A wrong view of the timing of the divine purpose could lead us to lose sight of the importance of our spiritual activities and become sidetracked with personal interests. To illustrate, imagine you are expecting guests. Anticipation of their visit may lead to a flurry of activity as you attend to necessary household chores related to their stay. However, then you receive word that your visitors are delayed. Will you abandon the preparations?

7. What is the meaning of Haggai 1:6, and what lesson should we take to heart?
 [Dec. 10, w06 4/15 p. 22 pars. 12-15]

TMS REVIEW: *** w06 4/15 p. 22 pars. 12-15 “I Am With You People” ***

¹² As you can imagine, the misplaced priorities of the Jews affected them personally. Note God’s view expressed at **Haggai 1:6**: “You have sown much seed, but there is a bringing of little in. There is an eating, but it is not to satisfaction. There is a drinking, but not to the point of getting intoxicated. There is a putting on of clothes, but it is not with anyone’s getting warm; and he that is hiring himself out is hiring himself out for a bag having holes.”

¹³ The Jews were in the land that God had given them, yet it was not producing as they would have liked. Jehovah was withholding his blessing, as he had forewarned. (Deuteronomy 28:38-48) Without his backing, the Jews sowed seed but had a meager harvest, not enough food to satisfy them. Lacking his blessing, they were unable to clothe themselves with warm garments. It even seemed as if the money they earned went into a bag full of holes, with no benefit to the wage earners. What of the expression: “There is a drinking, but not to the point of getting intoxicated”? It could not imply that getting drunk would have shown God’s blessing; he condemns drunkenness. (1 Samuel 25:36; Proverbs 23:29-35) Rather, the expression is another reference to the lack of God’s blessing on the Jews. Any wine they could make would be limited, not being enough to produce intoxication. The **Revised Standard Version** renders **Haggai 1:6**: “You drink, but you never have your fill.”

¹⁴ The lesson we should learn from all of that is not about home design or decorating. Long before the exile, the prophet Amos had rebuked wealthy ones in Israel for their “houses of ivory” and for their “lying down on couches of ivory.” (Amos 3:15; 6:4) The fancy houses and decorated furniture did not last. Those things were plundered by enemy conquerors. Yet, years later, after an exile of 70 years, many of God’s people had not learned from this. Will we? It would be fitting for each of us to ask: **‘Frankly, how much emphasis do I put on my home and its decoration? What about arranging for extra education to advance a career, though doing that would take up considerable time for a number of years, crowding out important aspects of my spiritual life?’**—Luke 12:20, 21; 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

¹⁵ What we read at **Haggai 1:6** should bring home to us our need for God’s blessing in our lives. Those Jews of old lacked that, to their detriment. Whether we have an abundance of material things or not, if we fail to receive Jehovah’s blessing, it will definitely be to our spiritual detriment. (Matthew 25:34-40; 2 Corinthians 9:8-12) Yet, how can we receive that blessing?

*** w07 11/1 p. 17 “The Silver Is Mine, and the Gold Is Mine” ***

Through his prophet Haggai, Jehovah reassured the builders that He was with them. “I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory,” God said. As for the builders’ economic concerns, Haggai conveyed this message: “‘The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies.” (**Haggai 2:7-9**) Within five years after Haggai spoke those stirring words, the project was completed.—Ezra 6:13-15.

Haggai’s words have also motivated God’s servants in more recent times during large projects related to the worship of Jehovah. In 1879 when the faithful and discreet slave class began publishing this journal, then called *Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*, it contained the following statement: “‘Zion’s Watch Tower’ has, we believe, JEHOVAH for its backer, and while this is the case it will never *beg* nor *petition* men for support. When He who says: ‘All the gold and silver of the mountains are mine,’ fails to provide necessary funds, we will understand it to be time to suspend the publication.”

Publication has never been suspended. The first issue had a printing of 6,000 copies, in English only.

THEOCRATIC MINISTRY SCHOOL SCHEDULE FOR 2013

INSTRUCTIONS

During 2013 the following will be the arrangements for conducting the Theocratic Ministry School.

SOURCE MATERIAL: *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* [bi12], “*All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial*” (1990 Edition) [si], and *Reasoning From the Scriptures* (1989 Edition) [rs]. When assignments No. 2 and No. 3 refer to paragraphs in the *Reasoning* book, only paragraphs that are indented are to be counted.

The School should begin with remarks of welcome and then proceed as outlined below. After each part, the school overseer will introduce the next part. If the school overseer wishes and if there is sufficient space, he may sit at a table and make his comments from a seated position on the platform. On the other hand, if he prefers, he may sit in the audience near the platform but make his comments from the speaker’s stand.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM BIBLE READING: 10 minutes. For the first **four minutes**, a qualified elder or ministerial servant should consider Scriptural points from the weekly Bible reading. The speaker should focus on selected verses and should not try to cover too many points. It is better to cover a few verses and to do it well. Also, whenever possible, the speaker should make local application, and emphasis should be put on how the material affects us today. (*be* 47 par. 2–48 par. 1) The exception to this will be when the weekly Bible reading begins with the opening chapter of a Bible book. On such occasions, material for the first **four minutes** should be taken from the “*All Scripture*” book. For example, the first six chapters of Matthew will be considered the week of January 7, so the speaker should select a few key points from the introductory paragraphs on the book of Matthew as found in the “*All Scripture*” book. He should apply the material in a way that will be beneficial to the congregation. Whether discussing the weekly Bible reading or points from the “*All Scripture*” book, the principal objective is to help the audience to appreciate *why* and *how* the information is of value. The speaker should be careful not to exceed the four minutes allotted for the opening portion. He should ensure that six minutes are set aside for the audience to offer *brief* comments of 30 seconds or less on what they have appreciated in the weekly Bible reading. The school overseer will then dismiss the students who are assigned to other classrooms.

ASSIGNMENT NO. 1: 4 minutes or less. This is a reading to be given by a brother. The student should read the assigned material without giving an introduction or a conclusion. The school overseer will be especially interested in helping students to read accurately and with understanding, fluency, proper sense stress, modulation, appropriate pausing, and naturalness.

ASSIGNMENT NO. 2: 5 minutes. This will be assigned to a sister. The student will either be given a setting or may select one from the list appearing on page 82 of *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*. The assigned theme should be used and be applied to an aspect of field service that is realistic and practical for the local territory. When no references are indicated as source material, the student will need to gather material for this part by doing research in our publications. The school overseer will be particularly interested in the way the student develops the material and the way she helps the one to whom she is witnessing to reason on the Scriptures and to understand the key points of the presentation. The school overseer will assign one assistant.

ASSIGNMENT NO. 3: 5 minutes. This may be assigned to a brother or a sister. The student should develop the assigned theme. When no references are indicated as

source material, the student will need to gather material for this part by doing research in our publications. When assigned to a brother, this part should be given as a talk with the Kingdom Hall audience in mind. When a sister is assigned this part, it should always be presented as outlined for Assignment No. 2.

COUNSEL: 1-2 minutes. The school overseer will not announce the speech quality that a student is working on. After Assignments No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3, the school overseer will offer positive observations on an aspect of the presentation that was commendable. He will draw attention to specific reasons why it was effective and refer frequently to the *Ministry School* textbook. According to the need of each student, additional constructive counsel may be given privately after the meeting or at another time.

TIMING: No part should go overtime, nor should the remarks of the counselor. Assignments No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 should tactfully be stopped when the time is up. If brothers handling highlights from the Bible reading go overtime, they should be given private counsel. All should watch their timing carefully. Total program: 30 minutes.

COUNSEL FORM: In *Ministry School* textbook.

AUXILIARY COUNSELOR: Whenever possible, it is good to use an elder who is an experienced speaker for this privilege of service. The auxiliary counselor’s responsibility will be to give private counsel, if needed, to elders or ministerial servants regarding any speaking assignment they may handle, including Bible highlights, Service Meeting parts, public talks, and conducting and reading at the *Watchtower Study* and the Congregation Bible Study. If there are a number of elders in your congregation who are capable speakers and teachers, then a different qualified elder may serve as auxiliary counselor each year. It is not necessary that the auxiliary counselor offer counsel after each assignment by elders and ministerial servants but only when he sees that a word of encouragement or a practical suggestion would help his brothers to make progress.

THEOCRATIC MINISTRY SCHOOL REVIEW: 20 minutes. Every two months, the school overseer will conduct a review. It will be preceded by highlights from the Bible reading. The review will be based on material considered in the school during the preceding two months, including the current week. If your congregation has a circuit assembly or the visit of the circuit overseer during the week of the Theocratic Ministry School Review, then the review should be postponed one week and Assignments No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 of the following week’s schedule should be used. No changes should be made in the schedule of the weekly Bible reading or the presentation of Bible highlights.